



IMPULSIVE CLOTHING PURCHASING AMONG YOUNG CONSUMERS IN ŠTIP, NORTH MACEDONIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE FASHION AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Scientific paper
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Sonja Krstovska Ilijoska^{1,a}, Sonja Jordeva^{1,a}, Vineta Srebrenkoska^{1*}

¹Goce Delcev University, Faculty of Technology, Štip, North Macedonia

^aE-mail: sonja.22422@student.ugd.edu.mk, ORCID ID: 0009-0003-6386-9934

^bE-mail: sonja.jordeva@ugd.edu.mk, ORCID ID: 0009-0002-2539-3827

^{*}E-mail: vineta.srebrenkoska@ugd.edu.mk, ORCID ID: 0009-0002-0198-1042

ABSTRACT: *This study investigates the phenomenon of impulsive clothing purchasing among young consumers in Štip, North Macedonia, and examines its implications for sustainability and environmental awareness. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale administered to 45 respondents of different social status (pupils, students, employed, and unemployed), with additional demographic information gathered on gender and age. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods and percentage analysis. The findings indicate that impulsive clothing purchasing is a widespread behavior among young people. The highest tendency toward impulsive buying was observed among female respondents and the youngest age groups (under 18 and 18–24 years), whereas male respondents and older participants demonstrated greater restraint in their purchasing behavior. These results reveal a gap between awareness of sustainable consumption and actual consumer behavior, highlighting the continued influence of fashion trends, social pressure, and fast-fashion practices on young consumers. The study concludes that although young people are particularly susceptible to impulsive clothing purchases, they also represent the group with the greatest potential to adopt sustainable consumption practices. Therefore, educational initiatives, awareness campaigns, and policies promoting sustainable fashion should primarily target younger consumers in order to encourage responsible purchasing behavior and contribute to long-term environmental sustainability.*

Keywords: *impulsive buying; sustainable fashion; consumer behavior; environmental awareness; young consumers.*

IMPULSIVNA KUPOVINA ODEĆE MEĐU MLADIMA U ŠTIPU, SEVERNA MAKEDONIJA: IMPLIKACIJE ZA ODRŽIVU MODU I EKOLOŠKU SVEST



APSTRAKT: Cilj ovog istraživanja bio je da se analizira fenomen impulsivne kupovine odeće među mladima i njegove implikacije na održivost i ekološku svest. Anketa je sprovedena putem upitnika sa pitanjima formulisanim na Likertovoj skali, među 45 ispitanika različitog statusa (učenici, studenti, zaposleni i nezaposleni), uz prikupljanje dodatnih demografskih podataka o polu i starosti. Podaci su obrađeni deskriptivnim statističkim metodama i procentualnom analizom. Rezultati pokazuju da je impulsivna kupovina široko rasprostranjen fenomen među mladima, pri čemu su žene i najmlađe starosne grupe (ispod 18 i 18–24 godine) najsklonije ovakvom ponašanju, dok muškarci i stariji ispitanici pokazuju veću uzdržanost. Ova ambivalentnost naglašava potrebu za edukativnim programima i kampanjama koje promovišu održivu modu i razvoj svesnih potrošačkih navika. Zaključak ukazuje da je mlada generacija istovremeno najpodložnija impulsivnoj potrošnji i najotvorenija za promene ka održivim praksama, što je čini kritičnom ciljnom grupom za buduća istraživanja i intervencije usmerene ka izgradnji kulture održivosti i ekološke odgovornosti.

Ključne reči: impulsivna kupovina; održiva moda; potrošačko ponašanje; ekološka svest; mladi potrošači.

1. INTRODUCTION

Impulsive clothing purchasing among young consumers has become an increasingly significant phenomenon in modern consumer society, driven by the rapid expansion of **fast fashion**, digital marketing, and social media [1,2]. The continuous availability of inexpensive clothing, combined with aggressive promotional strategies and the influence of online platforms, encourages frequent purchasing behavior that often exceeds consumers' actual needs. Consequently, clothing consumption has evolved beyond fulfilling functional requirements and has become closely associated with self-expression, social identity, and lifestyle [3].

Psychological theories suggest that impulsive buying is strongly influenced by emotional regulation, the desire for immediate gratification, and the pursuit of self-esteem and social acceptance [4]. At the same time, social factors including peer influence, fashion trends, celebrity endorsements, and digital influencers reinforce impulsive purchasing behavior, particularly among young consumers, who are more susceptible to external influences and rapidly changing market trends [5].

