

Green Marketing, Green Signaling Strength, and Value Differentiation in Sustainable Fashion Purchase Intention

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study investigates how green marketing is translated into purchase intention for sustainable fashion and identifies the consumer evaluations that make sustainability communication persuasive. The issue is especially relevant in fashion because purchase decisions combine functional considerations with symbolic and identity-related meanings, while sustainability claims do not always produce a consistent behavioral response.

Design/methodology/approach: The research used a quantitative explanatory design and analyzed online survey responses from 200 consumers. The proposed model incorporated green marketing, green signaling strength, value differentiation, environmental identity, consumption visibility, and purchase intention. PLS-SEM was employed to estimate direct relationships, sequential mediation, and moderating effects.

Findings: Green marketing showed no significant direct relationship with purchase intention. Instead, the relationship was fully transmitted through a sequential mechanism in which green marketing increased green signaling strength, stronger signals enhanced value differentiation, and differentiated value increased purchase intention. Environmental identity significantly moderated the green signaling strength-value differentiation relationship, whereas consumption visibility did not produce a significant moderating effect.

Originality/value: The study identifies value differentiation as the pivotal evaluative link between sustainability communication and purchase intention. For sustainable fashion brands, the findings imply that environmental messages are more effective when consumers can verify their credibility and recognize concrete, distinctive value rather than receiving broad green claims alone.

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1. Introduction

Sustainable fashion has attracted growing attention in consumer research because apparel choices are evaluated through more than style, price, comfort, and brand reputation. Clothing can simultaneously communicate environmental responsibility, ethical concern, and personal identity. Consequently, consumers may judge sustainable apparel by whether it reduces ecological harm, reflects responsible production, and remains desirable for everyday use. The challenge for the industry is therefore to reconcile sustainability with aesthetic, economic, and symbolic expectations. Evidence from [Alvino and Dangelico \(2022\)](#), [Hasbullah et al. \(2022\)](#), and [Li et al. \(2024\)](#) indicates that purchase intention is influenced by environmental value, perceived product attributes, consumer knowledge, and the credibility with which brands communicate sustainability.

A central issue addressed in this research is that green marketing does not produce a uniform effect on purchase intention. Fashion companies increasingly communicate recycled inputs, eco-labels, ethical sourcing, and other sustainability initiatives, yet consumers may still hesitate when those claims appear vague, interchangeable, or overly promotional. Experimental evidence in online fashion also shows that credible certification can strengthen the perceived reliability of sustainability information and, through that credibility, support buying intention ([Behre & Cauberghe, 2025](#)). Consistent with [Arora and Manchanda \(2022\)](#), [Chi et al. \(2021\)](#), and [Lin and Chen \(2022\)](#), this pattern suggests that the persuasive value of green marketing depends on how consumers interpret the claim and whether they can connect it with benefits that distinguish sustainable apparel from conventional alternatives.

To explain this gap, the study develops a sequential framework connecting green marketing with green signaling strength, value differentiation, and purchase intention. Green marketing represents the environmental information communicated by the brand, whereas green signaling strength captures the extent to which that information is understood as clear, consistent, and credible. Value differentiation then reflects whether consumers translate those signals into a judgment that sustainable fashion offers distinct ethical, symbolic, or product-related advantages. Drawing on [Huang et al. \(2024\)](#), [Montecchi et al. \(2024\)](#), and [Panopoulos et al. \(2023\)](#), the proposed sequence integrates Stimulus-Organism-Response logic, signaling theory, and identity-based consumption by assuming that consumers react to the meaning inferred from marketing stimuli rather than to message exposure alone.

The interpretation of green fashion is also likely to vary across consumers. Environmental identity can determine how much external information is needed before a sustainability claim becomes meaningful: individuals with well-established ecological values may rely more on their internal standards, whereas others may depend more heavily on explicit brand cues. Consumption visibility provides another possible boundary condition because clothing is publicly observable and can function as a vehicle for self-expression. [Han et al. \(2024\)](#), [Masserini et al. \(2024\)](#), [Pardeshi et al. \(2024\)](#), and [Schiarioli et al. \(2025\)](#) further support the need to consider heterogeneity in consumer responses by showing that younger generations differ in their patterns of sustainable clothing consumption.

On this basis, the study tests whether green marketing is linked to purchase intention through the successive formation of green signaling strength and value differentiation, while environmental identity and consumption visibility are examined as moderators. The PLS-SEM analysis of 200 respondents indicates no significant direct relationship between green

marketing and purchase intention. Instead, the effect is transmitted through full sequential mediation: green marketing strengthens the perceived signal, stronger signals increase differentiated value, and differentiated value predicts purchase intention. The contribution is to clarify that sustainability communication becomes behaviorally relevant when consumers convert environmental information into a distinct reason for choosing the product (Hair et al., 2021; Schiaroli et al., 2024; Wu & Lee, 2025).

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Within sustainable fashion, green marketing can be understood as brand communication that makes environmental responsibility, ethical production, material choices, and sustainability-related benefits visible to consumers. Such communication operates in a category where products are assessed both for functional performance and for the meanings attached to their use. Evidence from Han et al. (2024), Schiaroli et al. (2025), and Wu and Lee (2025) supports the relevance of both characteristics, as sustainable clothing may serve both private environmental goals and public identity expression.

