



# Sustainable Fashion and Consumer Practices: An Exploratory Study

Understanding factors that influence awareness, attitude and purchase intention towards sustainable fashion.



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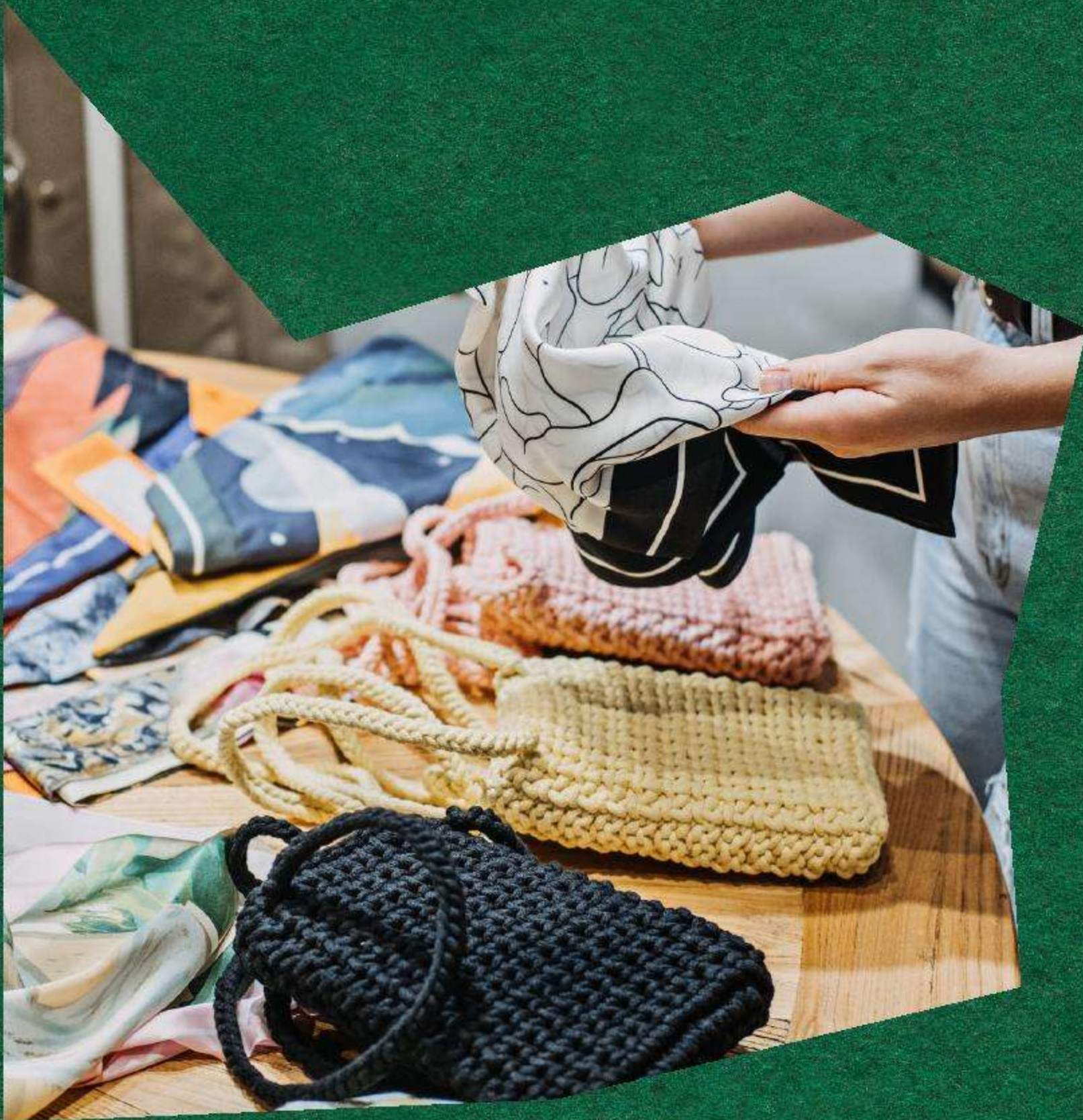


# OVERVIEW



Fast-fashion is no longer a rise in accessibility to trends, but is currently a pioneer of environmental hazards driven through over-consumption.

- “92 million tonnes of textile waste is produced every year” (Igini, 2023).
- “India’s fast fashion segment grew 30-40%” (Bansal, 2024).
- Global fast fashion industry was projected to reach \$148.23 billion in 2024 (Fortune Business Insights, 2025).
- Asia Pacific region contributing the most, accounting for 34.67% of the market share (Fortune Business Insights, 2025)





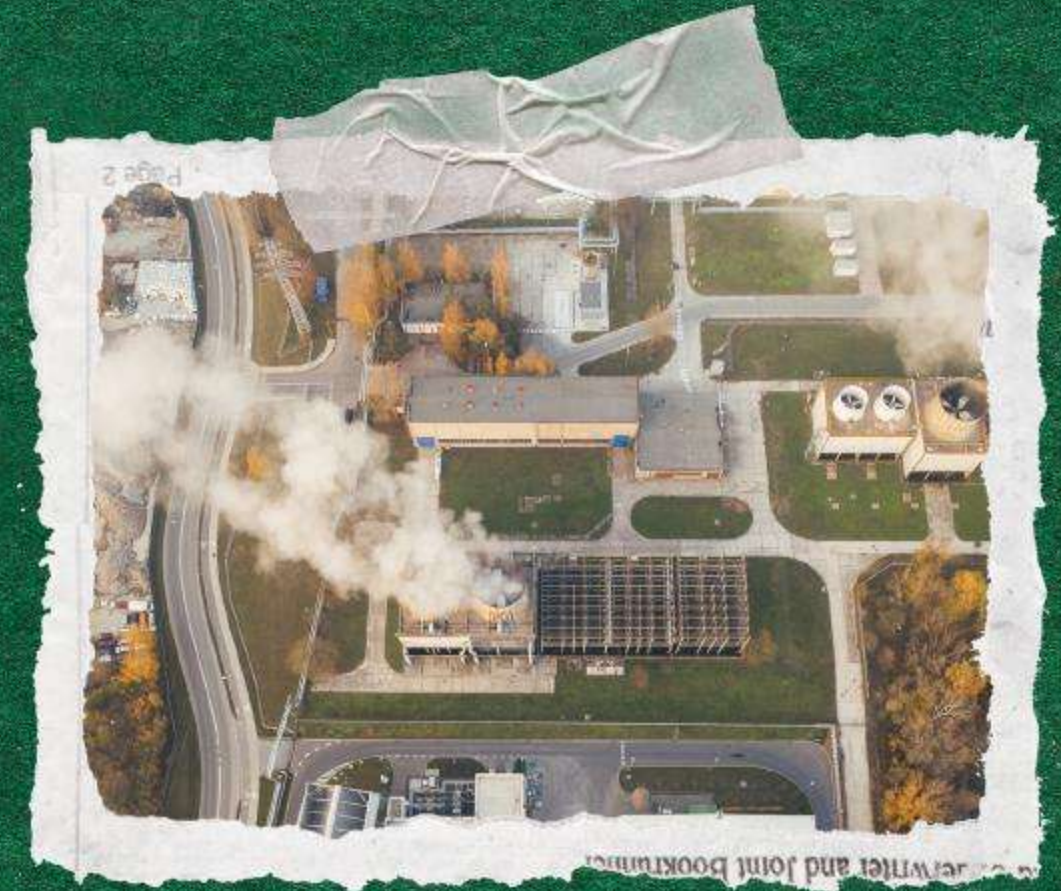
# Environmental Impact of Fast Fashion



2700 litres of water per cotton t-shirt.



92 million tons of textile waste generated each year.



10% of global carbon emissions come from fashion.



# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Functional

*Economics, Utility and Aesthetics are primary drivers of consumption*

Sustainability is perceived as a secondary thought, with the primary focus on fit, durability, and affordability.

**Supporting Literature:** Bosnjak et al. (2020); Magwegwe & Shaik (2024); Riesgo et al. (2020).

## Social identity and Belonging

*Fashion is about self-expression, not morals*

Consumers tend to use clothing as a medium of communication, defining who they are or desire to be, where fitting in versus standing out comes into account.