From the perspective of sustainable development, these consumption patterns raise important environmental concerns. The fast-fashion industry is recognized as one of the largest contributors to textile waste, excessive resource consumption, and environmental pollution [2,6,7]. As Fletcher [1] argues, sustainable fashion is not only concerned with environmentally responsible production but also with transforming consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior. Although young people generally demonstrate a relatively high level of awareness regarding environmental issues and sustainable consumption, numerous studies indicate a persistent gap between environmental awareness and actual purchasing behavior [1,3,8,9]. This contradiction reflects the complexity of consumer decision-



making, where environmental responsibility often competes with emotional impulses, fashion trends, affordability, and social expectations.

Despite the growing body of research on sustainable fashion and consumer behavior, relatively limited attention has been paid to impulsive clothing purchasing among young consumers in **North Macedonia** [3,4,10]. Understanding the purchasing habits of this population is essential for developing effective educational initiatives and sustainability strategies aimed at encouraging responsible consumption and reducing the environmental impact of the textile and fashion industries [11-16].

Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the prevalence of impulsive clothing purchasing among young people in Štip, North Macedonia, and to analyze how gender and age influence purchasing behavior. Furthermore, the study seeks to highlight the relationship between impulsive consumption and sustainable fashion, emphasizing the importance of environmental awareness and responsible consumer behavior among younger generations.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a quantitative research design based on a structured questionnaire to investigate young consumers' attitudes toward impulsive clothing purchasing and its relationship with sustainability and environmental awareness. The questionnaire consisted of statements evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). In addition to the attitude statements, demographic information regarding gender, age, and respondents' status (pupils, students, employed, and unemployed) was collected to enable comparative analysis across different groups.

The survey included 45 respondents from Štip, North Macedonia, representing different educational and employment backgrounds. Although the sample size was relatively small, it provided a diverse representation of the target population and offered valuable insights into the purchasing behavior of young consumers. The questionnaire was administered anonymously in order to ensure the confidentiality of participants and encourage honest responses, thereby improving the reliability of the collected data.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, with percentage analysis employed to determine the distribution of responses for each survey statement. Comparative analyses were subsequently conducted according to gender and age to identify potential differences in impulsive clothing purchasing behavior among demographic groups. This analytical approach enabled a clear interpretation of the findings and facilitated the identification of consumer behavior patterns associated with impulsive purchasing and sustainable consumption.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings obtained from the survey conducted among young consumers in Štip, North Macedonia. The results provide insights into respondents' attitudes toward impulsive clothing purchasing and reveal differences according to gender

and age. The graphical analysis not only illustrates the level of agreement with the statement that young people often purchase clothing without a genuine need but also identifies behavioral patterns that have important implications for sustainable consumption and environmental responsibility.

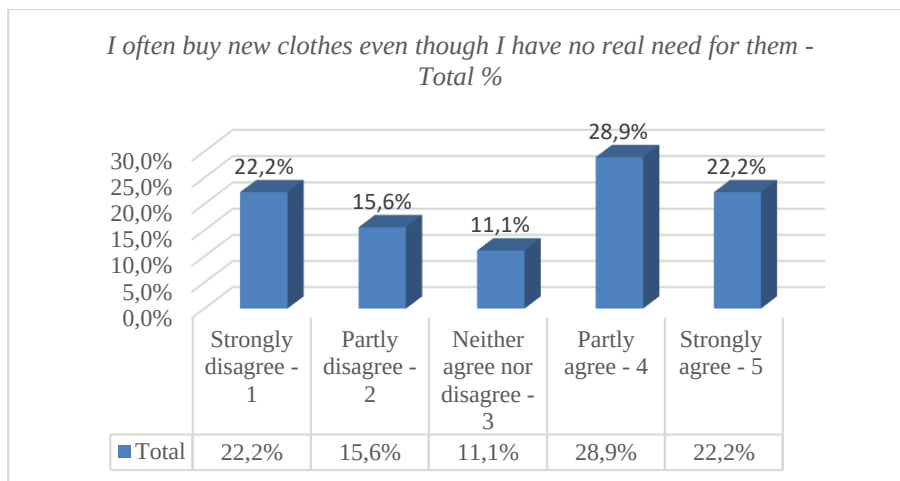


Figure 1: Distribution of responses regarding impulsive clothing purchasing

Figure 1 illustrates the overall distribution of responses to the statement, *"I often buy new clothes even though I have no real need for them."* The largest proportion of respondents (28.9%) partly agreed, while 22.2% strongly agreed, indicating that more than half of the respondents acknowledged engaging in impulsive clothing purchasing to some extent. Conversely, 22.2% strongly disagreed and 15.6% partly disagreed, suggesting that a considerable proportion of young consumers consciously regulate their purchasing behavior. A relatively small percentage of respondents (11.1%) expressed a neutral opinion.