A sustainability message is unlikely to influence purchase intention merely because it contains a green claim. Consumers first need to decide whether the information is understandable, believable, and sufficiently diagnostic of the product. Signaling theory explains this process by treating marketing communication as a means of reducing uncertainty about environmental attributes that are difficult to verify before purchase. When the signal is credible, consumers are more likely to infer distinctive ethical, functional, or symbolic value from sustainable fashion (Huang et al., 2024; Panopoulos et al., 2023; Schiaroli et al., 2024). Recent evidence on certification labels similarly indicates that credibility is a key mechanism through which sustainability signals can support buying intentions (Behre & Cauberghe, 2025). More broadly, persuasive digital communication tends to be effective when recipients regard the information as trustworthy and useful (Rahmani et al., 2025).

Two consumer characteristics may alter these evaluations. Environmental identity captures the extent to which ecological responsibility forms part of the self-concept, while consumption visibility reflects how observable fashion choices are to other people. Evidence from Han et al. (2024), Schiaroli et al. (2025), and Wu and Lee (2025) supports the theoretical relevance of both characteristics because sustainable clothing may serve private environmental goals as well as public identity expression.

Thus, the hypotheses are formulated as follows:

- H1: Green marketing has a positive effect on green signaling strength.
- H2: Green signaling strength has a positive effect on value differentiation.
- H3: Value differentiation has a positive effect on purchase intention.
- H4: Green marketing has a positive effect on value differentiation.
- H5: Green signaling strength has a positive effect on purchase intention.
- H6: Green marketing has a positive effect on purchase intention.
- H7: Green signaling strength and value differentiation sequentially mediate the relationship between green marketing and purchase intention.
- H8: Environmental identity moderates the relationship between green signaling strength and value differentiation.

H9: Consumption visibility moderates the relationship between value differentiation and purchase intention.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative explanatory design was employed to test the theoretically specified relationships among green marketing, green signaling strength, value differentiation, environmental identity, consumption visibility, and purchase intention. The design enabled simultaneous assessment of direct paths, the proposed sequential mediation, and interaction effects within one structural model. Because the observations were collected once and were self-reported, the directional coefficients are interpreted as theory-guided predictive associations rather than proof of temporal or experimental causality. Model specification was informed by Stimulus-Organism-Response reasoning, signaling theory, and identity-based consumption.

3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

The target population comprised consumers who were familiar with fashion products and had encountered sustainability-oriented fashion communication. The individual consumer served as the unit of analysis. Eligibility required respondents to be at least 18 years old, to have purchased or considered purchasing fashion products, and to have prior exposure to messages such as eco-labels, recycled-material information, ethical-production claims, or green fashion campaigns. Data were gathered through a Google Forms questionnaire distributed on social media, with screening items used to confirm the required exposure. After screening, 200 valid responses were retained. Before entering the questionnaire, participants received information about the academic purpose of the study, voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality, and the option to withdraw before submission; proceeding with the survey indicated informed consent. Because online recruitment produced a sample dominated by younger and digitally active consumers, this characteristic is considered when discussing external validity.

3.3 Measures and Variable Definitions

Six latent constructs were operationalized through multi-item statements rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The indicators were contextually adapted rather than copied verbatim. Wording was simplified where necessary, original product or service references were replaced with sustainable-fashion terminology, and the conceptual content of each construct was retained. Researchers familiar with marketing and consumer behavior reviewed the English wording for semantic clarity and contextual appropriateness before distribution. Table 2 reports the construct-specific sources and adaptation procedure, and Appendix A presents the complete indicator wording. The model uses the following variable abbreviations, as presented in Table 1::

Table 1. Variable Definitions

Variable	Definition
Green Marketing (GM)	Consumers' perception of brand efforts to communicate sustainable fashion practices, including eco-friendly materials, ethical production, environmental claims, and sustainability-oriented promotion.

Variable	Definition
Green Signaling Strength (GS)	The perceived clarity, credibility, consistency, and strength of environmental signals communicated by sustainable fashion brands.
Value Differentiation (VD)	Consumers' perception that sustainable fashion products offer unique, distinctive, or added value compared with conventional fashion products.
Environmental Identity (EI)	The degree to which environmental concern and ecological responsibility are part of a consumer's self-concept.
Consumption Visibility (CV)	The extent to which fashion consumption is publicly observable and can be seen or recognized by others.
Purchase Intention (PI)	Consumers' likelihood or willingness to buy sustainable fashion products.
Regression/path coefficient (β)	The estimated strength and direction of the relationship between variables in the structural model.
Error term (ϵ)	The unexplained variation in the model after accounting for the predictors.

Table 2. Construct-Specific Measurement Sources and Adaptation Procedure

Construct	Exact source(s)	Adaptation for this study
Green Marketing (GM)	Huang et al. (2024) ; Panopoulos et al. (2023) ; Montecchi et al. (2024)	Environmental marketing, labeling, transparency, and sustainability communication statements were contextualized to fashion brands.
Green Signaling Strength (GS)	Panopoulos et al. (2023) ; Montecchi et al. (2024)	Credibility, clarity, consistency, and recognizability items were rewritten to refer specifically to green fashion claims.
Value Differentiation (VD)	Arora and Manchanda (2022) ; Jeong and Ko (2021) ; Pandey et al. (2023) ; Wu and Lee (2025)	Perceived green value and consumption-value items were reframed as ethical, emotional, symbolic, design, quality, and added value relative to conventional fashion.
Environmental Identity (EI)	Han et al. (2024) ; Yang et al. (2024)	Environmental knowledge, values, beliefs, and self-concept statements were adapted to reflect personal ecological identity and sustainable consumption.
Consumption Visibility (CV)	Saepudin et al. (2023) ; Schiaroli et al. (2025)	Public observability and identity-expression statements were contextualized to visible

		clothing choices and social impressions.
Purchase Intention (PI)	Alvino and Dangelico (2022) ; Chi et al. (2021) ; Hasbullah et al. (2022)	Behavioral-intention items were contextualized to future consideration, choice, willingness to buy, and recommendation of sustainable fashion.