**Supporting Literature:** Tajfel & Turner (1979); McNeill & Venter (2019).

## Attitude-Behaviour Gap

*A positive belief does not necessarily mean doing better*

*Highlights the contradiction between internal value systems and actual behaviour, where mindset does not translate to habits.*

**Supporting Literature:** Ajzen et al. (2018); Carrington et al. (2014); Hao & Zhang (2025).



# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Institutional Skepticism

*A trust deficit built by greenwashing and limited transparency*

This, specifically among younger consumers has led to a lack of desire in paying a premium for clothing that is actually sustainable, calling for transparent communications.

**Supporting Literature:** United Nations (n.d.); Corbin (2024); Azevedo *et al.* (2024).

## Demographics and Accessibility

*Privilege and access defines consumption*

This highlights how consumption and conversations on sustainability are a modern luxury, driven by women and those with higher disposable income.

**Supporting Literature:** Achabou & Dekhili (2015); Bansal (2024); Khandual & Pradhan (2018).



# RESEARCH GAP



While existing research provides globalised understandings, this research aims to identify the relevance of various India-specific factors, such as the awareness-action and attitude-action gaps, income, and cultural references, in circular practices.







# RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Understanding the level of awareness among consumers related to the fashion industry

Understanding the awareness-action gap among consumers in the Indian context

Understanding whether monthly personal income influences attitudes

Understanding the attitude-action gap among consumers in Indian context

Understanding the role of demographic factors in shaping fashion choices

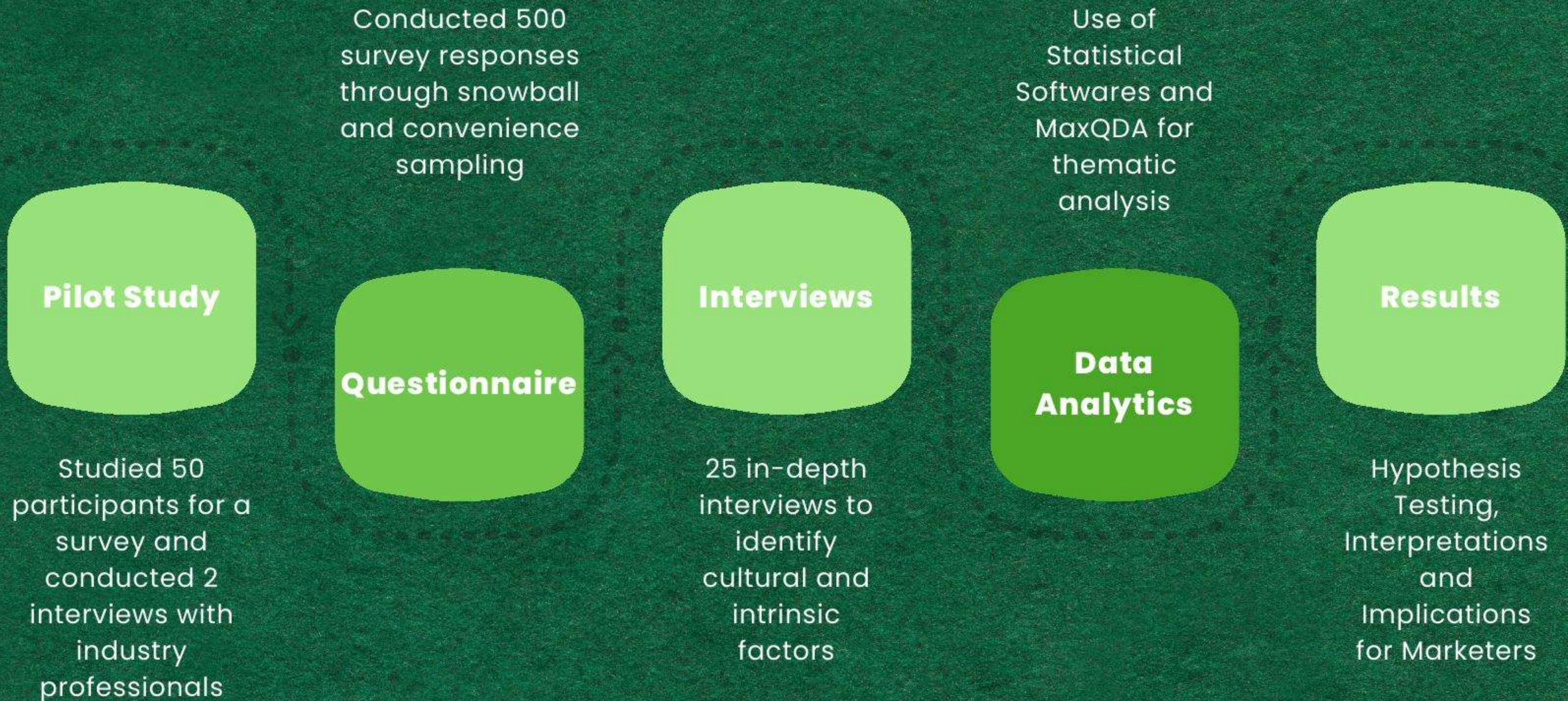
Understanding the role of culture in circular behaviour practices (exploratory)





# METHODOLOGY

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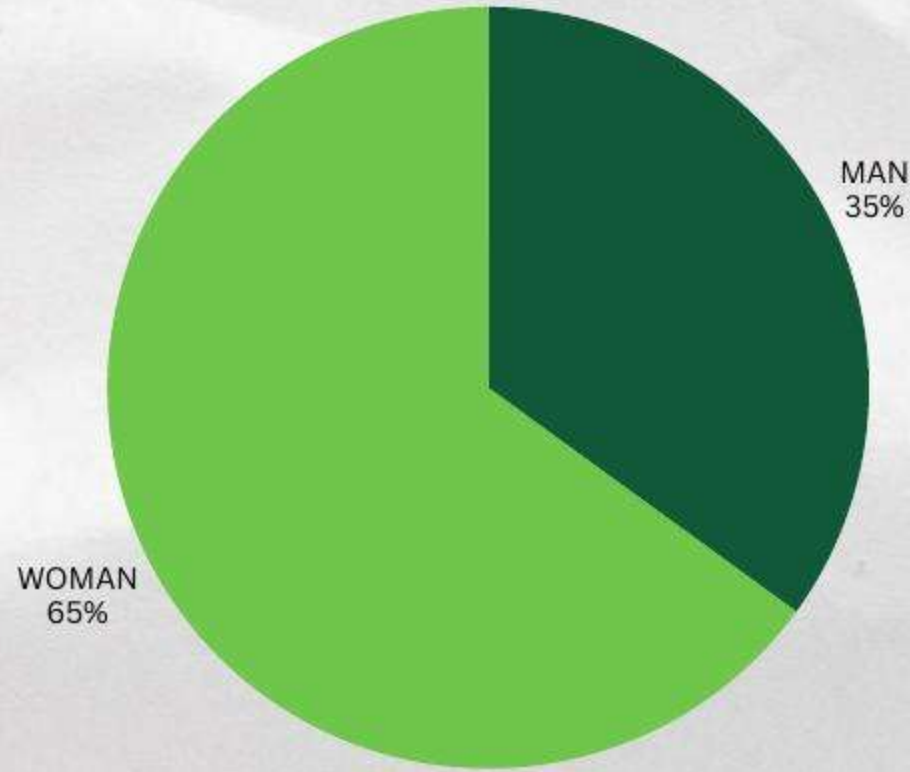
# FINDINGS



