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The influence of ethical production practices on consumer purchase intention from ultrafast fashion e-tailers

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The influence of ethical production practices on consumer purchase intention from ultrafast fashion e-tailers

Koketso Ramoshebi

A research proposal submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Digital Business

Johannesburg, 2023

ABSTRACT

The ultrafast fashion industry has been widely criticised for its unsustainable and unethical production practices, including obsolescence and excessive consumption. Recent studies have shown a growing demand for sustainable and ethical practices, particularly in the ultrafast fashion sector. However, research into the influence of ethical production practices on consumer purchasing intention in fast fashion is still limited.

Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour, this research investigates whether South African consumers' attitudes and subjective norms towards ethical production practices, and perceived behavioural control, where ethical production practices are concerned, influence consumers' intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. The primary data collection method is an online questionnaire distributed via email and social networking platforms.

The study found positive relationships between consumers' attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and consumers' intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. These results suggest that consumers are becoming more knowledgeable of the fast fashion industry's ethical and environmental challenges and express concern for ethical production practices.

KEYWORDS

Ethical production practices, purchase intention, ultrafast fashion, e-tailers

DECLARATION

I, Koketso Ramoshebi, declare that this research report is my own work, except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Digital Business at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Name: Koketso Ramoshebi Signature:

Signed at ……Broederstroom……

On the ……22……. day of ……November……. 2023….

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research project to my husband, Setota Keabetswe Ramoshebi, who has been a source of strength, support, patience, and motivation for me throughout this journey. I am truly blessed to have you as my life partner. I love you more than you can imagine!

I also dedicate this to my mother, Kedibone Nkoana, and late father, Thobisho John Nkoana. You walked so I could run.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Exploratory Factor Analysis	EFA
Perceived Behavioural Control	PBC
Theory of Planned Behaviour	TPB
Variance inflation factors	VIF

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of purpose

This quantitative study investigates the influence that ethical production practices have on the purchase intention of South African consumers from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. By employing the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), this study examines the relationship between the customer's attitude towards ethical production practices, subjective norms towards ethical production practices, perceived behavioural control where ethical production practices are concerned, and intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

Modern fashion consumption and the rise of fast fashion have led customers to buy things with little financial and psychological commitment and poor perceived value (Stringer et al., 2020). The fast and ultrafast fashion business, characterised by mass production and customer demand for shorter lead times, has resulted in an extreme consumption of new trend-driven and inexpensively produced designs (Blazques et al., 2019).

The fashion business produces over forty million tonnes of textile waste each year, most of which is either burned or dumped in landfills. For instance, in the European Union, the textile sector ranks the fourth-largest consumer of water and major raw materials (Mckinsey, 2022). By 2030, the world's clothing industry could require 118 billion cubic meters of water, which requires consumers to alter their clothing consumption patterns to one that is more sustainable (Rausch & Kopplin, 2021).

As consumers become more knowledgeable about the environmental and social issues created by the fast fashion industry (Kumar et al., 2021; McNeill & Moore, 2015; Stringer et al., 2020), they express concern for environmental protection. However, they are hesitant to implement environmentally friendly changes to their purchasing patterns (Kumar et al., 2021; McNeill & Moore,

2015), owing to the cost compared to traditional clothing, and they are also unaware of the actual environmental impact (Kumar et al., 2021).

1.2 Background of the study

The e-commerce fashion industry is expected to reach a valuation of $1 trillion by 2024, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14.2% between 2017 and 2025 (Orendorff & Dopson, 2022). This growth may be fuelled by expanding international markets, emerging global middle classes of consumers with disposable income, celebrity and influencer culture, as well as increased online access and smartphone penetration. Clothing businesses now have the opportunity to sell their goods internationally and quickly fill orders thanks to lower entry barriers in the digital realm (Orendorff & Dopson, 2022).

Fast fashion revolutionized the fashion business in recent years (McNeill & Moore, 2015) due to quicker manufacturing processes and more effective shipping techniques (PRNewswire, 2022). The new concept of ultrafast fashion is a direct-to-consumer business strategy that exclusively runs online and concentrates on creating clothing as needed. With the potential to deliver items from concept to sale in only a few days, the method is now quicker than fast fashion (Carmago et al., 2020). The ultrafast fashion concept is the focus of this study.

Since its start, the ultrafast fashion industry has been under fire for using environmentally harmful, unethical, and unsustainable business practices. It is mainly criticised for its embrace of obsolescence and promotion of excessive consumption. Demand to reduce the impact is escalating due to growing ethical concerns about the treatment of employees in fast fashion business, the consequences of manufacturing and waste on the environment, and the welfare of animals (Blazques et al., 2019; Stringer et al., 2020).

Several European nations have implemented regulations that call for financial contributions from garment manufacturers for product collection, recycling, and reuse to hold brands and merchants responsible for postconsumer waste. China published a five-year plan in July 2021 to promote recycling,

remanufacturing, and using renewable resources to promote its circular economy. In the United States, the National Institute for Standards and Technology promotes a circular economy for textiles (Mckinsey, 2022).

According to the Deloitte report of 2021, the South African e-commerce market generated net sales of US$3 billion in 2019 and continue to expand at an average CAGR of 13%. The most popular category for online buyers is clothing, which accounts for 58% of all e-commerce sales in South Africa (Deloitte, 2021). The textile industry has been particularly hard hit by Chinese imports; it now has approximately 70% of the market share. Approximately 90% of the clothing sold in the country is imported. Although South Africa's clothing industry is relatively well developed, it faces material threats to its future survival due to its overreliance on imported materials (Trade, 2016).

1.3 Research problem

The damaging effects of the fashion industry on the environment and society have been widely covered in the media. Owing to rising customer demand for affordable and trendy apparel, businesses have begun using ultrafast fashion business models, which compromise production quality to lower costs (Blazques et al., 2019). A paradigm shift is necessary for the ultrafast fashion sector, which has a significant environmental impact, as sustainability is a topic that is becoming increasingly socially relevant (Rausch & Kopplin, 2021).

According to Mckinsey & Company's "The state of fashion" report (2022), the sustainability gap is one of the top three issues for 15% of executives in 2022, placing supply chain disruptions as the first obstacle in their minds. The possibility that sustainable fashion practices could reduce the pressure that unsustainable ultrafast fashion practices are putting on social and environmental welfare (McNeill & Moore, 2015), is vital.

Although recent studies have examined the underlying values and motivations of consumers of sustainable clothing, research within a fast-fashion context is insufficient (Stringer et al., 2020). Specifically, there is limited research on the influence that ethical issues have on the purchasing behaviour of ethically

marketed fast fashion (Kumar et al., 2021; Stringer et al., 2020), particularly the new online-only concept of ultrafast fashion (Carmago et al., 2020). This study will close some of these gaps by investigating the influence of ethical production practices on the intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. In particular, this research will investigate whether South African consumers' attitudes and subjective norms towards ethical production practices, and perceived behavioural control, where ethical production practices are concerned, influence their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

1.4 Research questions

The main question

Do ethical production practices influence South African consumers' intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers?

Sub questions

1. Does attitude towards ethical production practices influence South African consumers' intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers?
2. Do subjective norms towards ethical production practices influence South African consumers' intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers?
3. Does perceived behavioural control where ethical production practices are concerned influence South African consumers' intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers?

1.5 Rationale

This research is vital due to the mounting pressure that unsustainable fast fashion practices are putting on social and environmental welfare, as well as the possibility that sustainable fashion practices could reduce this pressure (McNeill & Moore, 2015). Joergens (2006) found limited evidence that ethical issues have any effect on consumers' purchasing behaviour of fast fashion, citing that most consumers – even though aware of ethical problems – are more concerned with their fashion requirements than those of other people who are a

part of the clothing supply chain. Therefore, knowledge did not significantly affect their purchase decision. Furthermore, Moolla (2020) investigating the "South African consumers' consciousness and concern about environmental and social issues in the local fashion industry when purchasing apparel" found that consumer concern for environmental activities is only moderate. The author discovered that they are less worried about the long-term effects of their consuming habits.

The establishment of a more sustainable value chain, which requires attention throughout the product life cycle, from raw material to the production processes, and the disposal of products, is further necessitated by increased consumer demand for faster changes in trends and delivery (Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019).

The consumer's willingness to change their lifestyles to reduce consumption and/or opt for more sustainable alternatives will determine the viability of the fast fashion business in the future (McNeill & Moore, 2015; Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019). However, implementing such alternatives in an emerging market such as South Africa remains challenging (Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019). It is therefore important to understand the influence of the pressing issue of ethical production practices on the purchase intention of the South African consumer with the rapid growth of the ultrafast fashion phenomenon.

As mentioned in the previous section Figure 1 below from Mckinsey and Company's "The state of fashion" report (2022), shows the importance of sustainability as one of the top three issues for 15% of executives in 2022. However, 13% of CEOs also see sustainability as an opportunity, indicating that any expenses or difficulties they face may be exceeded by the financial gains connected with reducing their company's negative social and environmental impacts. These leaders listed digital as an opportunity for 2022, along with sustainability. Executives reference these two longer-term issues every year.

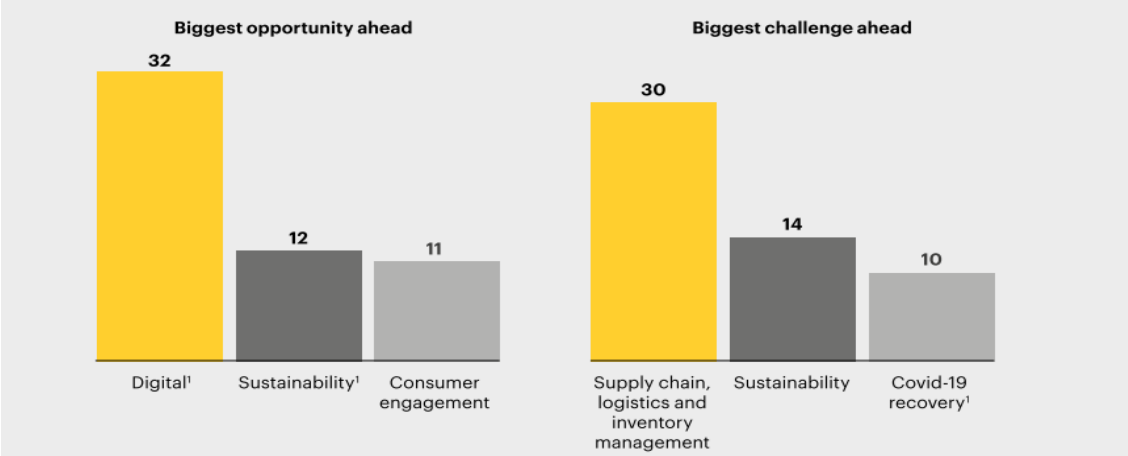

Figure 1: Biggest opportunities and challenges in fashion ahead

Source: (Mckinsey, 2022**)**

1.6 Delimitations of the study

The study will be limited to South African consumers possessing a device that enables them to access the internet and who actively participate in online shopping.