PLS-SEM was selected because the proposed model combines prediction-oriented relationships with sequential mediation and moderation. Measurement quality was examined using item outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). Structural assessment included standardized path coefficients, t statistics, p values, R², VIF, f², Q², indirect effects, confidence intervals, and interaction terms. Statistical significance was determined through bootstrapping. The structural relations were represented by the following equations:

$$GS = \beta_{10} + \beta_{11}GM + \varepsilon_1$$

$$VD = \beta_{20} + \beta_{21}GS + \beta_{22}GM + \beta_{23}EI + \beta_{24}(GS \times EI) + \varepsilon_2$$

$$PI = \beta_{30} + \beta_{31}VD + \beta_{32}GS + \beta_{33}GM + \beta_{34}CV + \beta_{35}(VD \times CV) + \varepsilon_3$$

The sequential indirect effect was estimated as $\beta_{11} \times \beta_{21} \times \beta_{31}$, representing $GM \rightarrow GS \rightarrow VD \rightarrow PI$.

$$GS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 GM + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

$$VD = \beta_0 + \beta_1 GS + \beta_2 GM + \beta_3 (GS \times EI) + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

$$PI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 VD + \beta_2 GS + \beta_3 GM + \beta_4 (VD \times CV) + \varepsilon \quad (3)$$

$$Indirect\ Effect = \beta_{GM \rightarrow GS} \times \beta_{GS \rightarrow VD} \times \beta_{VD \rightarrow PI} \quad (4)$$

The equations separate the direct paths from the sequential indirect mechanism and the two interaction terms. Accordingly, the estimated standardized coefficients describe the strength and direction of predictive relationships within the specified model; they should not be interpreted as establishing temporal precedence or experimental causation.

Because every construct was obtained from the same self-report instrument at a single point in time, common method bias was evaluated through two complementary checks. Harman's single-factor procedure showed that the first unrotated factor accounted for 27.28% of total variance, well below the 50% benchmark. Full-collinearity VIF values ranged between 1.234 and 2.553, which also remained below the conservative cutoff of 3.3. Taken together, these diagnostics suggest that common method bias was unlikely to materially distort the estimated relationships. The results of these two common method bias assessments are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Common Method Bias Assessment

Assessment	Result	Threshold	Decision
Harman's single-factor test	27.28%	< 50%	Accepted
Full collinearity VIF range	1.234–2.553	< 3.3	Accepted

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Respondent Profile

The final dataset consisted of 200 respondents. Nearly half of the sample (49.5%) was aged 18-24 years, making this the largest age category. Respondents aged 25-30 years represented 32.0%, while those aged 31-35 years accounted for 18.5%. Thus, 81.5% of participants were no older than 30. The age composition indicates that the evidence primarily reflects early-adulthood consumers who are likely to encounter fashion trends, digital promotional content, and sustainability communication through online channels. The age and gender characteristics of the respondents are presented in Figure 1.

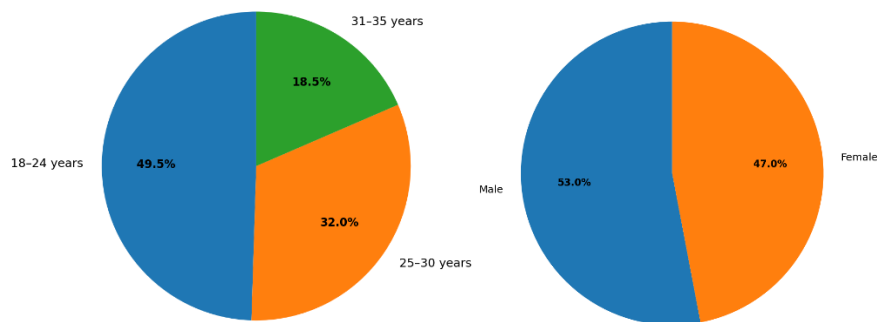


Figure 1. Respondent Characteristics by Age group (left) and Gender (right)

Gender representation was comparatively balanced, with men accounting for 53.0% of respondents and women for 47.0%. The absence of a large gender imbalance reduces the likelihood that the descriptive profile is driven by one gender group. Overall, the sample can be characterized as young and digitally engaged, which is appropriate for examining green marketing and sustainable-fashion purchase intention but should also be kept in mind when considering generalizability.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics summarize respondents' overall assessments of the six latent constructs. Green Marketing recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.587$; $SD = 0.577$), indicating relatively favorable recognition of sustainability-oriented marketing practices. Consumption Visibility was also rated relatively high ($M = 3.500$; $SD = 0.745$), consistent with the public observability of fashion choices. Environmental Identity produced a mean of 3.417 ($SD = 0.842$), suggesting a moderate-to-high degree of ecological self-identification among respondents. The descriptive statistics for all six latent constructs are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Latent Constructs