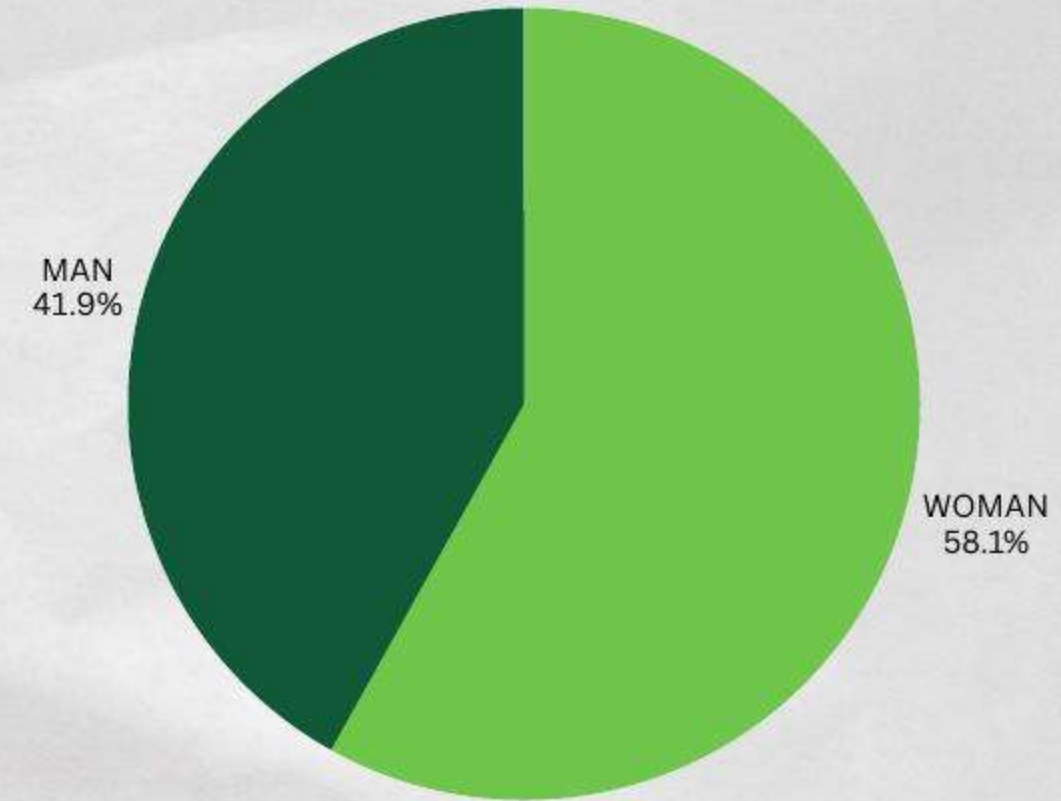
# DESCRIPTIVES

## Gender

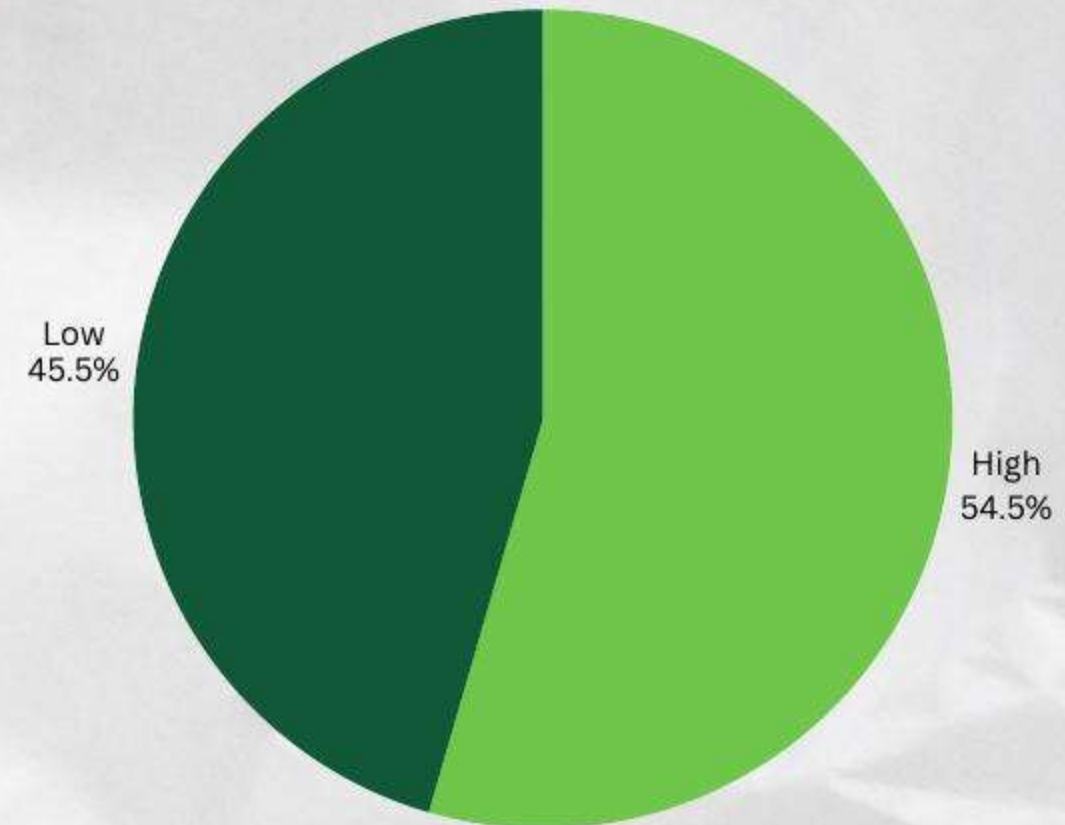
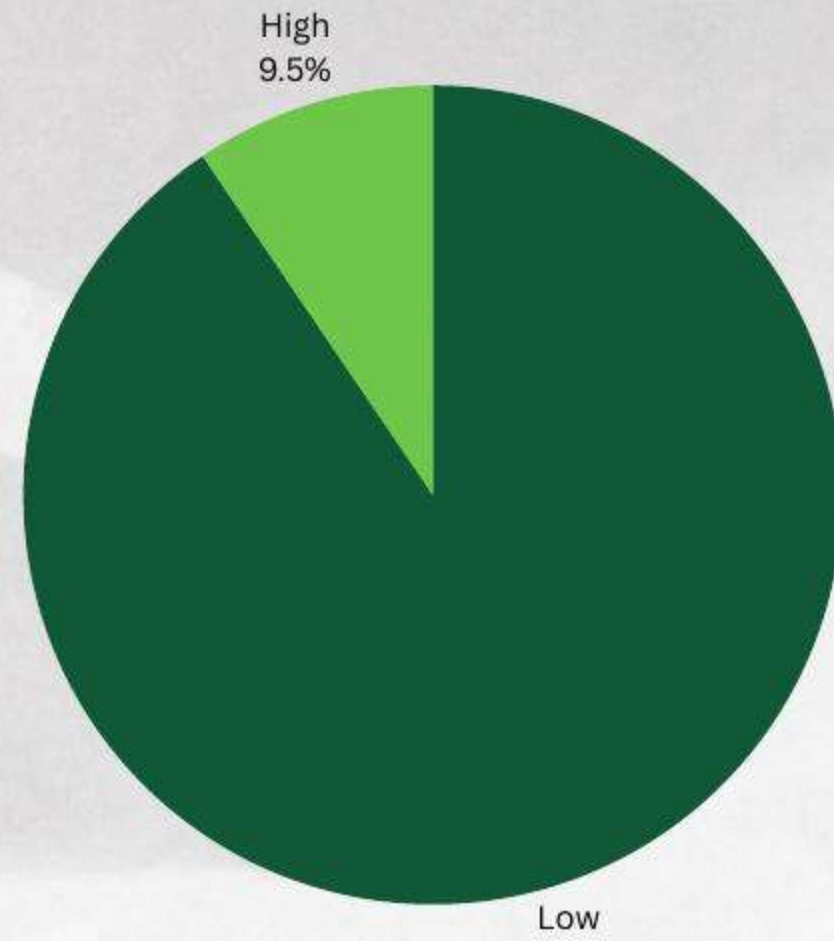
18-24