1.7 Definition of terms

1.7.1 *Fast fashion*

Fast fashion describes a business strategy that emphasizes developing a quick and effective supply chain to produce trendy goods and meet consumer demand (McNeill & Moore, 2015).

1.7.2 *Ultrafast fashion*

It is a direct-to-consumer business strategy that exclusively runs online and concentrates on creating clothing as needed. With the potential to deliver items from concept to sale in only a few days, the method is quicker than fast fashion (Carmago et al., 2020).

1.7.3 *Ethical fashion*

Fashionable clothing that adheres to fair trade standards and does not use sweatshop labour practices is considered ethical fashion. This is accomplished by employing materials such as biodegradable and organic cotton (Joergens, 2006).

1.7.4 *E-tailers*

An e-tailer (electronic retailer) is a retailer that sells products and services to customers using an online store (BBC, 2022).

1.8 Assumptions

1. South African consumers purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.
2. The research participants will give us the insights required to understand the influence that ethical production practices have on their purchasing behaviour.

1.9 Chapter Outline

Orientation	
Chapter 1	Chapter 1 outlines the context of the study, the purpose of the study, the research problem, the research questions, and the significance of the study.
Literature Review	
Chapter 2	Chapter 2 introduces and discusses the literature review as well the theoretical framework of the study.

Research Methodology	
Chapter 3	Chapter 3 covers the methodology to be used in the study. It covers the research approach taken, research design, research method, population & sampling, validity and reliability, data collection, ethical considerations, and limitations.
Results	
Chapter 4	Chapter 4 presents the results obtained from the data analysis of the interview.
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION	

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to introduce the literature review and the theoretical framework. Starting with the literature review, it describes and discusses the concepts of fast fashion, ultrafast fashion, and ethical production practices. The second part of this chapter will look at the theoretical framework underpinning this study – the theory of planned behaviour (TBP). This will be followed by the conceptual model, which shows the variables attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, and behavioural intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. The theoretical framework and conceptual model will inform the development of the study hypothesis.

2.2 Definition of topic or background discussion

2.2.1 *The fast fashion model*

According to Joy et al. (2012), the phrase “fast fashion” refers to low-cost clothing collections that mimic current luxury fashion trends. The concept of fast fashion is a business strategy focused on the creation of a rapid supply chain process that produces fashionable items and attends to consumer demand (Carmago et al., 2020). Fast fashion retailers such as ZARA, H&M, MANGO, and Topshop changed the face of global fashion through rapid production, lower pricing, and faster change in seasonal trends (PRNewswire, 2022).

Since the 1980s, the life cycle of a typical fashion item has gone through four stages: introduction and acceptance by fashion authorities, expansion, public acceptability, and obsolescence. The fashion calendar during the period also centred mostly on fabric displays, runway presentations, and trade events,

which generally followed the pattern of spring/summer and autumn/winter ranges, which normally resulted in the development of a seasonal range in one full year (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010).

Low-cost fashion did not become popular until the latter half of the 1990s and the 2000s. The shift in consumer behaviour to clothing consumption, coupled with low-cost production, has led to a culture of impulse buying. This shift forces fashion retailers to renew merchandise constantly, where new styles of clothing are available to consumers weekly (McNeill & Moore, 2015) to manage the growing competition in the market (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). Furthermore, the arrival of the internet, the Worldwide Web, and the smartphone revolutionized digital technology in the 1990s, transforming our sources of information and ushering in a period of globalization. This has seen a growth of online shopping in the 2000s, which has led to a drop in sales in physical department stores (Pares, 2020).

2.2.2 *The ultrafast fashion model*

Incepted online, with an emphasis on the one-to-one interaction with the customer and a vertical e-commerce integration plan (Carmago et al., 2020), digital-first stores emerged over the past ten years, supported by globalization, internet penetration, disposable money, and supply chains, to create trend-driven apparel and accessories for millennials and Generation Z clients who are digital natives. These stores include e-tailers such as Asos and Shein.

A direct-to-consumer business strategy that exclusively runs online and concentrates on creating clothing as needed is the new idea of ultrafast fashion. With the potential to deliver things from design to sale in a few days, the method is quicker than fast fashion (Carmago et al., 2020). Ultrafast fashion e-tailers such as Shein and Asos do not have a physical store network; instead, they operate only online, adding thousands of new products to their websites every day thanks to vast networks of affordable suppliers. Additionally, many online retailers, such as Shein, benefited from alterations in consumer behaviour brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw consumers making most of their purchases on smartphones or laptops. Shein became the world's largest

web-only fashion company in 2020, with sales tripling to $10 billion (Einhorn, 2022).

One of the primary characteristics of ultrafast fashion e-tailers is their rapid development in international markets. They provide diverse brands in addition to their own selection of apparel and accessories at reasonable prices. Additionally, most of these businesses grow faster than domestic merchants in some countries by adapting their websites and business practices to local markets (Pares, 2020).

Ultrafast fashion e-tailers rely on artificial intelligence, social tagging, and trend-watching by style scouts to identify consumer trends. A team of style scouts tasked with finding the top ten fashion trends each week work in tandem with artificial intelligence to spot trends on social media sites such as Instagram. These scouts concentrate on the most popular styles as well as the ones that influencers and celebrities are sporting. Users preorder all products and business concepts, and after combining AI research with that of these style scouts, they produce the products within 48 hours and send them to their final clients in as little as two weeks (Carmago et al., 2020).

Shein, an ultrafast fashion e-tailer that bases its marketing and sales strategies on "social network influencers," adds approximately five thousand new models to its website every day. In general, "social commerce," or the use of social media to facilitate product purchases online, is one of the major trends driving the growth of both e-commerce in general and the ultrafast fashion industry in particular (Gazzola et al., 2020).

2.2.3 *Ethical production practices*

The term "ethical fashion" refers to the idea that clothing should be sourced ethically, with good working conditions and standards provided to employees, as well as a sustainable business model in the country where the clothing was produced (Blazques et al., 2019) Furthermore, organic material is used to minimally impact the environment. Thus, ethical production practices of ethical fashion includes the use of materials such as biodegradable and organic cotton

to create trendy clothing that adheres to fair trade ideals and avoids sweatshop labour practices (Joergens, 2006). In addition, it considers consumers' health (Blazques et al., 2019).

The Sustainable Development Goals outlined by the United Nations can be greatly aided by actors in the fashion sector. With a global market size of $2.4 trillion and 300 million workers employed across the value chain, the fashion industry is likely to continue expanding. Unsustainable fashion industry practices significantly influence social and environmental development indices because of the industry's scale and global reach. Without significant changes to fashion's production procedures and consumption habits, the industry's social and environmental costs will keep rising.

2.3 Does attitude towards ethical production practices influence South African consumers' intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers?

Attitude refers to the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behaviour in question; it significantly influences decision-making (Ajzen, 1991). According to Cowan and Kinley (2014), attitude includes knowledge about the environment, concern for the environment, and attitudes toward wearing ecologically friendly clothing. When people have positive feelings, intentions, knowledge, and beliefs about the environment and sustainable products, they are more likely to behave in ways consistent with those values. Cowan and Kinley (2014) found that consumers with positive feelings about environmentally friendly apparel (EFA) are more likely to have intentions to purchase EFA, supporting their hypothesis that as their attitude towards EFA became more positive, they indicated a significant intention to purchase EFA. Similar findings were made in a study by Spence et al. (2018) examining consumer purchase intentions for traceable minced beef and beef steak. Spence et al. (2018) revealed attitude as the key determinant of intention to purchase each traceable product.

- ***Hypothesis 1***

There is a positive relationship between South African consumers' attitudes towards ethical production practices and their intentions to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

2.4 Does subjective norm towards ethical production practices influence South African consumers' intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers?

2.4.1 *Subjective norm*

A person's ideas or perceptions that significantly emerge from peers, society, or family are referred to as a their subjective norm, which can be described as the perceived social pressure to do or not to execute behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Nguyen et al., 2019). The social environment exerts pressure on people to buy particular things. Subjective norm is a crucial component of the TPB that is utilized to forecast behavioural intention (Nguyen et al., 2019). This norm reflects the degree to which a person feels ethically obliged to support others by purchasing environmentally friendly goods and how significant a positive social image is to customers (Barber et al., 2014). Therefore, while making a purchase, subjective norm functions to reflect how the consumer feels about their close relationships, including whether the referents believe the consumer should buy the goods in question and the consumer's motivations for doing so (Noble et al., 2009). According to Nguyen et al. (2019), Vietnamese consumers' subjective norms were the most significant predictor of their desire to purchase green apparel. This result is in line with that of a survey on American consumers conducted by Cowan and Kinley in 2014.

- ***Hypothesis 2***

There is a positive relationship between South African consumers' subjective norms towards ethical production practices and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

2.5 Does perceived behavioural control, where ethical production practices are concerned, influence South African consumers' intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers?

2.5.1 *Perceived behavioural control*

The perceived ease or difficulty of carrying out behaviour is referred to as the degree of perceived behavioural control (PBC); it reflects experience as well as expected barriers and obstructions (Ajzen, 1991). It depicts perceptions of the availability of opportunities and resources, such as money, time, and other resources, as well as the focus person's self-confidence in their capacity to carry out the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Roberts (1996) contends that PBC can influence consumers' attitudes and intention to buy favourably. A study performed by Blazques et al. (2019) on Spanish consumers' intentions towards sustainability found that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control positively affected consumers' behavioural intentions. This was consistent with the study by Cowan and Kinley (2014) and Nguyen et al. (2019) on American consumers and Vietnamese consumers, respectively.