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Green Marketing	3.587	0.577	0.024	-0.189
Green Signaling Strength	2.572	0.681	0.209	-0.104
Value Differentiation	2.292	0.709	0.495	0.343
Environmental Identity	3.417	0.842	-0.046	-0.935
Consumption Visibility	3.500	0.745	-0.121	-0.359
Purchase Intention	3.183	0.587	0.090	-0.316

Purchase Intention was more moderate ($M = 3.183$; $SD = 0.587$), implying that awareness of environmental marketing and ecological concerns did not automatically correspond with a strong willingness to buy sustainable fashion. Green Signaling Strength ($M = 2.572$; $SD = 0.681$) and Value Differentiation ($M = 2.292$; $SD = 0.709$) had the lowest averages. This pattern is consistent with the possibility that respondents noticed green communication but were less convinced of its signaling strength or of the distinct value offered by sustainable products. The reported skewness and kurtosis values did not indicate problematic distributional patterns for the subsequent multivariate analysis.

4.3 Measurement Model Assessment

Indicator reliability was evaluated through outer loadings. The reported construct-level ranges were all above 0.700, extending from 0.776 to 0.903. Specifically, Green Marketing ranged from 0.776-0.826, Green Signaling Strength from 0.839-0.859, Value Differentiation from 0.845-0.885, Environmental Identity from 0.869-0.903, Consumption Visibility from 0.851-0.880, and Purchase Intention from 0.782-0.825. Complete measurement-item wording and source information are presented in Appendix A. Appendix B is intended for the exact item-level SmartPLS loadings; these values should be transferred from the original SmartPLS output before resubmission because the available manuscript contains only loading ranges. No unreported empirical values were inferred during this revision. A summary of the outer loading results is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of Outer Loadings

Construct	Number of Items	Outer Loading Range	Threshold	Decision
Green Marketing	5	0.776–0.826	> 0.700	Accepted
Green Signaling Strength	5	0.839–0.859	> 0.700	Accepted
Value Differentiation	5	0.845–0.885	> 0.700	Accepted
Environmental Identity	5	0.869–0.903	> 0.700	Accepted
Consumption Visibility	5	0.851–0.880	> 0.700	Accepted
Purchase Intention	5	0.782–0.825	> 0.700	Accepted

Internal-consistency results were satisfactory for every construct. Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.852 to 0.932, and all values were above the commonly applied 0.700 criterion. Composite reliability ranged from 0.895 to 0.949, providing further evidence that the indicators within each construct produced consistent scores. The reliability and convergent-validity results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Decision
Green Marketing	0.859	0.899	0.639	Accepted
Green Signaling Strength	0.905	0.929	0.725	Accepted
Value Differentiation	0.912	0.934	0.739	Accepted
Environmental Identity	0.932	0.949	0.788	Accepted
Consumption Visibility	0.915	0.937	0.747	Accepted
Purchase Intention	0.852	0.895	0.630	Accepted

Convergent validity was assessed with average variance extracted (AVE). Values ranged from 0.630 to 0.788 and therefore exceeded the 0.500 criterion for all constructs. Each latent variable consequently accounted for more than half of the variance in its indicators. Environmental Identity showed the largest AVE (0.788), whereas Purchase Intention had the smallest (0.630) but still met the required level. These results, together with the reliability estimates, support proceeding to discriminant-validity and structural-model evaluation.

4.4 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was examined to determine whether the latent variables captured empirically distinct concepts despite their theoretical connections. This issue is particularly relevant for Green Marketing, Green Signaling Strength, and Value Differentiation because they represent successive stages in the proposed mechanism. The heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) served as the primary diagnostic. Every coefficient was below the conservative 0.85 threshold, with the largest value observed for Value Differentiation and Purchase Intention (HTMT = 0.699). Although these constructs are related, the coefficient remains sufficiently below the cutoff to indicate empirical distinction. The measurement model therefore satisfied the discriminant-validity requirement for structural testing. The HTMT results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. HTMT Matrix

Construct	GM	GS	VD	EI	CV	PI
GM	1.000					
GS	0.649	1.000				
VD	0.397	0.567	1.000			
EI	0.055	0.036	0.061	1.000		
CV	0.108	0.085	0.072	0.095	1.000	
PI	0.250	0.336	0.699	0.458	0.336	1.000

4.5 Structural Model Assessment

Structural-model testing was then used to evaluate the hypothesized paths among the latent variables. The estimated structural path coefficients and hypothesis-testing results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Structural Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Green Marketing → Green Signaling Strength	0.572	9.800	0.000	Supported
H2	Green Signaling Strength → Value Differentiation	0.464	6.251	0.000	Supported
H3	Value Differentiation → Purchase Intention	0.631	9.613	0.000	Supported
H4	Green Marketing → Value Differentiation	0.086	1.163	0.246	Not supported
H5	Green Signaling Strength → Purchase Intention	-0.035	-0.466	0.642	Not supported
H6	Green Marketing → Purchase Intention	0.012	0.179	0.858	Not supported

Green Marketing was positively associated with Green Signaling Strength ($\beta = 0.572$; $t = 9.800$; $p = 0.000$), providing support for H1. Thus, greater perceived green-marketing activity

corresponded with clearer and more credible environmental signals. Green Signaling Strength was also positively related to Value Differentiation ($\beta = 0.464$; $t = 6.251$; $p = 0.000$), supporting H2 and indicating that stronger sustainability signals were accompanied by a greater perception that sustainable fashion offers distinct value.