25+

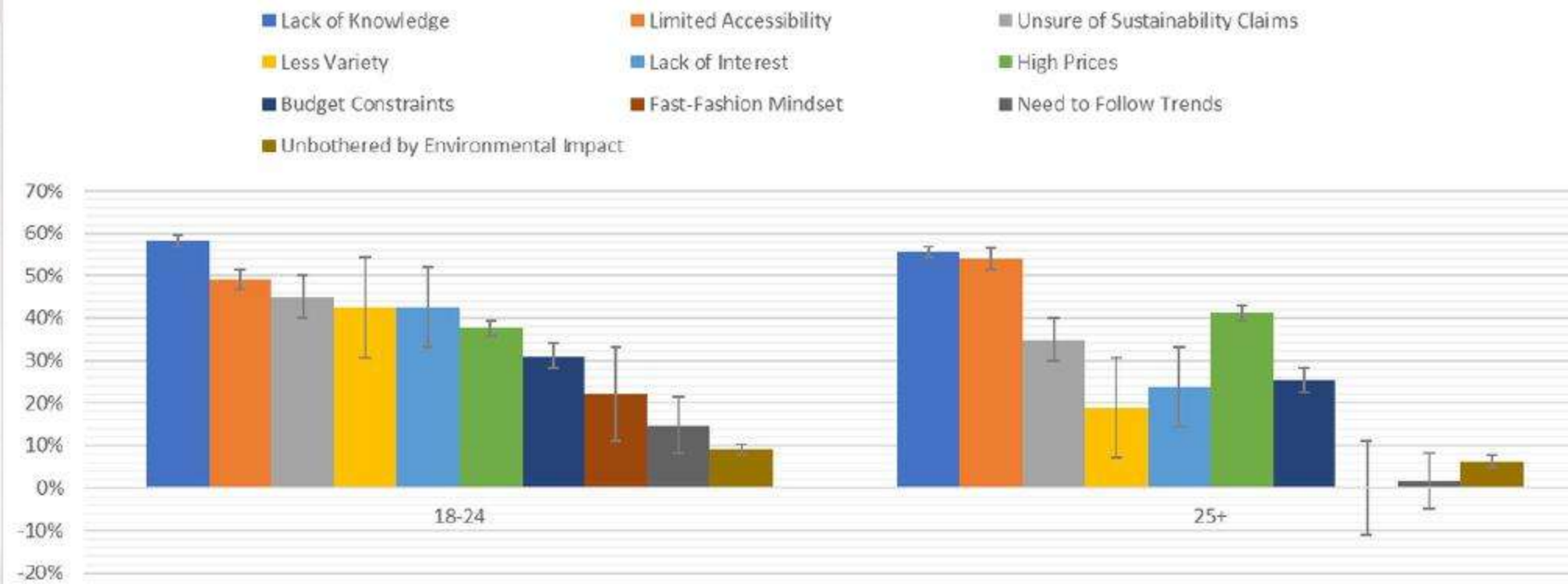


## Income



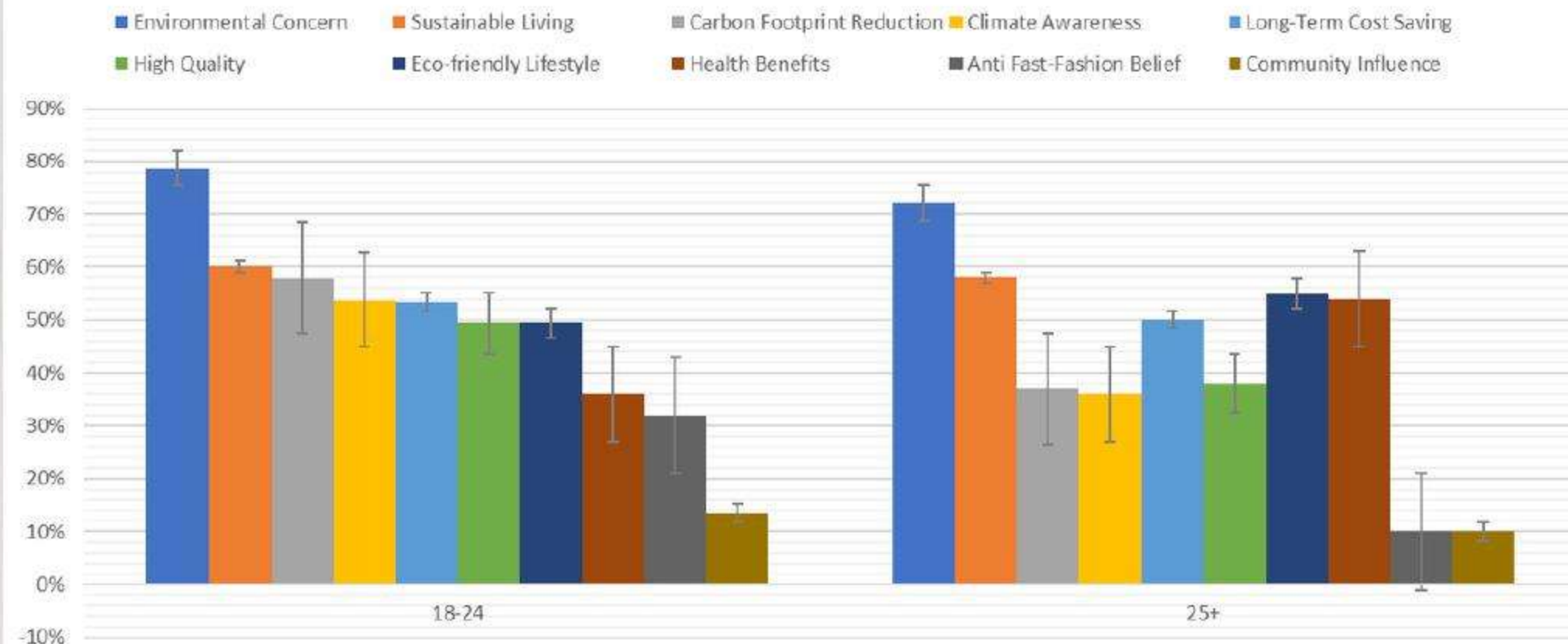


## Factors Limiting Sustainable Fashion Exploration



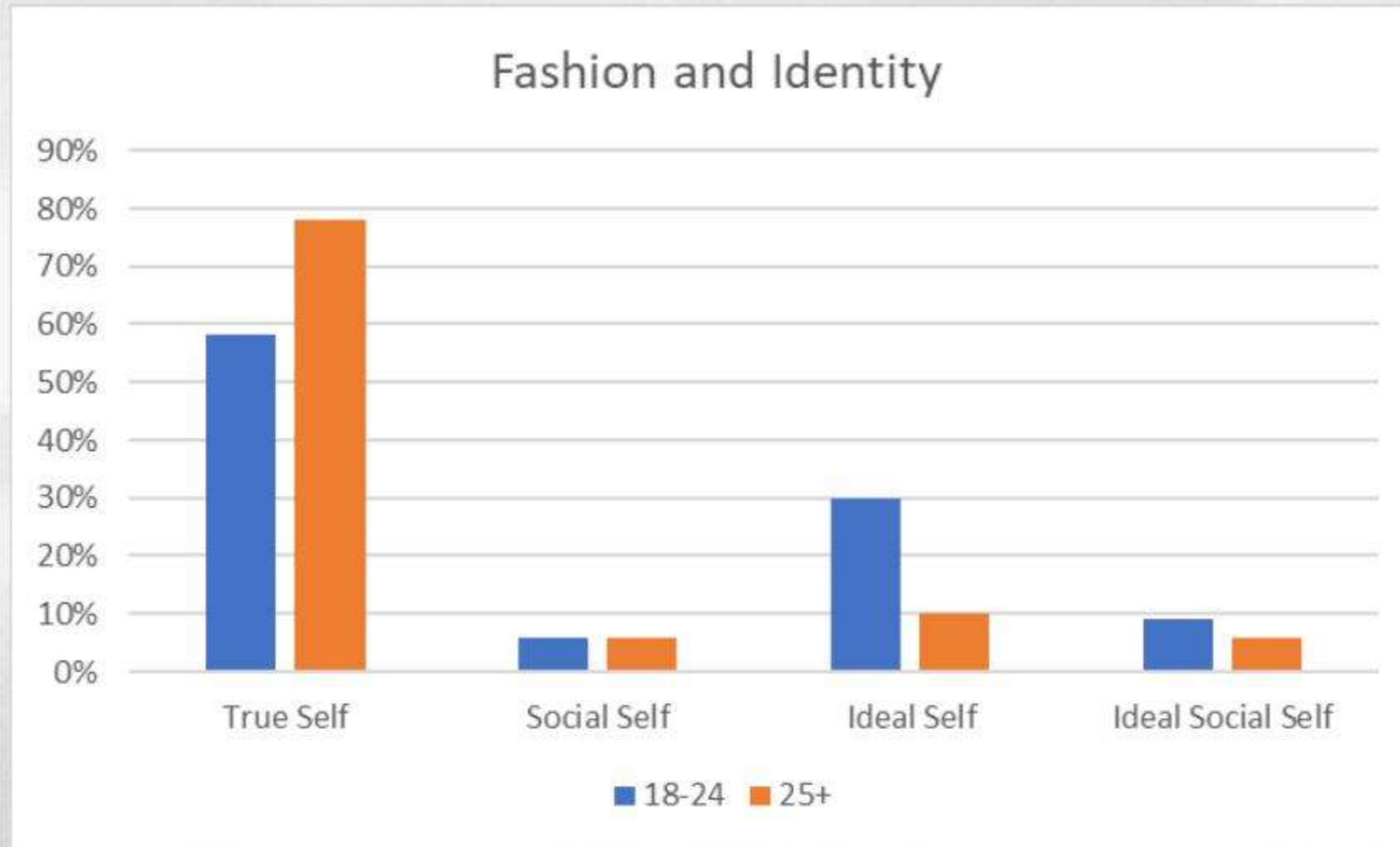
**While Limited Knowledge and Accessibility generally remain key factors, a Fast Fashion and Trend-based mindset has minimal to low presence as a limiter in 25+ individuals**