- ***Hypothesis 3***

There is a positive relationship between South African consumers' perceived behavioural control, where ethical production practices are concerned, and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

2.6 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

2.6.1 *Theoretical Framework*

The study will adopt an adaptation of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). According to the TPB, an individual's attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control contribute to the intention behind their behaviour. The individual's purpose of carrying out a specific behaviour is a key component of the TPB. The motivating variables that drive behaviour are captured by intentions, which also indicate how much effort a person is prepared to put forth to carry out the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).Many researchers have used TPB to explain and predict actions (Cowan & Kinley, 2014). In this research, the theory will be used to examine the relationship between South African consumers' attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

The TPB has several limitations. Firstly, it may oversimplify human behaviour by focusing on attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, neglecting factors such as emotions and situational influences. Secondly, the assumption that individuals always have the ability to plan and control their behaviour may not hold true for all individuals, considering resource constraints or health issues. Additionally, the TPB assumes stability in attitudes and norms across situations, overlooking variations in contexts (*Theory Hub*, 2020).

This theory has been employed in earlier studies to explain consumers' awareness of and intent towards sustainability from the standpoint of Spanish fashion (Blazques et al., 2019) consumer empathies towards green apparel among American consumers (Cowan & Kinley, 2014) and to explain consumers'

intention to eat a healthful diet among Southeastern United States office workers (Close et al., 2018).

2.6.2 *Conceptual Framework*

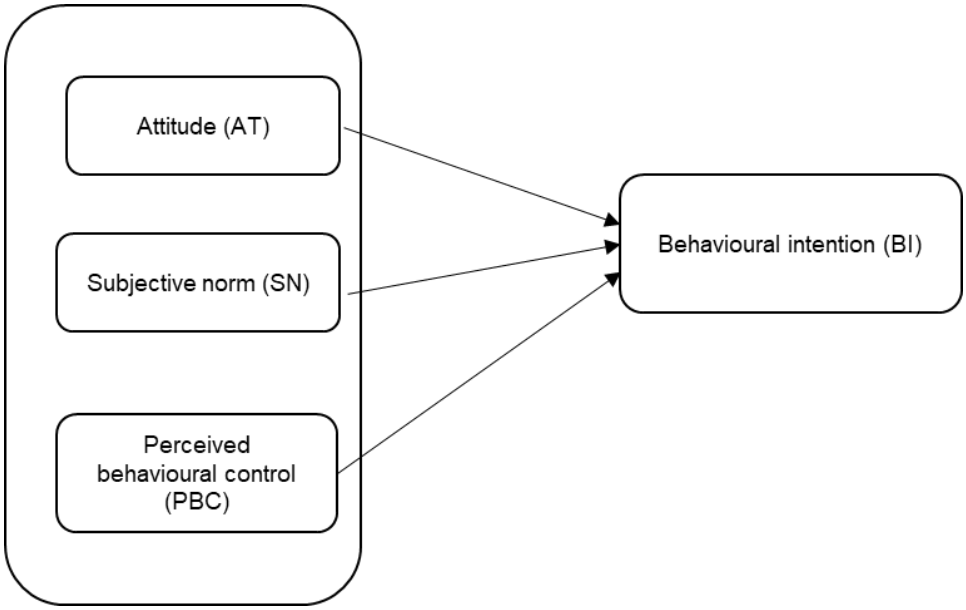

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

Source: Adopted from (Blazques et al., 2019)

2.7 Conclusion of Literature Review

This chapter introduced the literature review, where it described and discussed the concepts of fast fashion, ultrafast fashion, and ethical production practices. The second part of this chapter looked at the theoretical framework underpinning this study – the TPB. This was followed by the conceptual model, which shows the variables attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control and behavioural intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. The theoretical framework and conceptual model informed the development of the study hypothesis as follows:

H1: There is a positive relationship between South African consumers' attitudes towards ethical production practices and their intentions to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

H2: There is a positive relationship between South African consumers' subjective norms towards ethical production practices and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

H3: There is a positive relationship between South African consumers' perceived behavioural control when ethical production practices are concerned and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss the approach taken during the research process. It covers the following methodological concepts: the research approach, research design, data collection methods, population and sample, research instrument, data collection procedure, data analysis and interpretation and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research approach

For this study, a quantitative research approach was used to investigate the influence that ethical production practices have on the purchase intention of South African consumers from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. This research method is utilized to examine the relationship between the variables (Saunders et al., 2009) derived from the theoretical framework based on the TPB (Ajzen, 1991). The variables will be measured numerically and analysed using various statistical techniques (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.3 Research design

According to Saunders et al. (2009), a research design is a general strategy for how the study will attempt to respond to the research questions posed in Chapter 1 of the study. The method used was a quantitative, cross-sectional study using the survey research method.

The survey approach using an online self-administered questionnaire was used, allowing for the collection of standardised data from a sizeable population in a highly economical way and allowing for ease of comparison. In addition, the survey strategy is perceived as authoritative by people in general and is both comparatively easy to explain and understand (Saunders et al., 2009). The data

collected using the survey strategy were used to suggest possible reasons for the relationships between the variables identified. This method makes it possible to generate findings representative of the whole population at a lower cost than collecting for the whole population (Saunders et al., 2009). However, there are risks, such as the non-return of questionnaires (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.4 Population and sample

3.4.1 *Population*

The population for this study is South African consumers who meet the following criteria:

1. Having access to the internet.
2. Having a device with which they access the internet.
3. Have experience shopping from online fashion stores.

3.4.2 *Sample and sampling method*

The two different categories of sampling techniques are non-probability and probability. Probability sampling is related to survey research techniques where it is necessary to draw conclusions about the population from the sample to address a research question or questions and achieve research goals (Saunders et al., 2009). Probability sampling reduces sample bias by ensuring that everyone in the target population has an equal chance of being chosen for the research study (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). With non-probability sampling, individuals within the target population do not have the same chance of being selected for the study due to the method being non-randomised (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). Convenience sampling is the most common type of nonprobability sampling where the participants are selected based on convenience, where a list of the population is not needed, and participants can be selected based on a list of criteria. The benefits of this method include cost and time efficiency (Acharya et al., 2013). The second non-probability sampling

method is quota sampling, which splits the population into different categories based on certain characteristics, and the desired number of participants is selected for each category (Acharya et al., 2013). The final non-probability sampling method is snowball sampling, where participants are initially selected using probability or non-probability sampling, and participants are selected based on data collected from the initial participants (Acharya et al., 2013).

Convenience sampling was used for this study, with the sample drawn from various WhatsApp groups and contacts as well as social networking platforms, including LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. Participants were required to meet the above criteria to participate in the research. Social networking platforms were used to broaden the audience reach. However, convenience sampling has the limitations of variability and bias that cannot be measured or controlled (Acharya et al., 2013).

3.4.3 *Sample size*

The study uses multiple regression analysis and factor analysis and requires that the minimum sample sizes needed for these statistical techniques be considered. There are general guidelines for the best sample size for each method, but they all favour larger sample sizes (Field, 2013). A theoretical framework by MacCallum et al. (1999) shows the common rules of thumb regarding sample size in factor analysis as neither valid nor useful.

According to Field (2013), the common practice prevalent in the literature has been to use 10–15 observations per variable, with the minimum being five. In factor analysis, it is generally agreed that the higher the commonalities, the lower the required sample size. Regardless of the situation, larger sample sizes are always preferable irrespective of the statistical method utilized (Field, 2009), which caters to low response rates as well as unusable and missing data (Cooper & Schindler, 2006).

The 10–15 observations per variable criteria were used, equating to 80. The study aimed to achieve a larger sample size than calculated, which is between 150 and 200 respondents in the absence of a sample frame and an unknown

population. A total of 153 respondents who had used e-commerce websites to shop for clothing online responded to the survey. Of these, 43 were excluded because they were incomplete. Thus, the study analysis is based on a sample size of 110 respondents, which still meets the criteria recommended by Field (2013).

3.5 Data collection methods

The primary data collection method adopted for this study will be an online questionnaire distributed using email and various social networking platforms. Unlike direct interviews, a self-administered questionnaire enables objectivity and confidentiality and reduces social desirability. Online surveys are rapid, effective; they enable a greater geographic reach (Galawe, 2017). The questionnaire was designed through Qualtrics, which allows for a wider reach of the target population and allows for the storage of the data electronically for analysis.

3.6 The research instrument

The research instrument used in the study is a self-administered online questionnaire. It piloted before deployment using a small test sample obtained through WhatsApp.

Part A of the questionnaire gives the participants the background and purpose of the study. Part B focuses on collecting the respondents' demographic information, and Part C measures the three theoretical constructs, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control, derived from Ajzen (1991). The study adopted a 7-point Likert scale to measure each item ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

3.7 Procedure for data collection

Qualtrics was used to design, distribute, capture and summarise the data. Data was collected using a survey questionnaire over a period of three months from December 2023 to February 2023. Questionnaires are the most commonly used method of data collection in field research (Field, 2009).

The survey questionnaire was distributed to multiple social and business WhatsApp groups and contacts, and posted to social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.

3.8 Data analysis strategies and interpretation

The data were cleaned to ensure that their integrity was not compromised once captured into Qualtrics. The data quality check process includes screening the data for errors. The data were exported to SPSS and checked for missing data and violations of any statistical assumptions of multivariate analysis (Galawe, 2017).

Exploratory factor analysis was performed to establish construct validity. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the relationship between the dependent variable (i.e., behavioural intention) and the independent variables (i.e., attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control).

3.9 Validity and reliability

The TPB has been confirmed to be superior in explaining behaviours requiring control (Ajzen, 1991). In recent decades, there has been a tremendous increase in the usage and acceptability of the TPB (Kumar et al., 2021), demonstrating the reliability and validity of the model.

3.9.1 *External validity*

External validity relates to generalising the research findings to the population (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The sample data will be collected from multiple participants with various demographic characteristics, perceptions, and experiences. The diversity will allow the study to obtain valid results to generalise across SA's population. A pilot was be performed with a small sample to assess if the questionnaire meets the validity concepts. The results of the pilot were assessed, and the final questionnaire was distributed once the researcher had confirmed that the questionnaire was easily accessible, and the content clearly understood.