These findings suggest that impulsive clothing purchasing is a common behavioral pattern among young consumers. The coexistence of agreement and disagreement indicates that although many respondents recognize their tendency toward impulsive buying, others demonstrate greater self-control and awareness of responsible consumption. This ambivalence reflects the ongoing conflict between consumer culture and sustainable purchasing practices. This finding is consistent with previous studies reporting that young consumers frequently experience a conflict between fashion-oriented consumption and sustainable purchasing behavior [1,3].

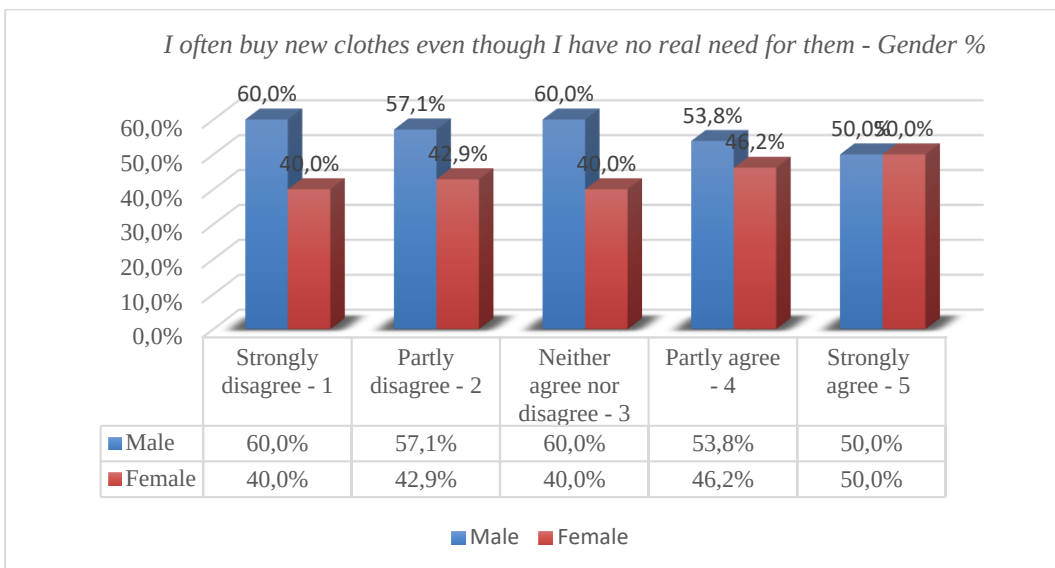


Figure 2: Distribution of responses by gender

Figure 2 presents the distribution of responses according to gender. Male respondents predominantly expressed disagreement with the statement, with 60% strongly disagreeing and 57.1% partly disagreeing, indicating a lower tendency toward impulsive clothing purchasing. Female respondents, in contrast, demonstrated higher levels of agreement, particularly within the categories partly agree and strongly agree, where their responses were more evenly distributed.

These results suggest that female respondents may be more susceptible to impulsive clothing purchasing than male respondents. Similar gender-related differences have been reported in previous studies of consumer behavior and impulsive buying [4,5]. This difference may be associated with social and cultural influences, including greater exposure to fashion trends, social media marketing, and appearance-related expectations reported in previous studies [5]. However, because the present study did not investigate the underlying causes of purchasing behavior, these findings should be interpreted cautiously and viewed as possible explanations rather than definitive causal relationships.