## Factors Motivating Sustainable Fashion Exploration

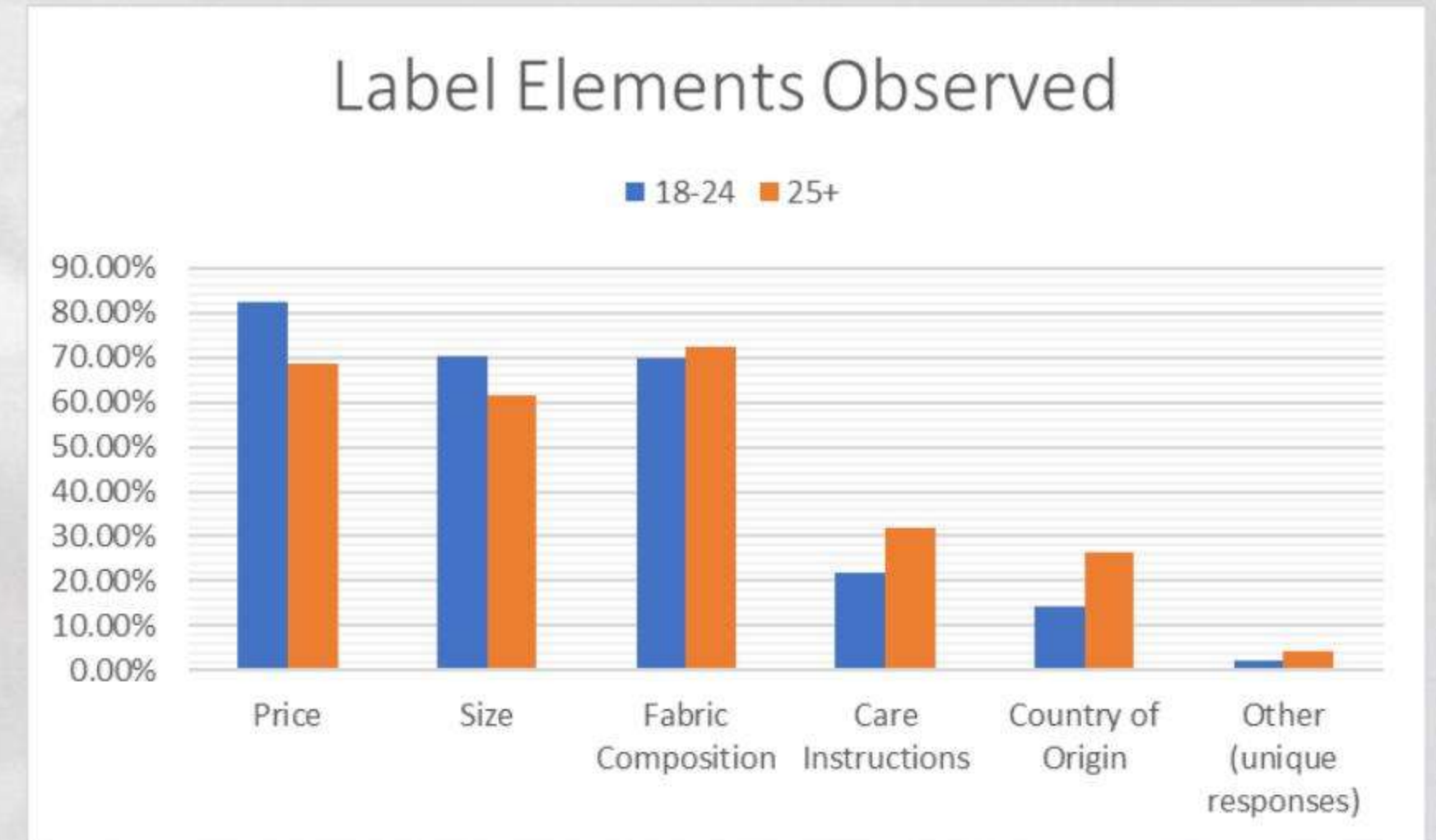


**While the younger audience is focused on external aspects, individual factors surface highly among older consumers such as health benefits**