3.9.2 *Internal validity*

Internal validity is concerned with how accurate the research tool is. This kind of testing focuses on whether an instrument repeatedly measures the same thing consistently (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The research study ensured internal validity by utilising the same questionnaire for all participants. Randomly selecting participants was expected to improve the results (Galawe, 2017).

3.9.3 *Construct validity*

Construct validity refers to the extent to which the measurement is consistent with the theoretical constructs that are being measured (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955).

EFA was performed separately for the dependent and independent variables to establish construct validity. The reason for conducting EFA separately was that some of the independent variable statements were loading onto the dependent variable.

3.9.4 *Reliability*

The reliability of the model was evaluated using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient method. According to SÜRÜCÜ and MASLAKÇI (2020), a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 and above is an indicator that the scale is reliable. There was excellent reliability for the behavioural intention construct (3 items, α = .909) and acceptable reliability for attitude (3 items, α = 0.775), perceived behavioural control (2 items, α =0.777), and subjective norm (2 items, α =0.722). Since the Cronbach's alpha values were at least 0.7 for all constructs, all 4 constructs were reliable. This means that a composite scale was computed for each construct. This was computed by calculating the average rating for all the items retained in each construct.

3.10 Ethical considerations

To ensure that the research will be conducted ethically, the researcher adhered to the following process:

1. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University's Ethics Committee before data collection (see Appendix C).
2. All participants were requested to consent to participate in the study (see Appendix A).
3. To ensure confidentiality, the respondents' names were concealed from the responses.
4. The research objectives will be articulated to ensure that transparency is adhered to.
5. There was no discrimination against anyone except allowing the correct participants in the study.
6. A plagiarism declaration form was signed, stating that other researchers would be acknowledged where necessary.

3.11 Chapter summary

The chapter has discussed in detail the research methodology. This quantitative research study employed convenience sampling to disseminate anonymous

online questionnaires using WhatsApp and social media platforms. A total of 153 respondents who had used e-commerce websites to shop for clothing online responded to the survey. In the following chapter, the data analysis will be performed using multiple regression analysis and SPSS.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis and presentation of the survey findings, starting with the sample characteristics, descriptive statistics, validity, and reliability of the scale for the constructs. The chapter concludes with multiple regression analysis and hypothesis testing.

4.2 Descriptive statistics

This section discusses the demographic profile, which includes a discussion of the respondents' gender, age, level of education, and their last online purchase.

4.2.1 *Sample description*

A total of 153 respondents who had used e-commerce websites to shop for clothing online responded to the surveys. Of these, 43 questionnaires were excluded because they were incomplete. Thus, a total of 110 responses were analysed. Of the 110, a few had missing data on the main constructs of the survey. Little's MCAR test was conducted to assess if the missing data were missing at random, which resulted in the following: Chi-Square = 60.198, DF = 69, Sig. =.766. Since the p-value of 0.766 was greater than 0.05, this implies that the cases were missing at random; thus, multiple data imputation was conducted in SPSS to fill in the missing cases.

4.2.2 *Gender*

The respondents were predominantly female (93%), with the other component being male respondents (7%).

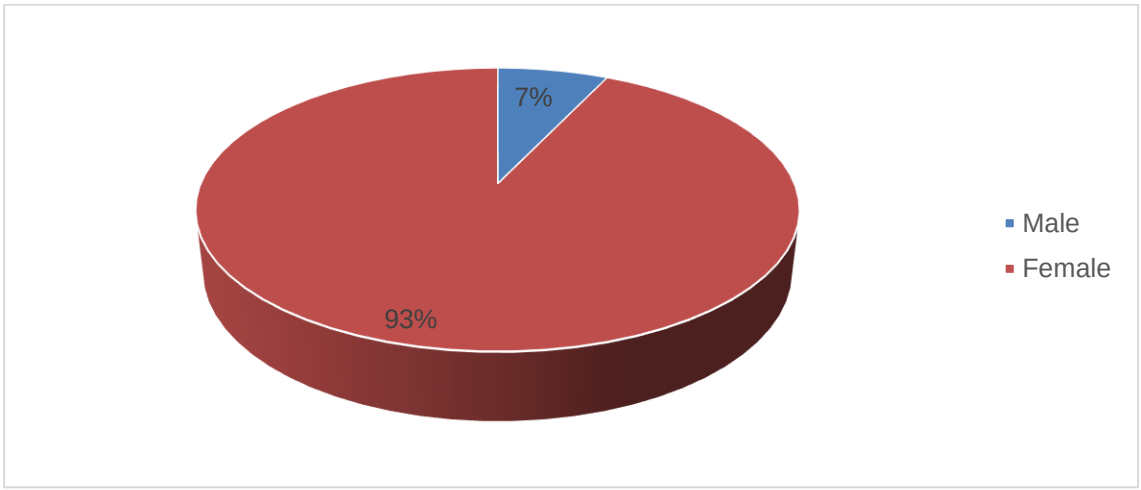

Figure 3: Respondents' Gender

4.2.3 *Age*

The age distribution showed that the respondents were mainly between 35 and 44 years old (58%). Youth (18–34 years old) constituted 29% of the sample. The results are presented in Figure 4.

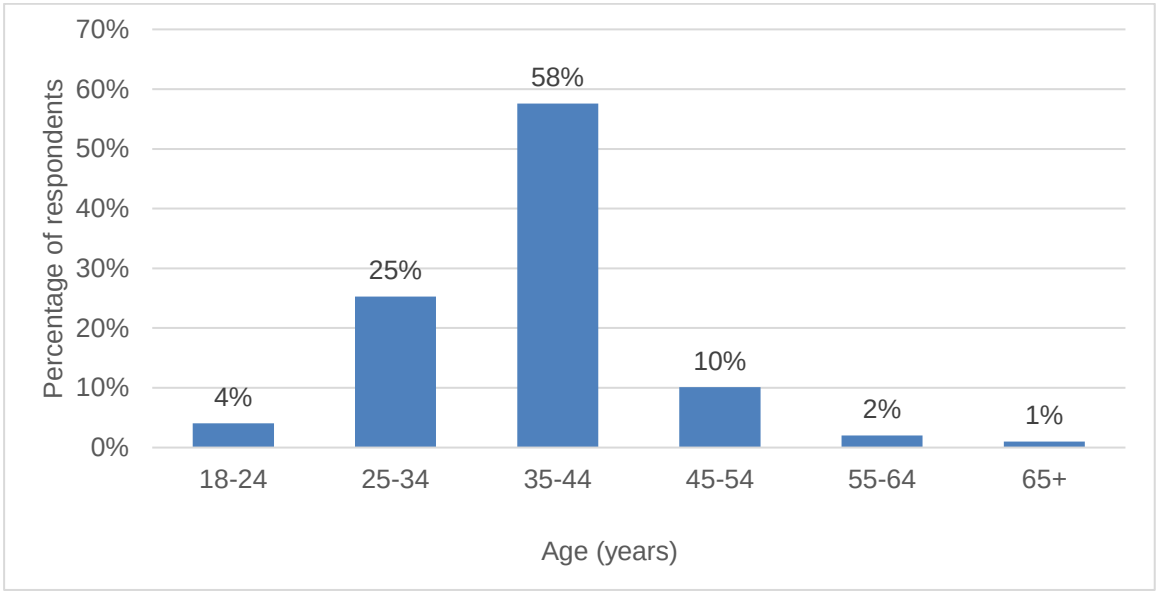

Figure 4: Respondents' Age

4.2.4 *Level of education*

The results presented in Figure 3 show that more than half of the respondents had an honours degree/postgraduate diploma or higher (55%) as their highest attained level of education. Only 7% had Grade 12/Matric as their highest level of education.

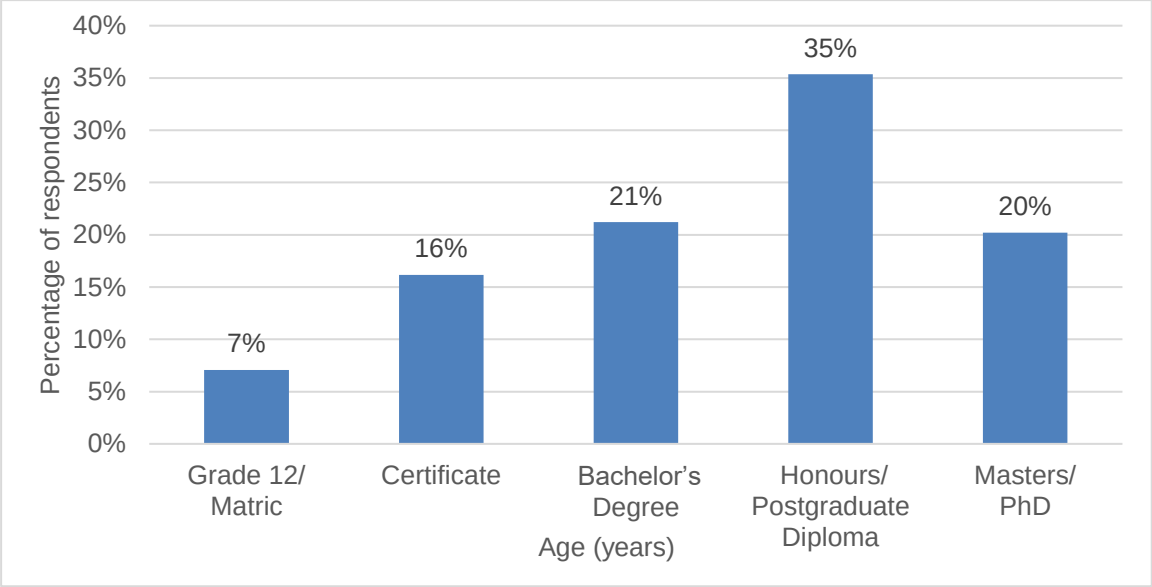

Figure 5: Respondents' highest level of education

4.2.1 *Last online purchase*

Most respondents had their last online purchase not more than 6 months earlier (86%). The other 4% had their last purchase between 6 months and 1 year ago, while 10% had their last purchase more than a year ago.