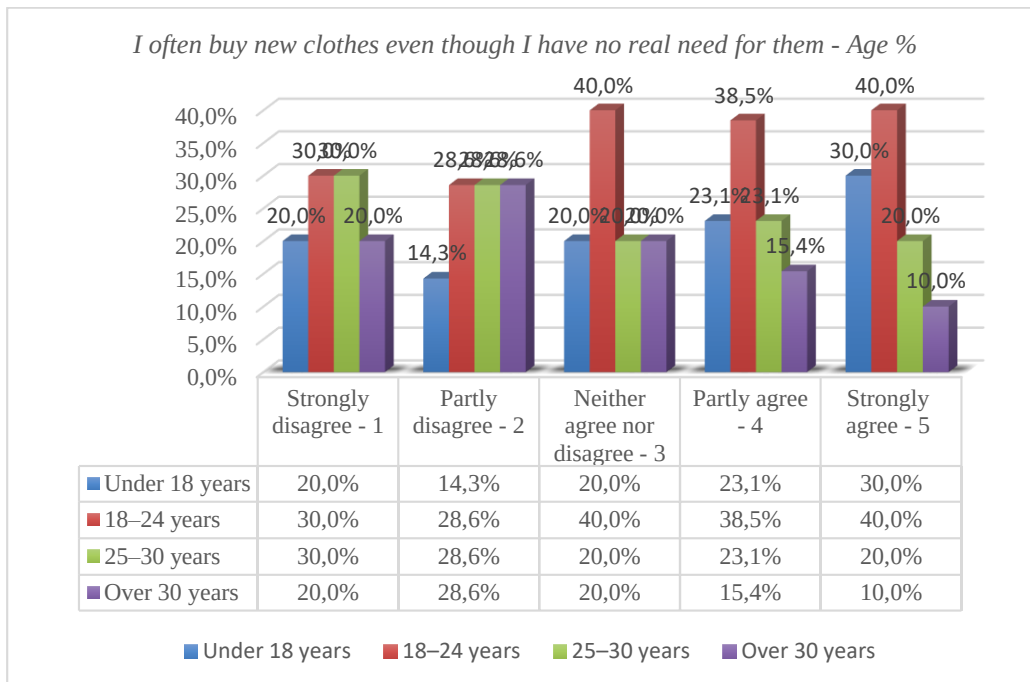


Figure 3: Distribution of responses by age

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of responses across different age groups. The highest levels of agreement were observed among respondents under 18 years of age and those aged 18–24 years, with 30% and 40%, respectively, strongly agreeing that they often purchase clothing without real necessity. These findings indicate that the youngest respondents demonstrate the greatest tendency toward impulsive buying.

In contrast, respondents aged 25–30 years displayed a more balanced distribution of responses, while participants over 30 years of age predominantly disagreed with the statement, suggesting greater purchasing restraint and more rational consumer behavior.

The observed age differences may reflect increasing consumer experience, financial responsibility, and environmental awareness that develop over time. Younger consumers are generally more exposed to digital marketing, social media, influencer culture, and rapidly changing fashion trends, all of which encourage impulsive purchasing behavior [3,5]. These findings emphasize the importance of educational initiatives promoting sustainable fashion and responsible consumption, particularly among younger age groups [6,7].

Overall, the results demonstrate that impulsive clothing purchasing is a widespread phenomenon among young consumers, particularly among female respondents and the youngest age groups. Although many participants recognize the importance of responsible consumption, their purchasing behavior continues to be strongly influenced by fashion



trends and consumer culture. This discrepancy between environmental awareness and actual consumer behavior has also been identified in previous research on sustainable fashion and consumer decision-making [1,3]. Educational programs, awareness campaigns, and initiatives encouraging conscious purchasing habits are essential for reducing excessive clothing consumption and its associated environmental impacts.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that impulsive clothing purchasing is a widespread behavior among young consumers, with significant differences observed according to gender and age. Female respondents and the youngest age groups (under 18 and 18–24 years) demonstrated the highest tendency toward impulsive purchasing, whereas male respondents and older participants exhibited greater restraint and more rational purchasing behavior. These findings indicate that demographic characteristics play an important role in shaping consumer habits and purchasing decisions.

The study further highlights the contradiction between young people's awareness of environmental issues and their actual purchasing behavior. Although many respondents recognize the importance of sustainable consumption, their purchasing decisions continue to be strongly influenced by fashion trends, social media, and consumer culture [3]. This gap between environmental awareness and consumer behavior demonstrates that promoting sustainability requires not only increasing knowledge but also encouraging long-term changes in consumer attitudes and purchasing habits.

The findings contribute to a better understanding of impulsive clothing purchasing among young consumers in North Macedonia by identifying demographic groups that are particularly vulnerable to impulsive consumption [4]. From a practical perspective, the results suggest that educational programs, sustainability campaigns, and initiatives promoting responsible fashion consumption should primarily target younger consumers, especially adolescents and young adults, in order to encourage more conscious purchasing behavior and reduce the environmental impact of the fashion industry.

This study is limited by the relatively small sample size and its focus on respondents from a single city, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future research should include larger and more geographically diverse samples, as well as investigate additional factors influencing impulsive clothing purchasing, such as income level, social media use, fashion involvement, and environmental values.

In conclusion, encouraging responsible clothing consumption among young people represents an important step toward reducing textile waste, promoting sustainable fashion, and supporting the transition to a more environmentally responsible society. Developing consumer awareness together with practical sustainable purchasing habits will contribute not only to environmental protection but also to the establishment of a long-term culture of sustainable consumption.



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