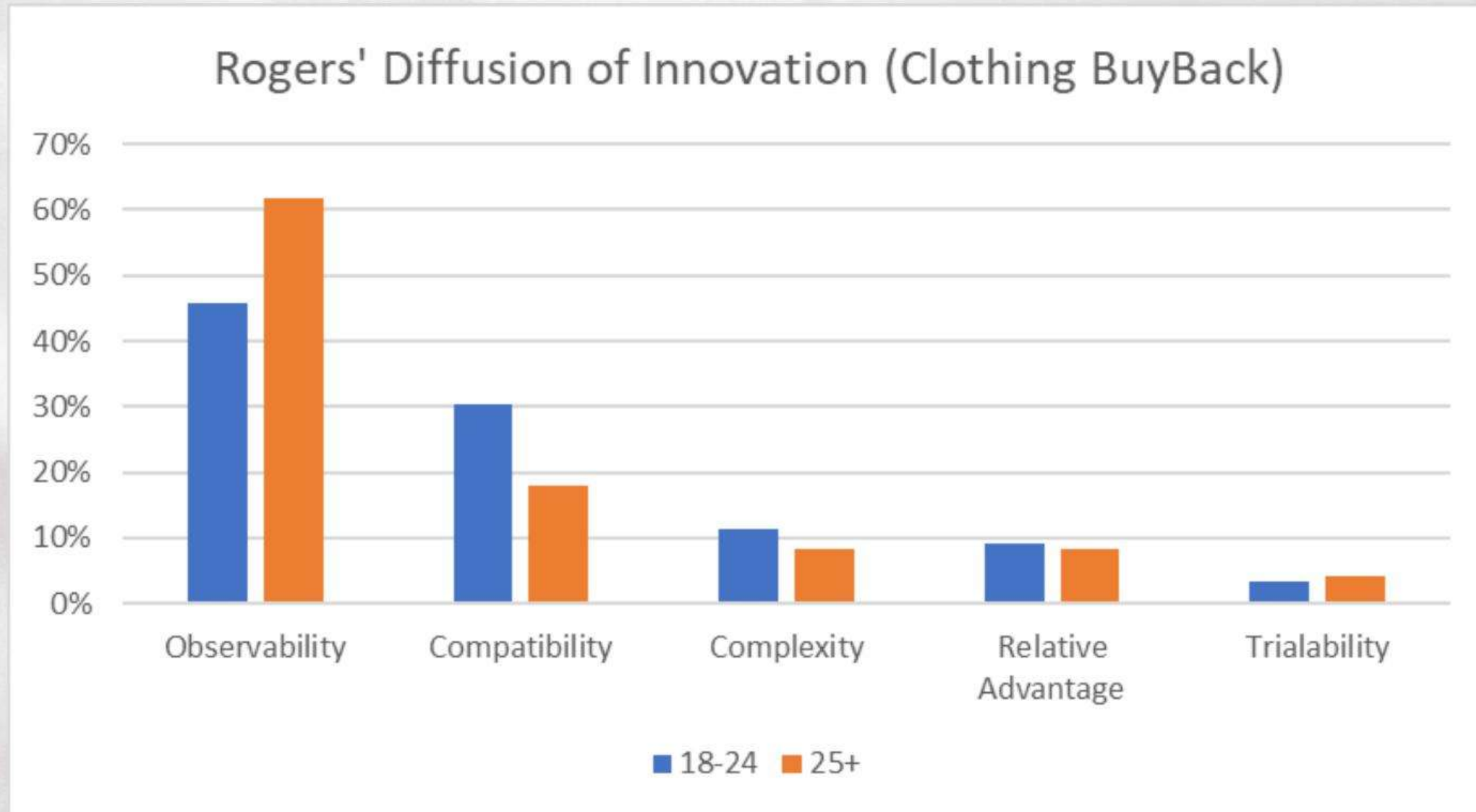


**Being one's true self is the core motivator for fashion across ages. Though, younger consumers are dressing to be their ideal self (who they aspire to be)**



**While other factors are the same, care instructions and country of origin are more prominent in older consumers**





**A key problem identified by those not engaging with buyback has been observability and compatibility (knowledge and alignment with lifestyles).**



# HYPOTHESIS TESTING

| Null Hypothesis (H <sub>0</sub> )                                                                                                  | Alternate Hypothesis (H <sub>1</sub> )                                                                                            | Test Used            | Result                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| There is no significant relationship between the level of environmental awareness and participation in circular economy practices. | There is a significant relationship between the level of environmental awareness and participation in circular economy practices. | Correlation Analysis | <b>Fail to Reject H<sub>0</sub></b> (No significant relationship found)                               |
| There is no significant relationship between attitudes towards sustainable production practices and purchase behaviour.            | There is a significant relationship between attitudes towards sustainable production practices and purchase behaviour.            | Correlation Analysis | <b>Partially Reject H<sub>0</sub></b> (Weak but significant relationship found, especially in 18–24)  |
| There is no significant relationship between monthly personal income and sustainable purchase behaviour.                           | There is a significant relationship between monthly personal income and sustainable purchase behaviour.                           | T-Test & ANOVA       | <b>Partially Reject H<sub>0</sub></b> (Significant only for 18–24 via price sensitivity; not for 25+) |
| There is no significant difference in sustainable fashion behaviour across genders.                                                | There is a significant difference in sustainable fashion behaviour across genders.                                                | T-Test & ANOVA       | <b>Reject H<sub>0</sub></b> (Significant differences in circular behaviour across genders)            |
| There is no significant relationship between monthly personal income and attitudes towards sustainable fashion.                    | There is a significant relationship between monthly personal income and attitudes towards sustainable fashion.                    | T-Test & ANOVA       | <b>Fail to Reject H<sub>0</sub></b> (No significant relationship found)                               |



# Reliability Analysis

| Scale                            | Awareness_Index | PriceSensitivity_Index | Attitude_Index | CircularBehaviour_Index |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Cronbach's $\alpha$ (Ages 18–24) | 0.201           | 0.634                  | 0.507          | 0.494                   |
| Cronbach's $\alpha$ (Ages 25+)   | 0.149           | 0.602                  | 0.648          | 0.471                   |

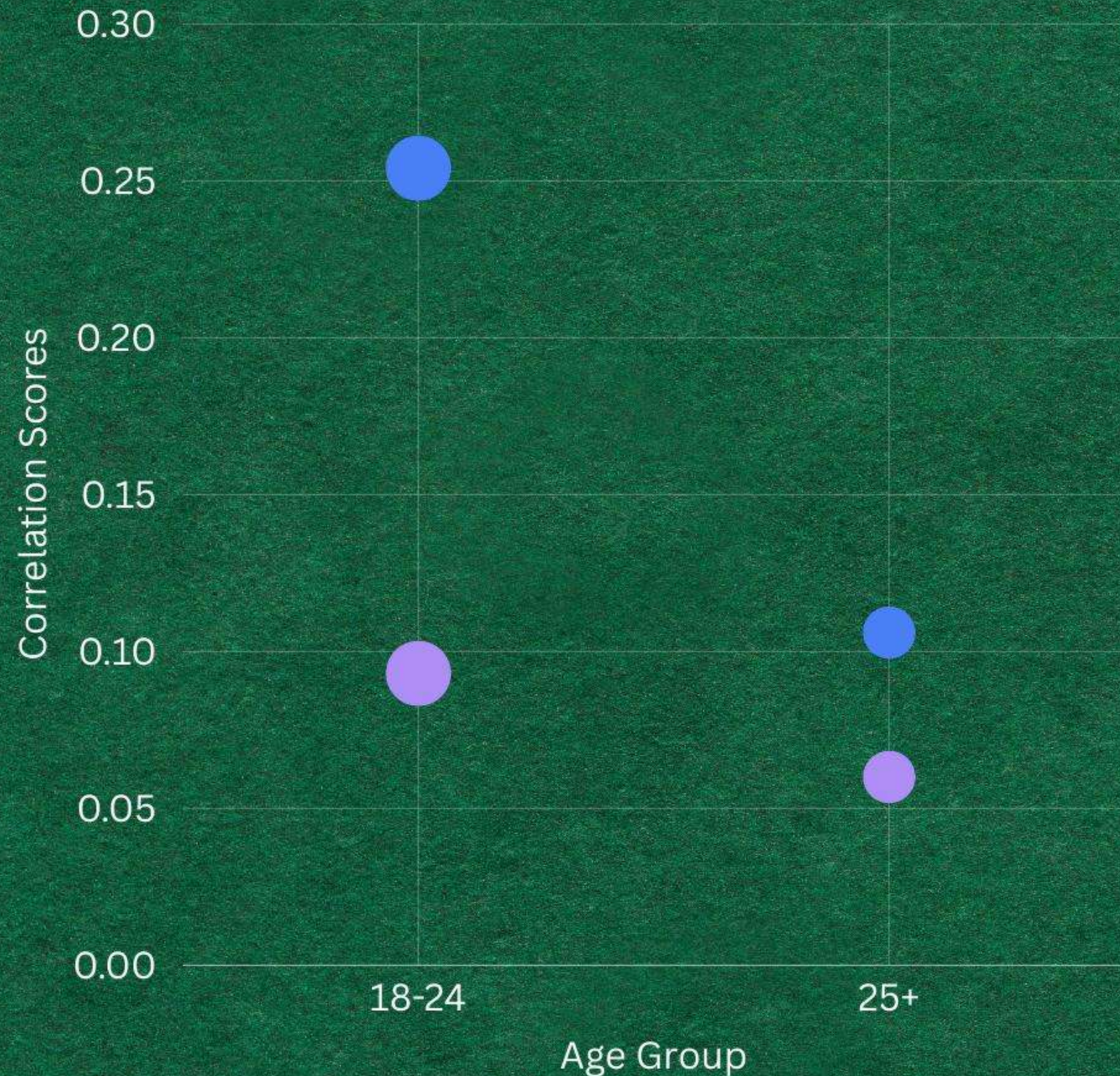
*\*While reliability is low for Awareness, it highlights the fact that environmental awareness is multidimensional.*

*\*The low scores demonstrate how awareness is varied, and complete awareness is difficult to internally measure.*