Value Differentiation showed the largest significant direct relationship with Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.631$; $t = 9.613$; $p = 0.000$), supporting H3. By comparison, Green Marketing did not significantly predict Value Differentiation, Green Signaling Strength did not significantly predict Purchase Intention, and Green Marketing had no significant direct relationship with Purchase Intention. The configuration of significant and non-significant paths therefore points to an indirect evaluative sequence rather than a direct persuasion effect.

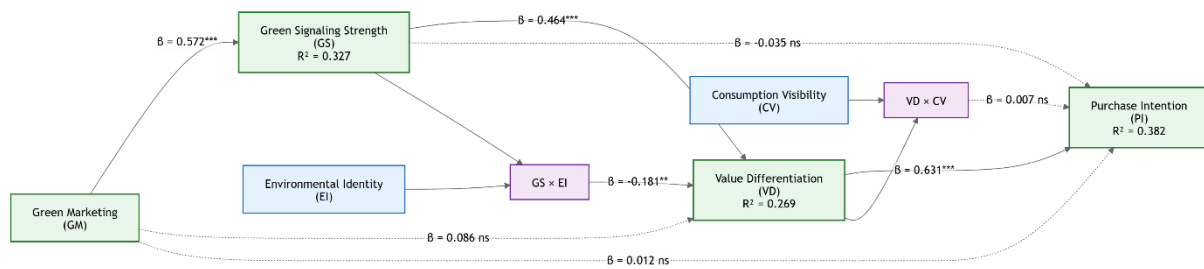


Figure 2. Path Diagram of Structural Model

As summarized in Figure 2, the statistically supported core of the model follows the sequence Green Marketing → Green Signaling Strength → Value Differentiation → Purchase Intention. The first path was significant at $\beta = 0.572$ ($p < 0.001$), the second at $\beta = 0.464$ ($p < 0.001$), and Value Differentiation was the strongest direct predictor of Purchase Intention at $\beta = 0.631$ ($p < 0.001$). The remaining direct paths from Green Marketing to Value Differentiation and Purchase Intention and from Green Signaling Strength to Purchase Intention were non-significant. The figure also reports a significant negative interaction of Environmental Identity with the Green Signaling Strength-Value Differentiation path ($\beta = -0.181$, $p < 0.01$), whereas the Value Differentiation × Consumption Visibility interaction was not significant.

4.6 Structural Model Quality Assessment

Model quality was examined through VIF, f^2 , R^2 , and Q^2 to assess collinearity, effect magnitude, explained variance, and predictive relevance. The results of the structural model quality assessment are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Structural Model Quality Assessment

Endogenous Construct	Predictor	VIF	f^2	R^2	Q^2
Green Signaling Strength	Green Marketing	1.000	0.485	0.327	0.308
Value Differentiation	Green Signaling Strength	1.485	0.198	0.269	0.253
Value Differentiation	Green Marketing	1.485	0.007	0.269	0.253
Purchase Intention	Value Differentiation	1.367	0.471	0.382	0.364
Purchase Intention	Green Signaling Strength	1.780	0.001	0.382	0.364
Purchase Intention	Green Marketing	1.495	0.000	0.382	0.364

All structural VIF values fell between 1.000 and 1.780, indicating no material collinearity problem among the predictors. Effect-size estimates showed a large contribution of Green Marketing to Green Signaling Strength and a large contribution of Value Differentiation to Purchase Intention. Green Signaling Strength had a moderate effect on Value Differentiation, while the f^2 values for Green Marketing $\rightarrow$ Value Differentiation, Green Signaling Strength $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention, and Green Marketing $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention were negligible.

Green Marketing accounted for 32.7% of the variance in Green Signaling Strength. Together, Green Marketing and Green Signaling Strength explained 26.9% of Value Differentiation, and the predictors of Purchase Intention explained 38.2% of its variance. These R^2 values represent weak-to-moderate through moderate explanatory capacity. Q^2 values for all three endogenous constructs were greater than zero, providing evidence of predictive relevance and supporting continuation to the mediation and moderation analyses.

4.7 Mediation Analysis

The mediation test assessed whether the relationship between Green Marketing and Purchase Intention was transmitted through Green Signaling Strength and Value Differentiation. The results of the mediation analysis are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Mediation Analysis

Indirect Path	Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	p-value	Decision
GM $\rightarrow$ GS $\rightarrow$ VD	0.265	0.170 ; 0.370	0.000	Significant
GM $\rightarrow$ GS $\rightarrow$ VD $\rightarrow$ PI	0.167	0.103 ; 0.234	0.000	Significant
Total indirect GM $\rightarrow$ PI	0.202	0.088 ; 0.322	0.000	Significant
Direct GM $\rightarrow$ PI	0.012	-0.129 ; 0.149	0.850	Not significant

The indirect path from Green Marketing through Green Signaling Strength to Value Differentiation was significant ($\beta = 0.265$; $p = 0.000$). More importantly, the complete sequential pathway Green Marketing $\rightarrow$ Green Signaling Strength $\rightarrow$ Value Differentiation $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention was also significant ($\beta = 0.167$; $p = 0.000$). These results support the proposed mechanism in which environmental marketing first strengthens the perceived signal and that signal subsequently contributes to differentiated value before purchase intention is formed. The overall indirect relationship between Green Marketing and Purchase Intention was significant ($\beta = 0.202$; $p = 0.000$), whereas the direct relationship remained non-significant ($\beta = 0.012$; $p = 0.850$). This pattern is consistent with full mediation in the estimated model: green marketing is associated with purchase intention through the successive interpretation of the message as a strong signal and the conversion of that signal into differentiated consumer value.

4.8 Moderation Analysis

Moderation testing evaluated whether Environmental Identity and Consumption Visibility altered the focal relationships. The Green Signaling Strength $\times$ Environmental Identity interaction significantly predicted Value Differentiation ($\beta = -0.181$; $p = 0.005$). Based on standardized moderator values, the estimated Green Signaling Strength slope was approximately 0.645 at one standard deviation below the mean of Environmental Identity and 0.283 at one standard deviation above the mean. The negative coefficient therefore implies that

external green signals contribute more strongly to differentiated value among consumers with comparatively weaker environmental identity. The Value Differentiation $\times$ Consumption Visibility interaction was non-significant ($\beta = 0.007$; $p = 0.903$). The results of the moderation analysis are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Moderation Analysis

Moderation Path	Interaction Effect	p-value Decision
Green Signaling Strength $\times$ Environmental Identity $\rightarrow$ Value Differentiation	-0.181	0.005 Significant
Value Differentiation $\times$ Consumption Visibility $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.007	0.903 Not significant

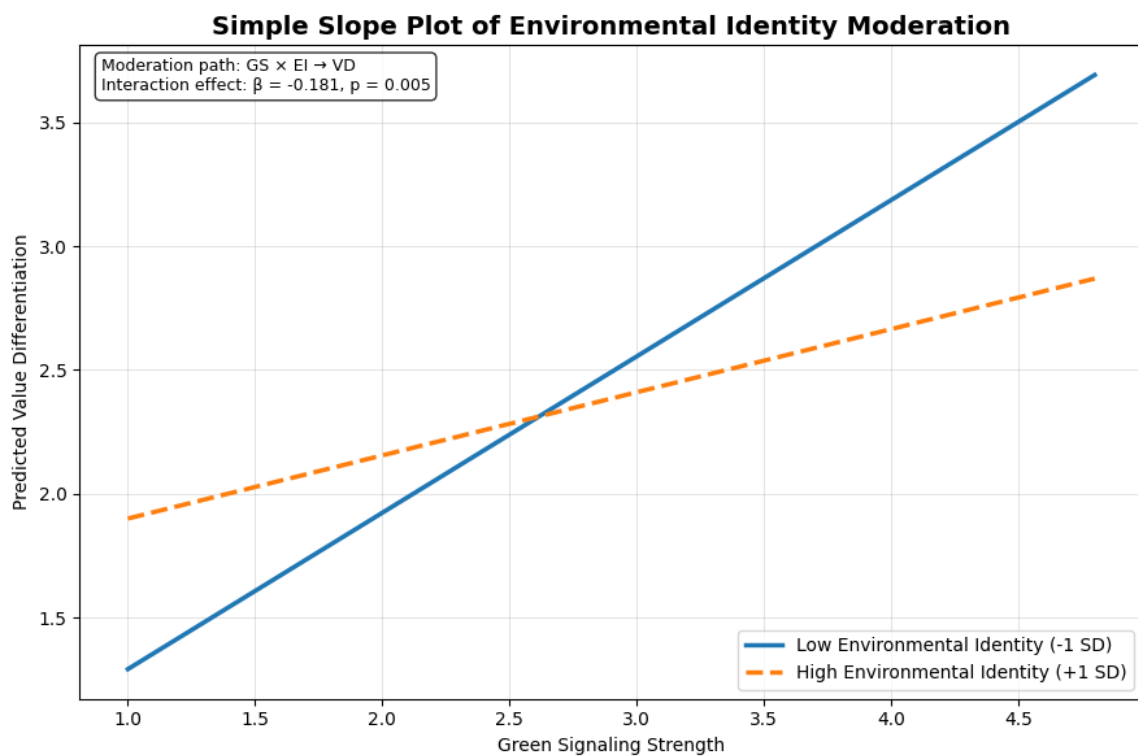


Figure 3. Simple Slope Plot of Environmental Identity Moderation

Figure 3 is consistent with the interaction coefficient: the estimated slope linking Green Signaling Strength to Value Differentiation declines from approximately 0.645 at low Environmental Identity (-1 SD) to 0.283 at high Environmental Identity (+1 SD). This pattern suggests that consumers with a stronger environmental self-concept depend less on brand-provided cues when evaluating the distinct value of sustainable fashion. The reported slopes are descriptive transformations of the main and interaction coefficients; confidence intervals for these conditional effects should be taken directly from the SmartPLS output before final submission.

4.9 Discussion

The results demonstrate that green marketing is not, by itself, sufficient to produce purchase intention for sustainable fashion. Respondents may notice references to recycled fabrics, environmentally preferable packaging, or responsible production without immediately

deciding that the product is worth buying. The significant Green Marketing → Green Signaling Strength path shows that communication can improve the perceived clarity and credibility of environmental information, but the non-significant direct path to Purchase Intention indicates that an additional evaluative process is required. This interpretation is consistent with research showing that sustainable-clothing intentions depend on trust, attitudes, environmental concern, and the behavioral relevance of product information rather than simple exposure to green claims (Abrar et al., 2021; Rausch & Kopplin, 2021; Zimand-Sheiner & Lissitsa, 2024). Although Fauziah and Imaningsih (2025) reported a direct influence of green advertising on purchase decisions in e-commerce, the present findings indicate that sustainable-fashion communication is more effective when consumers first recognize a credible signal and then perceive differentiated value.