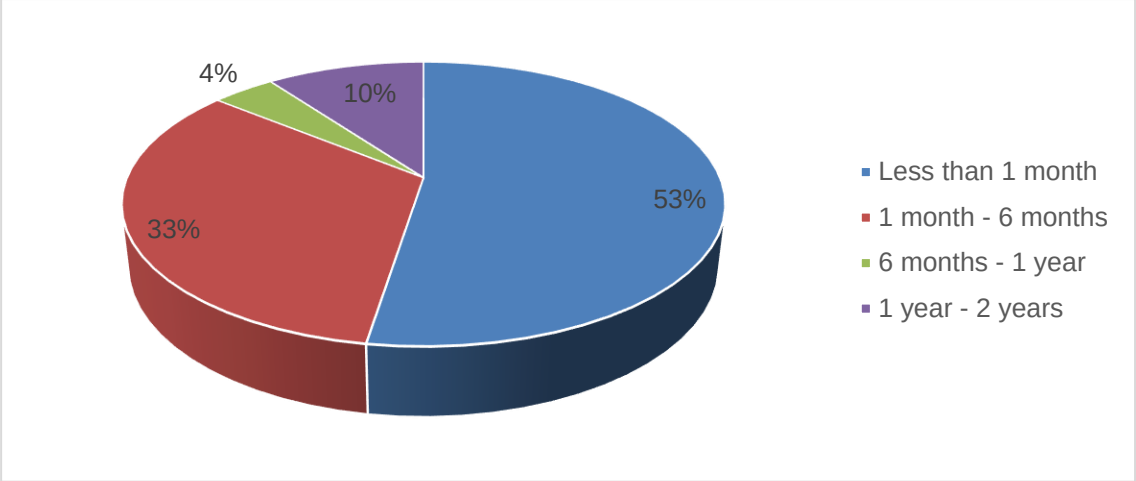

Figure 6: Last online purchase

4.3 Measurement instrument assessment

This section gives an overview of the analysis and discussion of the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument. The research constructs were measured on a 7-point Likert scale to measure each item ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

4.4 Exploratory factor analysis

For all the item scales, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed using SPSS to determine how many and what kind of components there were. It was also used to examine the correlation between the factors and the variables that they predicted. The extraction technique used was principal axis factoring (PAF) using Kaiser's criterion and scree plot. Promax, an oblique rotational approach, was utilized to optimize the factor structure. Because the factors are thought to be connected, oblique rotation was selected. For interpretative reasons, the pattern matrix was chosen over the structure matrix because it is simple to comprehend and contains details about the contribution of a variable to a factor (Field, 2013).

4.5 Validity testing

EFA was performed separately for the dependent and independent variables to establish construct validity. The reason for conducting EFA separately is that some of the independent variable statements were loading onto the dependent variable. The results are presented in the following section.

4.5.1 *Validity of the Dependent Variable*

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy value of 0.758 indicated that the sample was adequate for running factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity p-value of 0.000 < 0.05 indicates that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix, which means that the items within the behavioural intention construct were related to enable EFA. The results are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test-Dependent Variable

Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.758
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	193.201
	Df	3
	Sig.	.000

The total variance explained presented in Table 2 indicates that the 3 items that were within the hypothesised behavioural intention construct were indeed in one construct, as indicated by one factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1 (2.540). The retained construct explained 84.668% of the variation in the initial 3 items.

Table 2: Total Variance Explained-Dependent Variable

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.540	84.668	84.668	2.540	84.668	84.668

2	.239	7.977	92.645			
3	.221	7.355	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.						

The component matrix shown in Table 3 indicates that the 3 items retained in the behavioural intention construct loaded highly into this construct, with all the items having factor loadings above 0.9. These results indicated that there was a valid behavioural intention construct.

Table 3: Component Matrix

	Component
	1
Behavioral_intention_2	.888
Behavioral_intention_3	.872
Behavioral_intention_1	.872
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.	
a. 1 factor extracted. 6 iterations needed.	

4.5.2 *Validity of the independent variables*

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy value of 0.611 indicated that the sample was adequate for running factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity p-value of 0.000 < 0.05 indicates that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix, which means that the items were related to enable EFA. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: KMO and Bartlett's Test-Independent Variables

KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.611

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	241.500
	Df	21
	Sig.	.000

The total variance explained presented in Table 5 indicates that 3 constructs were extracted as had been hypothesised, as indicated by 3 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. This was, however, after excluding the items Subjective_Norm_1, which was loaded into more than one construct, and Perceived_behavioral_3, which had a factor loading less than the minimum requirement of at least 0.4. The retained construct explained 76.413% of the variation in the initial 3 items.

Table 5: Total Variance Explained-Independent Variables

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings[a]
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	3.087	44.099	44.099	2.728	38.975	38.975	2.224
2	1.260	18.004	62.103	.908	12.968	51.943	2.029
3	1.002	14.310	76.413	.743	10.609	62.552	1.596
4	.655	9.356	85.769				
5	.475	6.787	92.556				
6	.318	4.538	97.094				
7	.203	2.906	100.000				

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

a. When factors are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

The pattern matrix shown in Table 6 indicates that the items retained in the 3 constructs loaded highly onto their respective constructs. This indicates that

there were 3 valid independent variable constructs: attitude, perceived behavioural control, and subjective norm. The lowest factor loading was 0.557.

Table 6: Pattern Matrix - Independent Variables

	Pattern Matrix[a]			
Construct	Items	Factor		
		1	2	3
Attitude	Attitude_1	.905		
	Attitude_2	.756		
	Attitude_3	.428		
Perceived Behavioural Control	Perceived_behavioral_1		1.044	
	Perceived_behavioral_2		.557	
Subjective norm	Subjective_Norm_3			.778
	Subjective_Norm_1			.749
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.				

4.6 Reliability testing

The reliability assessment was conducted using Cronbach's alpha (Table 7). According to SÜRÜCÜ and MASLAKÇI (2020), a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 and above is an indicator that the scale is reliable. There was excellent reliability for the behavioural intention construct (3 items, α = .909) and acceptable reliability for attitude (3 items, α = 0.775), perceived behavioural control (2 items, α =0.777), and subjective norm (2 items, α =0.722). Since the

Cronbach's alpha values were at least 0.7 for all constructs, all 4 constructs were reliable. This means that a composite scale was computed for each construct. This was computed by calculating the average rating for all the items retained in each construct.

Table 7: Reliability of Scale

Construct	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability level
Behavioural intention	3	.909	Excellent
Attitude	3	.775	Acceptable
Perceived Behavioural Control	2	.777	Acceptable
Subjective norm	2	.722	Acceptable

4.7 Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted by running multiple regression analysis with behavioural intention control as the dependent variable, and attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control as the independent variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to interpret the results and analyse the relationship between the dependent variable (i.e., behavioural intention) and the independent variables (i.e., attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control).

Before the regression results are presented, there are certain assumptions that should be met when conducting regression analysis, which were tested and shown in the following section.

4.7.1 *Regression assumptions*

Test for outliers

Extreme outliers are not desirable in any model because they negatively impact the quality of the model. A box plot presented in Figure 7 was plotted; there were extreme outliers for the behavioural intention construct, as indicated by numbers outside the whiskers of the plot that have asterisks (*). These outliers were at the lower end of the scale and were identified and replaced with the next lowest value that was not an outlier. A box plot was charted again after replacing the outliers, which is presented in Figure 8. The extreme outlier was eliminated. Thus, data without extreme outliers were used for fitting the regression model.

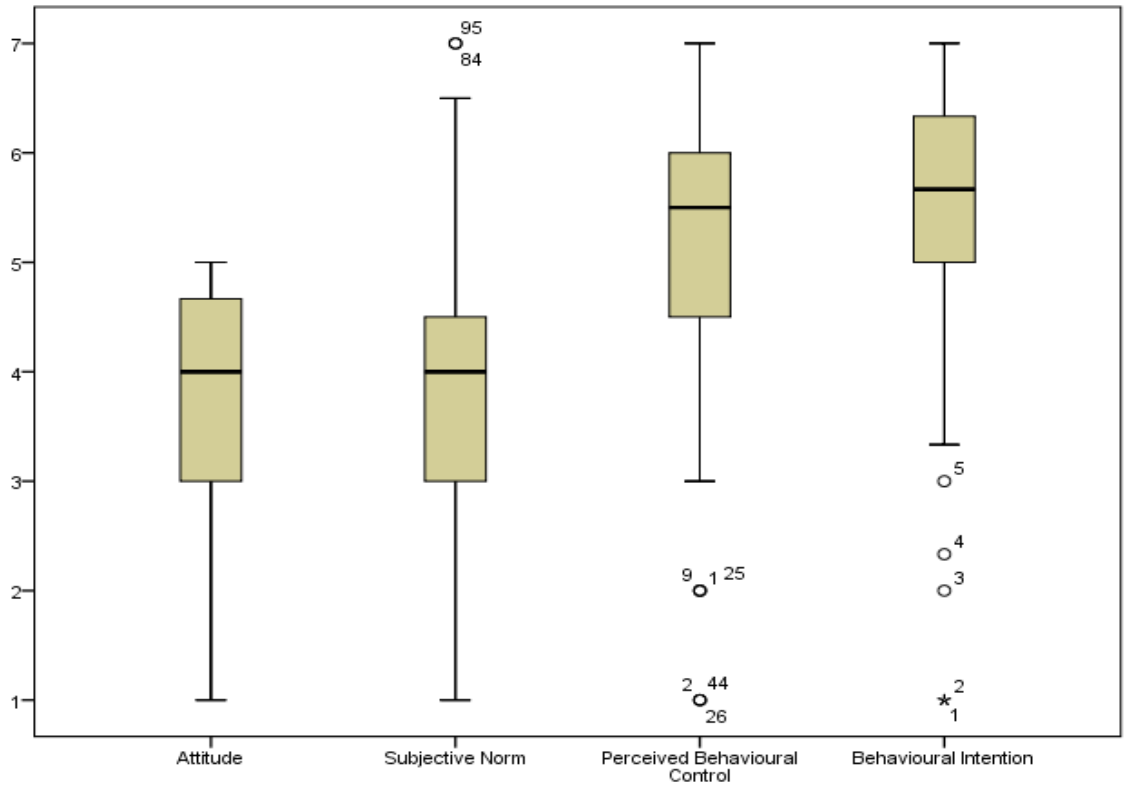

Figure 7: Boxplot before removing outliers.