**H01:**  
**Awareness-**  
**Action Gap**

**H02:**  
**Attitude-**  
**Action Gap**



The study identifies the level of awareness and positive attitudes to not be correlated with behaviour



# H03 & H05: Income and Behaviour & Income and Attitude

| Index                      | Ages 18–24 (p-value) | Ages 25+ (p-value) | Significance                    |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Awareness_Index            | 0.653                | 0.284              | Not Significant                 |
| PriceSensitivity_Index     | <b>0.005</b>         | 0.233              | <b>Significant (18–24 only)</b> |
| Attitude_Index             | 0.691                | 0.248              | Not Significant                 |
| CircularBehaviour_Index    | 0.572                | 0.383              | Not Significant                 |
| Independent Samples T-Test |                      |                    |                                 |

| Index                   | Ages 18–24 (p-value) | Ages 25+ (p-value) | Significance                    |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Awareness_Index         | 0.656                | 0.28               | Not Significant                 |
| PriceSensitivity_Index  | <b>0.023</b>         | 0.229              | <b>Significant (18–24 only)</b> |
| Attitude_Index          | 0.69                 | 0.246              | Not Significant                 |
| CircularBehaviour_Index | 0.584                | 0.379              | Not Significant                 |
| One Way ANOVA           |                      |                    |                                 |

*Price Sensitivity is a significant Factor when it comes to measuring behaviour in younger audiences, affecting behaviour, attitude is not affected by income.*



# H04: Gender and Behaviour

| Index                      | Ages 18–24 (p-value) | Ages 25+ (p-value) | Significance              |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Awareness_Index            | 0.006                | 0.239              | Significant (18–24 only)  |
| PriceSensitivity_Index     | 0.183                | 0.316              | Not Significant           |
| Attitude_Index             | 0.305                | 0.001              | Significant (25+ only)    |
| CircularBehaviour_Index    | 0.033                | 0.015              | Significant (Both groups) |
| Independent Samples T-Test |                      |                    |                           |

| Index                   | Ages 18–24 (p-value) | Ages 25+ (p-value) | Significance              |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Awareness_Index         | 0.007                | 0.243              | Significant (18–24 only)  |
| PriceSensitivity_Index  | 0.196                | 0.323              | Not Significant           |
| Attitude_Index          | 0.296                | 0.002              | Significant (25+ only)    |
| CircularBehaviour_Index | 0.036                | 0.016              | Significant (Both groups) |
| One-Way ANOVA           |                      |                    |                           |

*Behaviour except price sensitivity is influenced by Gender, making women more likely to engage in circular practices.*



# FACTOR ANALYSIS

Variance  
Explained:  
18-24: 59%  
25+: 62%

KMO:  
18-24: 0.58  
25+: 0.616

## Components

## Statements

**Price and  
Value  
Orientation**

Price is an important factor when I buy clothes.  
Discounts are an important factor when I buy clothes.  
The type of material used is an important factor when I buy clothes.

**Transparency**

Information on the labour practices is an important factor when I buy clothes.  
Label of eco-friendly dyes being used are an important factor when I buy clothes.

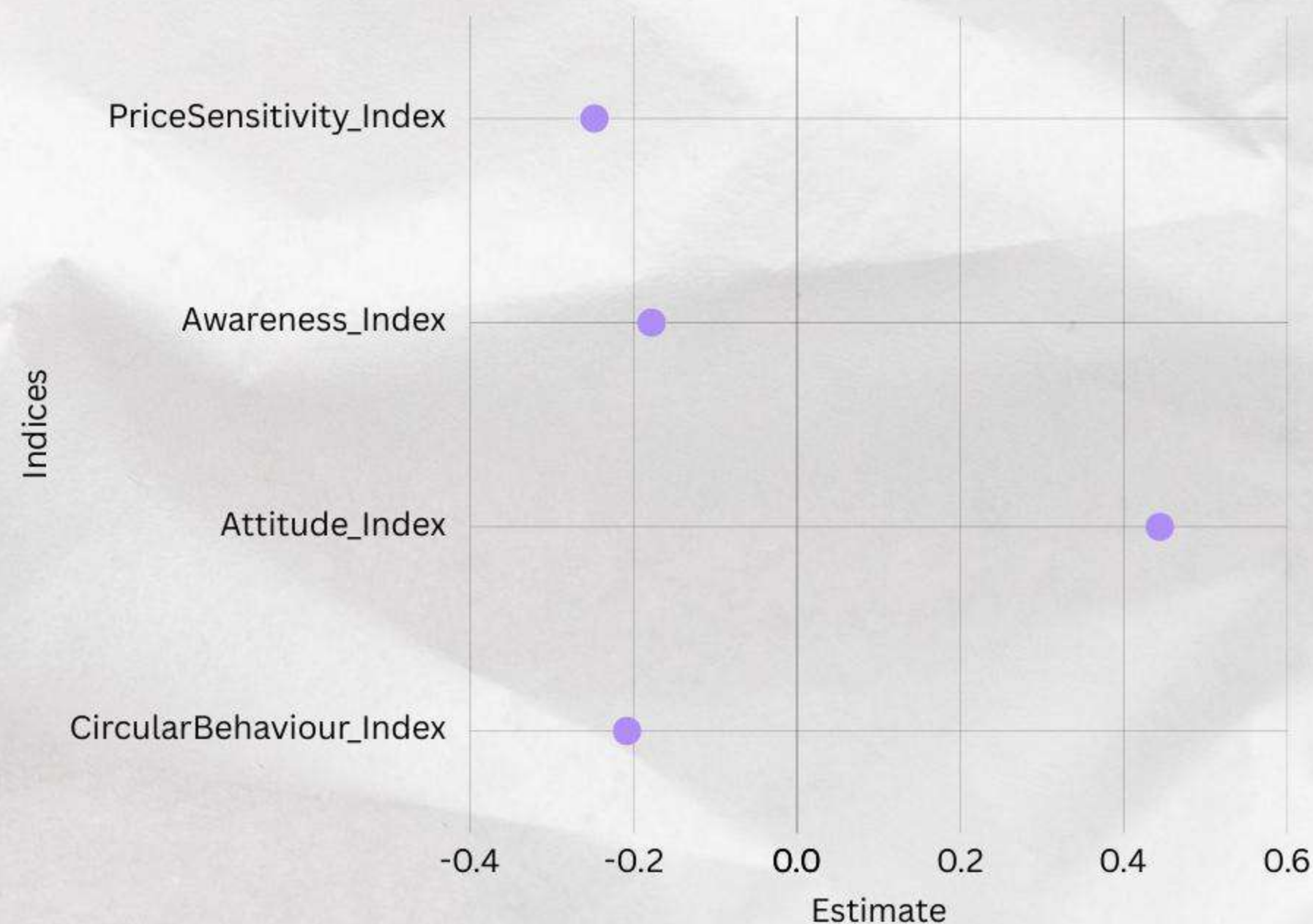
**Circular  
Practices**

Are you open to reusing a torn piece of clothing?  
I buy clothes from thrift stores.  
I tend to repair damaged clothes to extend their lifespan .

*\*While Transparency was the third rotated component for ages 18-24, for ages 25+, Circular Practices loaded third*



# BINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION



| Model Fit Measures                                |          |     |        |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------|-----|--------|
| Model                                             | Deviance | AIC | R²McF  |
| 1                                                 | 607      | 617 | 0.0384 |
| Note. Models estimated using sample size of N=493 |          |     |        |

| Predictor                  | p-value |
|----------------------------|---------|
| PriceSensitivity_Index     | 0.029   |
| Awareness_Index_Normalised | 0.023   |
| Attitude_Index             | 0.001   |
| CircularBehaviour_Index    | 0.051   |

*While attitudes have a strong presence in participants aged 25+, awareness, price sensitivity and circular behaviour is more prominent in the younger group*



# THEMATIC FINDINGS

THEME 1

Environmental  
Knowledge  
and Awareness

THEME 2

Awareness-  
Action Gap

THEME 3

Attitudes  
toward  
Sustainable  
Fashion

THEME 4

Income  
Influence

THEME 5

Social Identity  
and Pressures

THEME 6

Cultural  
Influences and  
Circular  
Economy

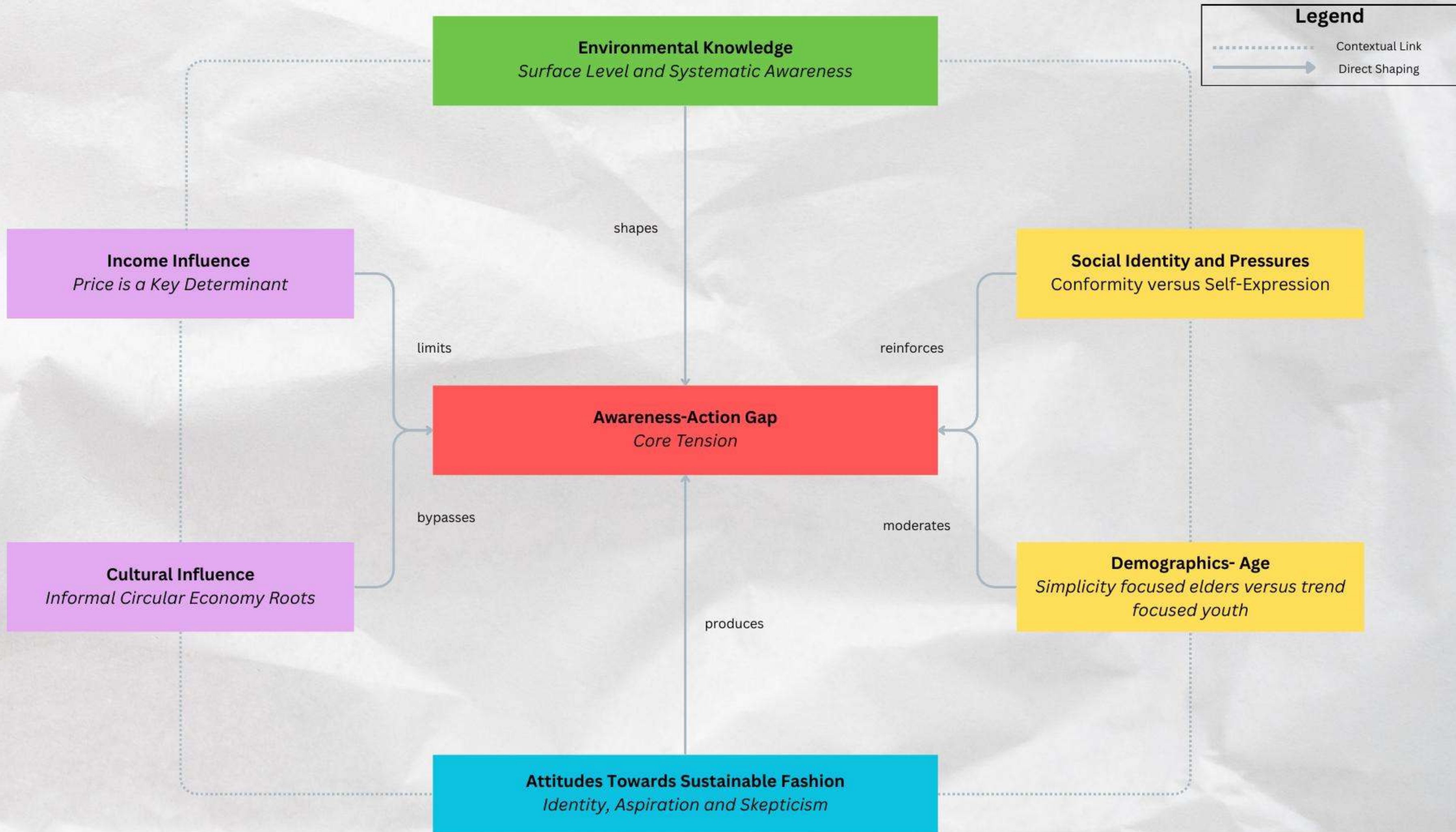
THEME 7

Age  
Demographics











# THEORETICAL FINDINGS

- High awareness does not translate into behaviour
- Positive sustainability attitudes fail to drive purchase behaviour  
(contradicting prior findings on millennials)
- Lower-income consumers show higher participation (challenges conventional income-behaviour assumptions)
- Behaviour is informal and culture-driven in India
- Adoption depends on trust in platforms; greenwashing concerns persist (contrasts Corbin (2024))
- Price & value dominate decisions (aligns with prior research; contradicts Ronda (2024))
- Demographics have a key role in consumption (Voola *et al.*, 2022)
- Thrifting is seen from a lens of skepticism in terms of quality.

**Table 9.4** Consumers' purchase behavior of ethical fashion products regarding their gender, age, and income

| Variables      |                    | Individuals who consume ethical fashion products |                | Individuals who do not consume ethical fashion products |                |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
|                |                    | Number of respondents                            | Percentage (%) | Number of respondents                                   | Percentage (%) |
| Gender         | Female             | 370                                              | 51.8           | 344                                                     | 48.2           |
|                | Male               | 123                                              | 32.8           | 252                                                     | 67.2           |
| Age            | Less than 20-years | 8                                                | 22.2           | 28                                                      | 77.8           |
|                | 20–35-years        | 288                                              | 47.3           | 321                                                     | 52.7           |
|                | 36–50-years        | 133                                              | 51.6           | 125                                                     | 48.4           |
|                | 51–65-years        | 65                                               | 36.7           | 112                                                     | 63.3           |
|                | 65 or more years   | 6                                                | 37.5           | 10                                                      | 62.5           |
| Monthly income | <1000 €            | 141                                              | 46.7           | 161                                                     | 53.3           |
|                | 1000–3000 €        | 290                                              | 49.1           | 301                                                     | 50.9           |
|                | 3000–6000 €        | 51                                               | 35.7           | 92                                                      | 64.3           |
|                | 6000 € and more    | 11                                               | 21.2           | 41                                                      | 78.8           |

(Voola *et al.*, 2022)



# IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETERS

- **Move Beyond Awareness:** identity, belonging and culture pivots behaviour
- **Leverage Cultural Narratives:** Position thrifting & buybacks as part of India's cultural legacy
- **Build Trust & Reduce Skepticism:** Transparency on practices beyond collection of clothing helps in trust building
- **Formalise Informal Practices:** Integrate existing reuse behaviours (donations, reuse) into structured brand initiatives
- **Reframe Sustainability as Identity:** Shift from guilt-based messaging to self-expression and trend alignment
- **Price as Key Driver:** Emphasise value and accessibility, making sustainable fashion easier to adopt
- **Segment by Age:**
  - Younger consumers: Trend-led, attitude-shaping campaigns
  - Older consumers: Awareness-building and personal relevance
- **Enhance Observability:** Clearly communicate how buybacks/thrifting work and fit into lifestyles and where it can be accessible
- **Lead with Authenticity:** Honest communication is key to building trust and driving adoption



# Limitations

- The study is foundational in nature and does not derive conclusions
- Convenience and Snowball sampling limits representativeness
  - Also causes the sample to skew towards students
- Does not take into account rural consumers
- Cross-Sectional Design
- Self-report measures may have caused social desirability
- Low internal consistency in the reliability index
- Limited Variable Coverage: Excludes factors like religion, caste, occupation; low explanatory power (Adjusted  $R^2 < 0.13$ )
- Moderate KMO Values: Only acceptable factor structure, limiting clarity of constructs
- Does not account for clothing rentals, informal exchanges, etc.
- The focus is only on a single category within fashion





# SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH



- Adopt experimental and repeated-measures designs for stronger causal insights
- Use random sampling to improve representativeness and capture urban–rural differences
- Conduct longitudinal studies (12–24 months) to track behavioural change over time
- Incorporate scenario-based questions & willingness-to-pay to improve reliability
- Include India-specific predictors (culture, religion, caste, festivals, accessibility, employment)
- Expand scope to footwear, ethnic wear, and broader circular models
- Explore brand collaborations & sector-specific studies
- Use pre–post survey designs to measure impact of interventions
- Examine regional and cultural variations across India





# Thank You!