The absence of a significant direct Green Marketing → Purchase Intention path also highlights the importance of evidence quality. Generic sustainability language can be insufficient when consumers are alert to greenwashing or cannot verify what an environmental claim actually represents. In online fashion settings, third-party certification has been shown to strengthen information credibility and thereby support buying intentions, illustrating why verifiability matters (Behre & Cauberghe, 2025). For managers, this means that claims such as 'eco-friendly' are more likely to be meaningful when accompanied by traceable material information, recognized certification, specific production practices, and product benefits that consumers can compare with conventional alternatives.

Value Differentiation emerged as the most influential direct predictor of Purchase Intention. Consumers were more inclined toward sustainable fashion when they viewed it as offering a meaningful advantage over ordinary alternatives, rather than merely carrying an environmental label. That advantage can arise from ethical production, durability, emotional satisfaction, design distinctiveness, or the belief that the purchase represents a better consumption choice. Consistent with the findings of Pandey et al. (2023), Pires et al. (2024), and Helinski et al. (2025), perceived value, willingness to pay, and product-specific evaluations are central to sustainable-fashion decisions.

This finding broadens the interpretation of sustainable-fashion value beyond environmental performance alone. A product may differentiate itself through responsible sourcing, emotional satisfaction, identity expression, longer useful life, design quality, or other benefits that consumers can recognize in comparison with conventional fashion. These dimensions matter because sustainability attributes compete with familiar purchase criteria such as appearance, usability, and perceived quality. Green positioning is therefore more persuasive when environmental benefits are integrated with a broader consumer value proposition.

The mediation analysis clarifies how green marketing becomes behaviorally relevant. Environmental communication first needs to function as a credible signal; the signal then needs to create a perception that the sustainable product offers distinct value; only after these evaluations does purchase intention increase. The practical difficulty is therefore not simply generating awareness of sustainability, but making the claim sufficiently concrete for consumers to understand why the product is trustworthy, different, and personally relevant. As indicated by Bianchi and Gonzalez (2021), Jeong and Ko (2021), and Saepudin et al. (2023), information about material origin, recycled content, production ethics, and other verifiable practices can help connect environmental communication with product value.

Signaling theory provides a useful explanation for this sequence because many sustainability attributes are credence characteristics that buyers cannot immediately confirm. A consumer can inspect the appearance of a garment but may be unable to verify recycled content, labor practices, or supply-chain responsibility at the point of purchase. Brand communication can reduce this information asymmetry, yet its influence remains limited if the signal does not translate into benefits that the consumer considers distinctive. Value Differentiation therefore functions as the evaluative bridge between the credibility of the environmental signal and the intention to buy.

The moderation results show that the effectiveness of green signals also depends on the consumer. Environmental Identity weakened the Green Signaling Strength → Value Differentiation relationship, suggesting that individuals with firmly established ecological values require less assistance from brand-generated cues to evaluate sustainable products. Consumers with weaker environmental identity, in contrast, appear to benefit more from explicit external evidence. This interpretation is consistent with the broader observation that sustainable-clothing behavior is heterogeneous across consumer groups and generations (Masserini et al., 2024). Consumption Visibility did not moderate the Value Differentiation → Purchase Intention relationship. Although apparel is publicly observable, respondents may have based sustainable-fashion evaluations more on ethical meaning, usefulness, quality, or affordability than on social display. Evidence from Jin et al. (2024), Sueda and Seo (2024), and Yang et al. (2024) similarly indicates that sustainable-fashion intention can be shaped by environmental values and product evaluations even when public recognition is not the dominant motive.

The study contributes theoretically by specifying an evaluative mechanism between green marketing and purchase intention. Instead of assuming that environmental promotion directly persuades consumers, the findings indicate that green communication must first be interpreted as a credible signal and then converted into differentiated value. Integrating signaling theory with value differentiation helps explain why the same sustainability message may generate awareness without generating purchase intention. In sustainable fashion, the persuasive force of a green claim depends less on the presence of environmental language itself than on whether that language gives consumers a credible and distinctive reason to prefer the product.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

The empirical results indicate that Green Marketing was not directly associated with stronger Purchase Intention. The supported mechanism was sequential: Green Marketing predicted Green Signaling Strength, Green Signaling Strength predicted Value Differentiation, and Value Differentiation was the strongest direct predictor of Purchase Intention. The significant sequential indirect effect helps reconcile inconsistent findings in prior green-marketing research by showing that environmental communication can matter without exerting an immediate direct effect on intention. The study therefore positions Value Differentiation as the principal evaluative link through which credible sustainability communication becomes relevant to consumer choice. Given the cross-sectional self-report design, these relationships should be read as theoretically directed predictive associations rather than definitive causal effects.

From a managerial perspective, sustainable-fashion brands should move beyond broad environmental positioning and provide evidence that enables consumers to identify both credibility and distinct value. Relevant practices include transparent information about materials, ethical-production procedures, recognized certification, durability, design quality, and other benefits that can be evaluated against conventional alternatives. Verifiability is particularly important for reducing skepticism. The moderation result further suggests that explicit and understandable green cues may be especially useful for consumers with weaker Environmental Identity. Effective strategy should therefore combine trustworthy sustainability evidence with product attractiveness and a clear value proposition.

6. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations define the scope of these findings. First, 81.5% of participants were 18-30 years old and respondents were recruited online, so the sample primarily represents younger, digitally active consumers; conclusions may differ for older consumers, people with lower digital engagement, different income groups, or other geographic settings. Second, the cross-sectional self-report design cannot establish temporal order or causal effects. Third, although procedural controls and statistical diagnostics did not indicate severe common method bias, all focal measures originated from the same respondent source. Fourth, the model did not incorporate potentially important factors such as price sensitivity, brand trust, fashion involvement, perceived quality, or greenwashing skepticism. Future studies could strengthen inference through longitudinal or experimental designs, probability or stratified sampling, broader multi-regional samples, observed purchasing behavior, and multi-group comparisons across demographic and product categories.

Declaration of AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used ChatGPT by OpenAI to assist in language refinement, article structuring, paraphrasing, and preliminary organization of the manuscript. After using this tool, the author(s) reviewed, verified, revised, and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, originality, and final content of the publication.

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Appendix A: Measurement Items

Construct	Code	Measurement Item*
Green Marketing	GM1	Sustainable fashion brands communicate their environmental practices clearly.
	GM2	Sustainable fashion brands promote eco-friendly materials in their products.
	GM3	Sustainable fashion brands emphasize ethical and responsible production.
	GM4	Sustainable fashion brands use green messages in their marketing communication.
	GM5	Sustainable fashion brands show concern for environmental sustainability.
Green Signaling Strength	GS1	The environmental claims of sustainable fashion brands are easy to understand.
	GS2	The green messages communicated by sustainable fashion brands are credible.
	GS3	Sustainable fashion brands provide consistent environmental signals.
	GS4	The sustainability information provided by fashion brands is convincing.
	GS5	Green messages help me recognize whether a fashion product is environmentally responsible.
Value Differentiation	VD1	Sustainable fashion products offer unique value compared with conventional fashion products.
	VD2	Sustainable fashion products provide ethical value that makes them different.
	VD3	Sustainable fashion products provide emotional satisfaction.
	VD4	Sustainable fashion products are distinctive in design, quality, or meaning.
	VD5	Sustainable fashion products offer added value beyond ordinary fashion products.
Environmental Identity	EI1	Environmental concern is part of who I am.
	EI2	I see myself as someone who cares about environmental issues.
	EI3	I prefer products that are aligned with environmental responsibility.
	EI4	Protecting the environment reflects my personal values.
	EI5	I feel personally connected to sustainable consumption.
Consumption Visibility	CV1	My fashion choices can be seen by other people.
	CV2	Clothing allows me to express my values publicly.
	CV3	Other people may notice the type of fashion products I use.
	CV4	Fashion products are important for social impression.
	CV5	Sustainable fashion can communicate personal identity to others.
Purchase Intention	PI1	I intend to buy sustainable fashion products in the future.
	PI2	I would consider sustainable fashion products when shopping.
	PI3	I am likely to choose sustainable fashion over conventional alternatives.

Construct	Code Measurement Item*
	PI4 I am willing to purchase fashion products with credible sustainability claims.
	PI5 I would recommend sustainable fashion products to others.

The items were adapted and contextually modified rather than reproduced verbatim. Green Marketing was informed by [Huang et al. \(2024\)](#), [Panopoulos et al. \(2023\)](#), and [Montecchi et al. \(2024\)](#); Green Signaling Strength by [Panopoulos et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Montecchi et al. \(2024\)](#); Value Differentiation by [Arora and Manchanda \(2022\)](#), [Jeong and Ko \(2021\)](#), [Pandey et al. \(2023\)](#), and [Wu and Lee \(2025\)](#); Environmental Identity by [Han et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Yang et al. \(2024\)](#); Consumption Visibility by [Saepudin et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Schiaroli et al. \(2025\)](#); and Purchase Intention by [Alvino and Dangelico \(2022\)](#), [Chi et al. \(2021\)](#), and [Hasbullah et al. \(2022\)](#). Contextual modification replaced generic product references with sustainable-fashion terminology, simplified wording, and retained the conceptual meaning of the source constructs.

Appendix B: Item-Level Outer Loadings

Editorial reporting note: the current manuscript reports only construct-level loading ranges. The exact indicator loadings below must be populated from the original SmartPLS outer-loading output before resubmission. Placeholder cells are intentionally used to avoid inventing empirical values.

Construct	Indicator	Outer loading from SmartPLS
Green Marketing	GM1	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Green Marketing	GM2	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Green Marketing	GM3	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Green Marketing	GM4	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Green Marketing	GM5	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Green Signaling Strength	GS1	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Green Signaling Strength	GS2	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Green Signaling Strength	GS3	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Green Signaling Strength	GS4	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Green Signaling Strength	GS5	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Value Differentiation	VD1	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Value Differentiation	VD2	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Value Differentiation	VD3	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Value Differentiation	VD4	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Value Differentiation	VD5	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]

Environmental Identity	EI1	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Environmental Identity	EI2	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Environmental Identity	EI3	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Environmental Identity	EI4	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Environmental Identity	EI5	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Consumption Visibility	CV1	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Consumption Visibility	CV2	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Consumption Visibility	CV3	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Consumption Visibility	CV4	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Consumption Visibility	CV5	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Purchase Intention	PI1	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Purchase Intention	PI2	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Purchase Intention	PI3	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Purchase Intention	PI4	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]
Purchase Intention	PI5	[Insert exact SmartPLS value]