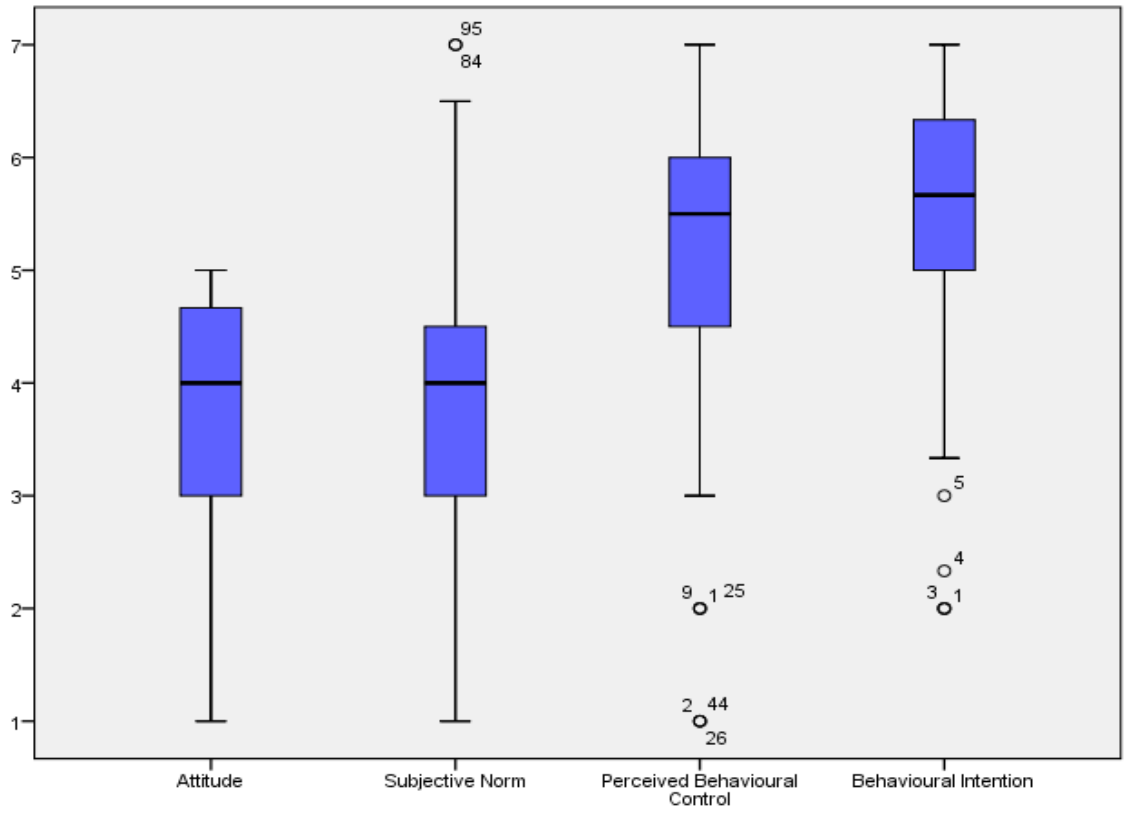

Figure 8: Boxplot after removing outliers.

Test for linearity

The assumption of a linear relationship between the dependent variable, behavioural intention, and the independent variables was tested and found to be met. The correlation coefficients revealed significant positive relationships between behavioural intention and each of the independent variables: attitude ($r = 0.583$, p-value < 0.01), subjective norm ($r = 0.427$, p-value < 0.01), and perceived behavioural control ($r = 0.553$, p-value < 0.01). These findings suggest that as attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control increase, so does the behavioural intention, supporting the assumption of a linear association between these variables in the context of the study.

Table 8: Correlation and Descriptive Statistics

	Descriptive Statistics		Pearson's Correlation			
Construct	**Mean**	**SD**	**1.**	**2.**	**3.**	**4.**
1. Attitude	3.74	.98	1			
2. Subjective Norm	3.80	1.41	.312**	1		
3. Perceived Behavioural Control	5.14	1.43	.470**	.247*	1	
4. Behavioural Intention	5.55	1.19	.583**	.427**	.553**	1

**, Significant at the 5% significance level, i.e., p-value < 0.05*

***, Significant at the 1% significance level, i.e., p-value < 0.01*

Test for normality

It is also assumed that the residuals follow a normal distribution. This was assessed by a histogram of the standardised regression residuals, and the results are illustrated in Figure 9. The results show that the residuals were bell-shaped, hence resembling a normal distribution. This means the residuals were normally distributed or at least approached the normal distribution, suggesting that the normality assumption was also met.

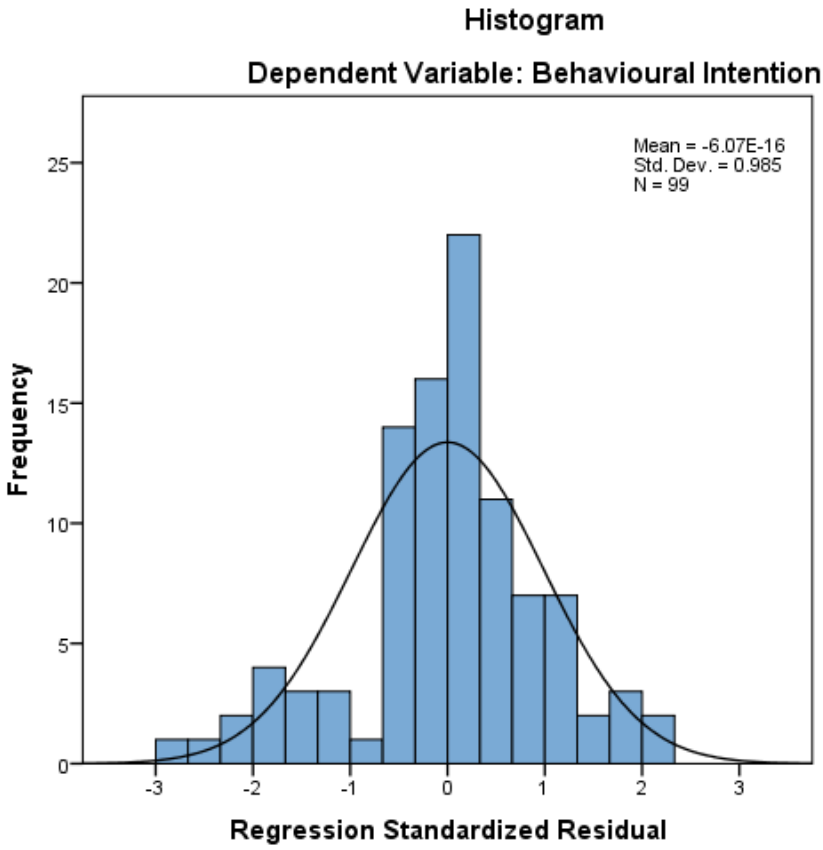

Figure 9: Histogram of regression standardised residuals

Test for multicollinearity

The other assumption is that there is no multicollinearity. That is, the independent variables are not too strongly correlated to the extent of negatively impacting the quality of the model. This was assessed by calculating the variance inflation factors (VIFs) during model fitting. All the VIF factors were less than 10, beyond which there will be a concern of multicollinearity. This indicates that the no multicollinearity assumption was also met.

Table 9: Test for Multicollinearity

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		
Attitude	.738	1.356
Subjective Norm	.890	1.124
Perceived Behavioural Control	.768	1.303

Test for homoscedasticity

It is also assumed that there is homoscedasticity; the error terms have equal variance. This is assessed by plotting a scatter plot of the regression-predicted values against residuals, as presented in Figure 10. The chart shows that the residuals are scattered around the mean zero with no clear pattern. This proves that the homoscedasticity assumption was also met.

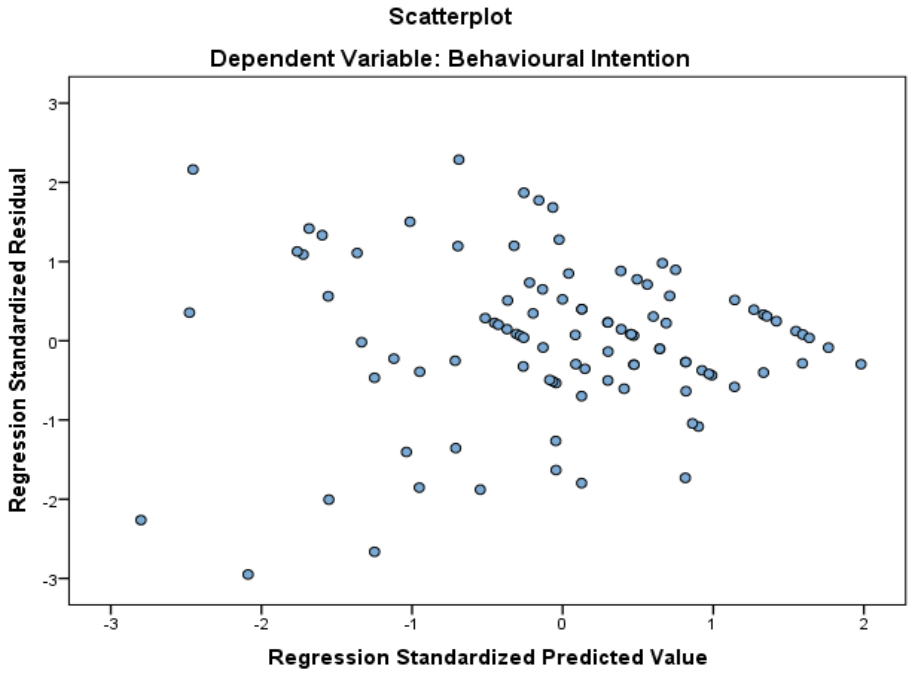

Figure 10: Scatter plot of regression predicted values against residuals.

4.7.2 *Regression results*

The results presented in the model summary indicate that perceived behavioural control, subjective norm, and attitude explain 69.9% of the variation in behavioural intention, as indicated by an r-square of 0.699.

Table 10: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.699[a]	.488	.472	.86378
a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Behavioural Control, Subjective Norm, Attitude				
b. Dependent Variable: Behavioural Intention				

Table 12 indicates that a model with perceived behavioural control, subjective norm, and attitude is significant in predicting behavioural intention, as indicated by a p-value of 0.000.

Table 11: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	67.664	3	22.555	30.229	.000[b]
	Residual	70.881	95	.746		
	Total	138.545	98			
a. Dependent Variable: Behavioural Intention						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Behavioural Control, Subjective Norm, Attitude						

The coefficients presented in Table 12 indicate that attitude (β = 0.355, t value = 4.154, p-value = 0.000), subjective norm (β = 0.235, t value = 3.020, p-value = 0.003), and perceived behavioural control (β = 0.328, t value = 3.915, p-value = 0.000) are all significant in predicting behavioural intention.

Table 12: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.785	.404		4.415	.000		
	Attitude	.429	.103	.355	4.154	.000	.738	1.356
	Subjective Norm	.198	.065	.235	3.020	.003	.890	1.124
	Perceived Behavioural Control	.273	.070	.328	3.915	.000	.768	1.303
a. Dependent Variable: Behavioural Intention								

Results pertaining to hypothesis H1: There is a positive relationship between South African consumers' attitudes towards ethical production practices and their intentions to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

H0: There is no relationship between attitude towards ethical production practices and intention to purchase.

H1: There is a positive relationship between South African consumers' attitudes toward ethical production practices and their intentions to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

The results presented in Table 13 show that attitude towards ethical production practices (β = 0.355, t value = 4.154, p-value = 0.000) has a significant and positive relationship with behavioural intention. The relationship is significant because the coefficient for attitude (β = 0.355) was positive, and the relationship was significant because the p-value (0.000) was less than 0.05. This indicates that the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, there is a positive relationship between South African consumers' attitudes towards ethical production practices and their intentions to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. This suggests that South African consumers who hold favourable attitudes toward ethical production practices are more inclined to express intentions to support ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

Results pertaining to hypothesis H2: There is a positive relationship between South African consumers' subjective norms towards ethical production practices and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

H0: There is no relationship between subjective norms towards ethical production practices and consumers' intention to purchase.

H2: There is a positive relationship between South African consumers' subjective norms towards ethical production practices and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

Table 13 shows that subjective norm towards ethical production practices (β = 0.235, t value = 3.020, p-value = 0.003) has a significant and positive relationship with behavioural intention. The relationship is significant because the coefficient for the subjective norm (β = 0.235) was positive, and the relationship was significant because the p-value (0.003) was less than 0.05. This indicates that the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, there is a positive relationship between South African consumers, subjective norm towards ethical production practices and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. This suggests that social influences and norms regarding ethical production practices play a meaningful role in shaping consumers' intentions in the context of ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

Results pertaining to hypothesis H3: There is a positive relationship between the South African consumer's perceived behavioural control, where ethical production practices are concerned, and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

H0: There is no relationship between perceived behavioural control and ethical production practices and consumers' intention to purchase.

H3: There is a positive relationship between South African consumers' perceived behavioural control, where ethical production practices are concerned, and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

The results presented in Table 13 show that perceived behavioural control and ethical production practices (β = 0.328, t value = 3.915, p-value = 0.000) have a significant and positive relationship with behavioural intention. The relationship is significant because the coefficient for perceived behavioural control (β = 0.328) was positive, and the relationship was significant because the p-value (0.000) was less than 0.05. This indicates that the null hypothesis was rejected

in favour of the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, there is a positive relationship between South African consumers' perceived behavioural control, where ethical production practices are concerned, and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. This underscores the importance of individuals' perceived control in influencing their intentions related to ethical considerations in the context of purchasing from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

4.8 Hypothesis test results

Hypothesis		**Supported or Not Supported**	**Significant/ Not Significant**	**P value**
H1	There is a positive relationship between the South African consumer's attitude towards ethical production practices and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers	Supported	Significant	0.000
H2	There is a positive relationship between the South African consumer's subjective norm towards ethical production practices and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.	Supported	Significant	0.003
H3	There is a positive relationship between the South African consumer's perceived behavioural control where ethical production practices are concerned and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers	Supported	Significant	0.000

4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided statistical analysis and results from the data collected on the influence of ethical production practices on consumer purchase intention from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. It provided the results on descriptive statistics, validity testing, and reliability testing of the scale for the constructs. Further, the chapter discussed exploratory factor analysis, and multiple regression analysis and hypothesis testing.

The demographic profile of the 110 respondents was predominantly female (93%) aged 35-44 with higher education (55%). The survey revealed that most recent online purchases occurred within the last 6 months (86%).

The validity and reliability of the measurement instrument were examined through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and multiple reliability tests. EFA identifies three constructs for both dependent and independent variables, validating their measurement on a 7-point Likert scale.

The Hypothesis testing employed multiple regression analysis, fulfilling key assumptions such as outliers' removal, linearity, normality, multicollinearity check, and homoscedasticity. The results demonstrate that the independent variables of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control collectively explain 69.9% of the variation in the behavioural intention.

Furthermore, the hypothesis testing confirms the positive relationships between these variables. Attitude towards ethical production practices, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control significantly influence the intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers, reinforcing the importance of these factors in shaping the South Africa consumer's behaviour. The following chapter offers a critical discussion of the study findings against the research objectives stated in the first chapter of this study.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss the research findings in depth, considering the available literature. The results of the hypotheses are discussed first, and then linked to the literature, and their implication for the ultrafast fashion online industry are discussed.

5.2 Discussion pertaining to Hypothesis 1

H0: There is no relationship between attitude towards ethical production practices and intention to purchase.

H1: There is a positive relationship between South African consumers' attitudes towards ethical production practices and their intentions to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

The finding for Hypothesis 1 indicates a positive relationship between attitude toward ethical production practices and behavioural intention. Attitude refers to the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behaviour in question, and decision-making is significantly influenced by attitude (Ajzen, 1991). According to Cowan and Kinley (2014), attitude includes knowledge about the environment, concern for the environment, and attitudes towards wearing ecologically friendly clothing. When people have positive feelings, intentions, knowledge, and beliefs about the environment and sustainable products, they are more likely to behave in ways consistent with those values. The results from the analysis suggest that South African consumers who hold favourable attitudes toward ethical production practices are more inclined to express intentions to support ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

The findings from this study support previous studies that have used the theory of planned behaviour (TBP) to examine the relationship between people's attitude and their intention to purchase ecologically friendly apparel (Cowan & Kinley, 2014) and consumers' purchase intentions for traceable minced beef and beef steak (Spence et al., 2018). Cowan and Kinley (2014) found that consumers with positive feelings about ecologically friendly apparel are more likely to have intentions to purchase ecologically friendly apparel, supporting their hypothesis that as their attitude towards ecologically friendly apparel became more positive, they indicated a significant intention to purchase ecologically friendly apparel. This explains the positive relationship between South African consumers' attitudes towards ethical production practices and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. Since the findings show a strong link between attitude and purchase intention, ultrafast fashion e-tailers who intend to practice more sustainable production should highlight the benefits of their sustainability efforts, and by doing so, they can reinforce the positive feelings that their customers have and the association with positive environmental impact.

5.3 Discussion pertaining to Hypothesis 2

H0: There is no relationship between subjective norm towards ethical production practices and consumers' intention to purchase.

H2: There is a positive relationship between South African subjective norm towards ethical production practices and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

The finding for Hypothesis 2 indicates a positive relationship between subjective norm towards ethical production practices and behavioural intention. A person's ideas or perceptions that significantly emerge from peers, society, or family are referred to as a person's subjective norm, which can be described as the

perceived social pressure to do or not execute a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Nguyen et al., 2019). The social environment exerts pressure on people to buy particular things. Subjective norm is a crucial component of TPB that is utilized to forecast behavioural intention (Nguyen et al., 2019). This norm reflects the degree to which a person feels ethically obliged to support others by purchasing environmentally friendly goods and how significant a positive social image is to customers (Barber et al., 2014). Therefore, while making a purchase, a subjective norm reflects how the consumer feels about their close relationships, including whether the referents believe the consumer should buy the goods in question and the consumer's motivations for doing so (Noble et al., 2009). The results from the analysis suggest that social influences and norms regarding ethical production practices play a meaningful role in shaping consumers' intentions in the context of ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

The findings support previous studies that have used the TBP to examine Vietnamese consumers' subjective norms and their intention to purchase green apparel (Nguyen et al., 2019), in line with results from the study conducted by Cowan and Kinley in 2014. Therefore, there is a positive relationship between South African consumers' subjective norms towards ethical production practices and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. In the chapter, we discussed that as consumers become more knowledgeable about the environmental and social issues that the fast-fashion industry creates (Kumar et al., 2021; McNeill & Moore, 2015; Stringer et al., 2020), they are beginning to express concern for environmental protection. Industry stakeholders concerned with the protection of the environment and the sustainable practices of the fashion industry are also putting pressure on the industry to make changes. Ultrafast fashion e-tailers can contribute to this movement through increased communication of their own sustainable behaviours and the use of influential individuals in society, and they can further reinforce the pressure on customers to change their consumption behaviour.

5.4 Discussion pertaining to Hypothesis 3

H0: There is no relationship between perceived behavioural control and ethical production practices and consumers' intention to purchase.

H3: There is a positive relationship between South African consumers' perceived behavioural control, where ethical production practices are concerned, and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

The finding for Hypothesis 3 indicates a positive relationship between perceived behavioural control, where ethical production practices are concerned, and their behavioural intention. The perceived ease or difficulty of portraying behaviour is referred to as the degree of perceived behavioural control, and it reflects experience as well as expected barriers and obstructions (Ajzen, 1991). It depicts perceptions of the availability of opportunities and resources, such as money, time, and other resources, as well as the focus person's self-confidence in their capacity to portray behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Additionally, Roberts (1996) contends that PBC can influence consumers' attitudes and intent to buy favourably. The relationship is significant because the coefficient for perceived behavioural control (β = 0.328) was positive, and the relationship was significant because the p-value (0.000) was less than 0.05. This is after item "Perceived_behavioural_3" "Whether I buy fashion clothing that is produced ethically or not is entirely up to me," which had a factor loading less than the minimum requirement of at least 0.4., had to be removed as it affected model fit. This suggests that this might not have a positive relationship with purchase intentions from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. The assumption is that consumers do not believe that their purchase of ethically produced ultrafast fashion is not entirely up to them. Despite their best efforts, several situations may lead consumers to believe that they have little control over variables that affect their ability to act in an environmentally responsible manner. For instance, they may not be convinced that there are eco-friendly clothing options available (Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019).

The findings in the study support the previous studies done by Blazques et al. (2019) on Spanish consumers' intentions towards sustainability, which found

that attitudes, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control positively affected consumers' behavioural intentions. This was consistent with the study of American consumers performed by Cowan and Kinley (2014) and Vietnamese consumers by Nguyen et al. (2019). Thus, there is a positive relationship between South African consumers' perceived behavioural control, where ethical production practices are concerned, and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. Ultrafast fashion e-tailers need to actively involve customers in their sustainability efforts by showing customers how easy it is to participate in sustainability. This can be done by highlighting items in their stores that were produced sustainably and the impact thereof. They can also highlight items that have price parity with unsustainable items, and last, by giving customers the choice of sustainable packaging, customers can be more aware of their contribution to the larger sustainability goal.

5.5 Summary Findings

In summary, this research study indicated that the three hypotheses are supported. H1 was supported and showed a positive relationship between South African consumers' attitudes towards ethical production practices and their intentions to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. H2 was supported and showed a positive relationship between South African consumers' subjective norms towards ethical production practices and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers. H3 was supported and showed a positive relationship between the South African consumers' perceived behavioural control, where ethical production practices are concerned, and their intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

Hypotheses H1, H2 and H3 showed similar findings to the literature and confirmed a significant positive relationship between the variables. Table 13 summarizes the results from the hypotheses.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents conclusions to the research questions posed in Chapter 1 and the possible answers to each question. It provides recommendations to the stakeholders identified in Chapter 1 and concludes with recommendations for future research.

6.2 Conclusions based on research questions

The research questions asked in Chapter 1 are as follows:

Do ethical production practices influence South African consumers' intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers?

Sub questions

1. Does attitude towards ethical production practices influence South African consumers' intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers?
2. Does subjective norm towards ethical production practices influence South African consumers' intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers?
3. Does perceived behavioural control, where ethical production practices are concerned, influence South African consumers' intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers?

The findings from the study indicate this to be affirmative on all three research questions. Joergens (2006) found limited evidence that ethical issues have any effect on consumers' purchasing behaviour of fast fashion, citing that most consumers – even though aware of ethical problems – are more concerned with

their fashion requirements than those of other people who are a part of the clothing supply chain. Furthermore, Moolla (2020) investigating the “South African consumers’ consciousness and concern about environmental and social issues in the local fashion industry when purchasing apparel” found that consumers are only moderately conscious and concerned about environmental practices.

The positive findings related to all three questions in the study indicate that South African consumers are concerned about the ethical production practices of ultrafast e-tailers. This can be attributed to consumers becoming more knowledgeable about the environmental and social issues that the fast-fashion industry creates (Kumar et al., 2021; McNeill & Moore, 2015; Stringer et al., 2020). Consumers are beginning to express concern for environmental protection. As the industry continues to grow, the South African e-commerce market will generate net sales of US$3 billion in 2019; it will continue to expand at an average CAGR of 13% (Deloitte, 2021). The most popular category for online buyers is clothing, which accounts for 58% of all e-commerce sales in South Africa (Deloitte, 2021).

6.3 Recommendations

According to Mckinsey & Company's "The state of fashion" report (2022), the sustainability gap is one of the top three issues for 15% of executives in 2022, placing supply chain disruptions as the first obstacle in their minds. However, 13% of CEOs also see sustainability as an opportunity, indicating that any expenses or difficulties they face may be exceeded by the financial gains connected with reducing their company's negative social and environmental impacts. These leaders listed digital as an opportunity for 2022, along with sustainability. Executives reference these two longer-term issues every year. The possibility that sustainable fashion practices could reduce the pressure that unsustainable fast fashion practices are putting on social and environmental welfare (McNeill & Moore, 2015), is vital. It is recommended that the industry continue to establish more sustainable value chains, which requires attention throughout the product life cycle, from raw material to the production processes,

as well as the disposal of products, which is further necessitated by increased consumer demand for faster changes in trends and delivery (Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019).

6.4 Limitations and recommendations for further research

The consumer's willingness to change their lifestyles to reduce consumption and/or opt for more sustainable alternatives will determine the viability of the fast fashion business in the future (McNeill & Moore, 2015; Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019). However, implementing such alternatives in an emerging market such as South Africa remains challenging (Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019). Therefore, it is important to understand the influence of ethical production practices on the purchase intention of South African consumers with the rapid growth of the ultrafast fashion phenomenon.

While the research study had a well-defined population, a limitation arose during the determination of inclusion criteria. The criteria for inclusion required respondents to have internet access, possess a device capable of accessing the internet, engage in online shopping, and be familiar with the various e-tailers described in the survey. The stringent nature of these criteria could potentially exclude individuals who, despite being part of the broader target population, may not meet all the specified conditions. As a result, the findings of the study may not be fully representative of the entire population, and the external generalizability of the results may be constrained by the defined criteria. It is essential to acknowledge this limitation and interpret the study findings within the context of the specified inclusion criteria.

Future research should use the probability sampling method to achieve a better representative sample for accurate generalisations. The study was limited to consumers who had access to the internet, a device to access the internet, and those who used e-commerce to purchase fashion clothing. It also had a large female bias, possibly due to the topic being focused on ultrafast fashion, which is a new concept that caters mostly to females. To draw inferences about South African consumers, a more representative sample would be needed to properly

guide intervention programs. However, the lack of sample frames makes it difficult at times to obtain representative data in developing nations such as South Africa (Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019). Concern has also been raised about response bias in environmental research, where participants have the propensity to overestimate how pro-environmental they are compared to how they act in similar situations (Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019).

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APPENDIX A

Dear Participant,

My name is Koketso Ramoshebi. I am a Master's student at the University of the Witwatersrand Business School in Johannesburg. Part of my studies require me to undertake a research project. My research project is to investigate the influence of ethical production practices on the purchase intention of South African consumers from ultrafast fashion e-tailers under the supervision of Dr Nakuze Chalomba. The objective of this study is to investigate the factors that influence consumers' behavioural intention to purchase from ultrafast fashion e-tailers when ethical production practices are considered.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to participate in answering a questionnaire, which will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

This research project will not put you at risk or compromise your personal information in any manner. Your participation will be anonymous, and no personal information will be requested from you. There are no costs involved for you to participate in this study. Your participation is voluntary, and you may at any point during the completion of this survey choose to withdraw from it. There will be no penalties. You may only complete the survey once.

Should you have questions about this survey, or the study please feel free to contact me on the following details: 1820116@students.wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely

Koketso Ramoshebi

079 715 4381

APPENDIX B Instrument

Consent

I agree to voluntarily participate in the following research study: The influence of ethical production practices on the purchase intention of the South African consumer from ultrafast fashion e-tailers.

I understand my right as a participant to choose to withdraw my participation for whatever reason at any point and will not be subjected to any form of discrimination, penalties, or any level of prejudice as a result.

I understand that my submission will be treated with confidentiality and will not be used for any other purpose except for the purpose of this study and that all data provided will be anonymous.

I consent ☐

Demographic information

This section is about background information. Please tick (X) appropriate answer:

A1: Gender

Male		Female		I'd rather not say	

A2: Age

18 – 29 years	
30 – 39 years	
40 – 49 years	
50 – 59 years	

60 or more years	

A3: Level of education

Grade 12/Matric	
Certificate	
Bachelor's Degree	
Honours/Postgraduate Diploma	
Masters PhD	

Screening Information

The following information will enable me to determine about you. Kindly please select the option that you feel best represents your answer.

Have you used an e-commerce website to shop for clothing online?

Yes	
No	

When was your last online purchase?

1. Less than 1 month	
2. 1 month - 6 months	
3. 6 months – 1 year	
4. 1 year – 2 years	

Have you ever heard of ultrafast fashion e-tailers? (Examples of ultrafast fashion e-tailers include Shein, Asos, Light in the box)

Yes ☐

No ☐

Have you ever shopped from ultrafast fashion e-tailers? (Examples of ultrafast fashion e-tailers include Shein, Asos, Light in the box)

Yes ☐

No ☐

Please select the appropriate answer that applies best to you in relation to the below attributes on a scale of 1 -7, where 1 is Strongly disagree and 7 is Strongly agree.

Attitude

Statement	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
I care about the effects that clothing production has on the environment									
I believe that the clothing I buy is produced ethically									
I care for the ethical clothing production practices of Ultra fast fashion e-tailers									

Subjective norm

Statement	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
Most people who are important to me care about the effects of clothing productions effects on the environment									
Most people who are important to me believe the Ultra- fast fashion e-tailers such as SHEIN, ASOS and Light in the box practice ethical clothing production									
Most people who are important to me care for the clothing production practices of Ultra fast fashion e-tailers such as SHEN, ASOS or Light in the box									

Perceived behavioural control.

Statement	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
I believe that I have the ability to purchase ethically produced fashion clothing									
If it were entirerly up to me, I am confident that I would be able to purchase ethically produced fashion clothing									
Whether I buy fashion clothing that is produced ethically or not is entirely up to me									

Behavioural intention

Statement	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
I intend to purchase fashion clothing that us produced ethically									
I plan to purchase fashion clothing that us produced ethically									
I want to purchase fashion clothing that us produced ethically									

APPENDIX C Ethical clearance

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/DB1820116/489
This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (Below)

Project title	The influence of ethical production practices on consumer purchase intentions from ultra fast fashion e-tailers
Investigator / Researcher	Mrs Koketso Ramoshebi
Nature of Project	MM (Digital Business)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality.
Issue Date of Certificate	2022-11-21
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Prof Anthony Stacey +27 11 717 3587 +27 82 880 4531 anthony.stacey@wits.ac.za

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature

Date: