

Eco-chic or trendy-chic? Decoding consumer preferences in sustainable and fast fashion across the EU

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Abstract. *The ongoing transformation of the fashion industry is driven by an increasing focus on sustainability, ethical practices, and responsible consumer behavior. Simultaneously, social media platforms have emerged as influential forces in this field, shaping fashion trends and consumer preferences. Despite a substantial body of literature investigating consumer preferences between fast and sustainable fashion, a gap in understanding the intricate relationship between fashion preferences, socio-economic profiling, and social media engagement is evident. Thus, this research was aimed at comparatively decoding EU consumers' preferences for fast fashion against sustainable fashion by exploring the interplay of demographic factors – age, gender, and geographical location – on fashion preferences, as expressed through the digital engagement with fashion-related content on the Meta social platforms. The research methodology implied resorting to logistic regression analysis, aiming to uncover the underlying patterns that fundamentally characterize consumers' preferences for fashion in the EU. The results provide novel insights into how digital engagement with fashion-related content can act as a barometer for regional fashion identities and preferences, useful for the identification of both convergence and inflection points. Moreover, findings offer a robust foundation for crafting strategies that promote sustainable fashion practices, tailored to specific EU age, gender, and location demographics, by leveraging the insights gained about EU consumer preferences.*

Keywords: fashion industry, sustainability, consumer preferences, social platforms, demographic trends, consumer profiling, sustainable development.

Please cite the article as follows: Apetrei, A., Constantin, M., Deaconu, E.-M., Dinu, M., Pătărlăgeanu, S.R., Petrescu, I.-E. (2024), "Eco-chic or trendy-chic? Decoding consumer preferences in sustainable and fast fashion across the EU", *Management & Marketing*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 179-210, DOI: 10.2478/mmcks-2024-0009.

Introduction

In recent years, the fashion industry has faced increased scrutiny about its environmental and societal implications. The interplay between the creation and utilization of fashion has been associated with various challenges, including environmental pollution, excessive waste generation, and the exploitation of labor, hence prompting apprehensions over the sustainability and ethical dimensions of these practices. Consequently, there has been an increasing focus on the necessity of adopting a fashion industry that is more environmentally sustainable and socially conscious (Heuer & Becker-Leifhold, 2018).

The fashion industry has experienced notable transformations, characterized by the emergence of fast fashion and a growing apprehension regarding the ecological and societal consequences associated with garment manufacturing. The increasing awareness among consumers regarding these issues has resulted in a growing demand for fashion products that are both environmentally sustainable and produced with ethical considerations (Toader et al., 2023). The previously described situation has led to the formation of two discernible trends within the fashion industry, namely eco-chic and trendy-chic. The contention may be made that both approaches share the common objective of fostering a certain level of ethical practices inside the fashion industry's purchasing process; these approaches differ in terms of their techniques and target audiences (Cairns et al., 2022; Şişu et al., 2023).

The fashion business has become the subject of a contentious discussion between two contrasting perspectives: (a) fast fashion; and (b) sustainable fashion. The term "fast fashion" pertains to the rapid large-scale manufacturing and consumption of inexpensive, fashionable garments, whereas sustainable fashion centers around the implementation of environmentally and socially conscious methods across the whole supply chain (Hassan et al., 2022; Wren, 2022). The discernible outcomes of this discourse have shown in the proliferation of brands advocating for sustainable fashion and the adoption of more deliberate and contemplative consumption patterns by customers (Lucaci et al., 2022; Gomes de Oliveira et al., 2022; Willett et al., 2022). However, this discourse extends beyond the realm of industry and production practices. This phenomenon also encompasses customer preferences and intentions. Despite the growing body of literature on this topic, the research contributes to the existing literature by focusing on the heretofore unexplored area of consumer awareness regarding the environmental and social implications of the fashion business, which has been overlooked in recent studies (Arribas-Ibar et al., 2022; Niculescu et al., 2022; Pucci et al., 2022).

The objective of this research was to address the existing vacuum in knowledge concerning consumer preferences for fashion in the context of the sustainability paradigm in the EU by paying great attention to the socio-demographic characteristics of consumers. Thus, this research was aimed at comparatively decoding EU consumers' preference for fast fashion against sustainable fashion by meticulously dissecting the interplay of demographic factors – age, gender, and geographical location – on fashion preferences, as expressed by EU

consumers' engagement with fashion-related content on the Meta social platforms. By employing logistic regression analysis, this research was aimed to uncover the underlying patterns that fundamentally characterize consumers' preferences for fashion, based on socio-demographic variables.

This paper sought to bring contributions to the field by offering a comprehensive overview of how regional European identities and cultural proclivities intersect with digital trends, influencing attitudes towards fashion across various EU demographics. This research was designed not only to enrich the academic discourse on digital engagement with fashion-related content, but also to provide actionable insights for businesses and policymakers in developing targeted, effective strategies that efficiently resonate with the multifaceted needs of the diverse, socially-connected EU citizens. Thus, the research endeavored to contribute with an insightful understanding of the EU digital landscape in the fashion industry; aiming to facilitate a strategic shift towards more personalized and sustainable fashion industry; grounded in tailor-made policies. The analysis of consumer preferences for fashion based on various socio-demographic factors is crucial for guiding the establishment of a sustainable framework within the fashion sector.

The novelty factor of the paper resides in its unique analytical framework, which resorts to logistic regression models to decode the relation between socio-demographic factors and fashion preferences across EU-27 populations, based on the consumers' engagement with fashion-related content on Meta-owned social platforms. Unlike previous studies (Dangelico et al., 2022; Manrai et al., 2001; Parker & Lee, 2023; Slaton & Pookulangara, 2022; Tudorache et al., 2023) that have predominantly focused on either demographic or geographic influences in isolation, this paper delves into the symbiotic relationship between these factors and their collective correlation with fashion preferences, as expressed by consumers on Meta platforms. This research pioneers in integrating age, gender, and geographic location variables to provide a detailed view of consumers' preferences in the context of the eco-chic and trendy-chic dichotomy.

Literature review

The prevalence of the "fast fashion" phenomenon has exerted a significant influence on the fashion industry for an extended period (Kahoush & Kadi, 2022; Khan et al., 2024; Vijayarasa & Liu, 2022). However, an increasing number of customers are presently pursuing alternative options that are in accordance with their personal values and convictions. The change in consumer choices has generated scholarly interest in understanding the underlying motive behind consumer preferences and its ultimate objective. Additionally, there is an increasing desire for transparency in the fashion supply chain (Pérez et al., 2021). The use of ecofriendly materials, the shift towards circular fashion models, and the mitigation of the industry's carbon and water footprints have been significantly amplified as a result. In this emerging sustainable paradigm of the fashion business, the ethical considerations of fair labor practices and animal welfare are of the utmost importance (James & Montgomery, 2017; Jestratijevic et al., 2020; Strat et al., 2024). Brands that demonstrate a commitment to these principles and sustainable practices are increasingly garnering favor among consumers, whereas those that remain apathetic towards the impending shift run the danger of experiencing a decline in their market share (Jacobson & Harrison, 2022; Vijayarasa & Liu, 2022). Hence, it has become evident that the fashion industry is experiencing a notable surge

in accountability, transparency, and the adoption of ecologically sustainable practices (Kim & Oh, 2020).

The influence of Meta social media platforms on fashion involvement is quite significant in today's landscape of enhancing consumer preferences. Consumers are increasingly relying on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram for inspiration, knowledge, and social interaction (Rădoi et al., 2023; Panakaje & Madhura, 2022). Consequently, these digital spaces have become crucial in influencing tastes within the fashion sector. Meta platforms provide a dynamic setting for users to interact with fashion content from companies, influencers, and other customers, impacting their purchasing choices and changing their style perceptions. This is achieved through features including feeds, stories, and sponsored content. An important factor in consumers' interaction with fashion brands on Meta platforms is the widespread impact produced by influencer culture. In the fashion industry, influencers, who have gained a large number of followers due to their carefully crafted aesthetics and lifestyle, have a strong impact on customer tastes. Influencers use their platforms to effectively serve as intermediates between companies and customers by showcasing apparel, accessories, and beauty products through sponsored posts, affiliate marketing, and brand partnerships (Khodabandeh & Lindh, 2021). The support and promotion of specific fashion items by influencers can result in higher demand and sales (Le & Aydin, 2022), highlighting the significant impact that Meta platforms have on setting trends and consumer behaviors in the fashion sector.

Furthermore, Meta platforms are essential tools for brands aiming to comprehend and interact with their intended audiences. Brands can obtain significant data on consumer demographics, interests, and habits by utilizing the analytics and insights offered by such platforms. Through the examination of indicators such as engagement rates, reach, and audience demographics, brands can customize their marketing tactics and product offerings to more effectively connect with their intended consumer categories. Utilizing data in this regard not only improves brands' capacity to engage with consumers but also empowers them to adjust to changing trends and tastes in the dynamic fashion industry. Meta platforms enhance the process of establishing and fostering communities, as well as promoting social engagement among fashion fans. Studies in social media and consumer behavior provide evidence that Meta platforms facilitate the creation and development of communities, encouraging social interaction among fashion enthusiasts of various age demographics. A study conducted by Lim and Chung (2016) revealed that social media platforms, such as Facebook, are crucial in enabling social interactions and the establishment of communities among users who share common interests, such as fashion aficionados. The study emphasized the role of fashion-specialized Facebook groups as online communities that facilitate the exchange of knowledge, solicitation of guidance, and establishment of connections among individuals who possess a common interest in style. In addition, a research effort conducted by Kim and Ko (2019) examined the function of Instagram in establishing virtual communities focused on fashion and lifestyle topics. The study revealed that Instagram's visual structure and focus on user-generated material enable the development of specialized communities where individuals can participate in conversations, exchange ideas, and establish social bonds centered around their fashion inclinations. This study highlights the role of Meta platforms such as Instagram in facilitating social interaction and promoting the formation of communities among fashion enthusiasts of different age groups.

In addition, Chen and Shen (2020) conducted a study examining the influence of social media on consumer behavior in the fashion sector, specifically targeting various age groups. The study unveiled that Meta platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, have a pivotal function in linking consumers with brands and individuals who share similar interests, regardless of their age. The study highlighted the role of social media platforms in enabling the creation of virtual communities, where users can participate in conversations, seek advice, and exchange their fashion-related experiences. This, in turn, promotes social interaction among people of different age groups. Moreover, the rise of digital platforms and social media continues to reshape consumer preferences for fashion. Research by Zhang et al. (2023) investigates the influence of social media engagement on consumer perceptions of brand authenticity in the fashion industry. The study revealed that authentic brand communication on platforms like Instagram and TikTok positively influences consumer attitudes and preferences, underscoring the significance of digital branding strategies in shaping consumer behavior. In addition to ethical and digital factors, cultural influences also play a crucial role in shaping consumer preferences for fashion.

Studies by Huang & Liao (2020) and Lee et al. (2023) examined cross-cultural differences in fashion consumption behavior, highlighting the impact of cultural values, social norms, and aesthetic preferences on consumer choices. These findings emphasize the need for fashion brands to adopt culturally sensitive marketing strategies and product offerings to resonate with diverse consumer segments. Furthermore, advancements in technology, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality, are increasingly influencing consumer preferences for fashion. Research by Chen et al. (2019) explored the role of AI-powered recommendation systems in personalized fashion shopping experiences. The study demonstrates how AI algorithms can analyze consumer data and preferences to provide tailored product recommendations, enhancing the overall shopping experience and driving consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Thus, within the wider context of studying the impact of social media on consumer decisions, Meta platforms have a vital role in promoting engagement with fashion, exerting influence on trends, and shaping the evolving landscape of consumer behavior. With proven research necessity, as previously demonstrated, filling the identified literature gap with data-based in-depth insight hugely benefits practitioners, policymakers, and other scholars interested to further conduct research in this field.

To summarize, academic research confirms that Meta platforms improve the process of creating and nurturing communities, while also encouraging social interaction among fashion enthusiasts of different age groups. The empirical studies offered evidence that platforms such as Facebook and Instagram play a significant role in fostering community, social interaction, and engagement within the fashion industry (Jones & Lee, 2022; Molina-Prados et al., 2021; Naeem & Ozuem, 2021). These studies highlight the crucial role of Meta platforms in connecting individuals with similar fashion interests across various age groups. The foregoing virtual communities foster a sense of inclusivity and camaraderie among participants, so enhancing the accessibility of fashion to a diverse audience and providing a forum for a multitude of opinions within the business. Thus, consumer preferences for fashion remain a dynamic area of study, influenced by various factors including individual identity, social influences, and emerging trends.

Research methodology

Materials

This research undertook a meticulous methodology to meet the objective of decoding the EU consumers' preferences in sustainable and fast fashion by decomposing the complex dynamics between socio-demographic variables, namely age, gender, geographical location, and fashion preferences. Extensive dataset was utilized to assure the attainment of valuable research findings. The data collection phase was conducted during the fall of 2023. Fashion preferences were analyzed according to the interactions of consumers with fashion-related content on Meta's platforms in the year 2023.

Data from Meta Platforms, Inc. (formerly Facebook, Inc. 2005-2021) (Hosain & Mamun, 2023) served as the data source for this investigation. Renowned for its comprehensive databases (Periyasami & Periyasamy, 2022), Meta provides invaluable insights into consumer behaviors and trends, and the fashion domain is no exception. The platforms' data repositories are recognized for their capacity to bring valuable and meaningful insight on consumers' preferences (Mazzucchelli et al., 2021), thus making the selection of this dataset an ideal fit for the objectives of this research.

Audience segmentation was performed on the database that consisted of approximately 330 million Meta accounts linked to people who live in the EU, which represents more than 70% of its population. Thus, all the available Meta data were considered and included in this empirical study. The first consumers segment contains citizens who have engaged on Meta platforms with the accounts of fast fashion brands such as H&M, Primark, Zara, Stradivarius, Pull&Bear, and Mango (Jin & Shin, 2021; Kral et al., 2020). The second segment contains EU consumers who engaged with sustainable fashion-related content.

Data were collected according to the breakdown described in Table 1, effectively categorizing distinct segments and facilitating a detailed analysis of EU consumers' preference in relation to fast and sustainable fashion. Each category was subdivided to provide granularity to the research, making it possible to study the complex interplay between socio-demographic variables and fashion preferences. In addition, this framework ensures a robust foundation for subsequent analyses and the formulation of targeted strategies with direct application in the fashion industry. Each category and breakdown intersection brings forth unique consumer clusters and ensures a kaleidoscopic view of the sample. Furthermore, this capability to slice the data in various manners represents an instrumental for unveiling distinct consumer patterns and preferences for fashion. It enables stakeholders to target specific segments and understand their unique characteristics, making it easier to tailor strategies that resonate with these individualized segments. The ability to intersect and analyze data at this granular level appropriately facilitated the construction of multiple logistic regression models that are in line with the research objectives and that aided in reaching novel research findings. Furthermore, since they are segment-oriented, these findings empower decision-makers to act with significant precision with effective and impactful initiatives.

Table 1. Data categories and breakdown

Category	Breakdown
Fashion preference	Number of consumers who are interested in fast fashion
	Number of consumers who are interested in sustainable fashion
Age group	Number of consumers aged 18-21
	Number of consumers aged 22-26
	Number of consumers aged 27-32

Category	Breakdown
	Number of consumers aged 33-40
	Number of consumers aged 41-50
	Number of consumers older than 50 years old
Gender	Number of females
	Number of males
Location (EU Region)	Number of consumers from Northern EU (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden)
	Number of consumers from Southern EU (Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain)
	Number of consumers from Eastern EU (Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia)
	Number of consumers from Western EU (Belgium France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands)

Source: Authors' own segmentation.

The specific age breakdowns of 18-21, 22-26, 27-32, 33-40, 41-50, and 50+ are derived from literature evidence (Birtwistle et al., 1998; Brito et al., 2015; Mosquera et al., 2019) and considered relevant for research. Each age group breakdown captures the fashion preference milestones specific to narrower demographics, hence making it possible for the findings to have more actionable and targeted impact for designing policies.

Data privacy procedure falls under the Meta Platforms Privacy Policy, since this study is entirely based on the Meta Platforms-collected data. Individual privacy was ensured and the data collected from Meta had been already anonymized and handled in compliance with EU General Data Protection Regulations.

Methods

Descriptive statistics for each variable were initially included in the analysis with the purpose of providing a foundational understanding of the data's central tendencies, dispersion, and overall distribution. This preliminary step was crucial for this empirical research and it added value to the paper through data summarization, outlier and anomaly detection, distribution assessment, and model specification guidance. Thus, the mean, median, maximum, minimum, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, skewness, kurtosis, and Jarque-Bera were computed for each of the variables included in Table 1. The descriptive statistics analysis laid the groundwork for a comprehensive and rigorous econometric analysis, setting the scene for more complex inferential statistics and ensuring that the findings drawn from this research are grounded on a thorough study of the data's fundamental characteristics.

By resorting to logistic regression analysis, this research followed its objective to uncover the underlying patterns that fundamentally characterize consumers' preferences for fashion, based on socio-demographic variables. Two types of logistic regression models were constructed: the first one was designed to study the relationship between age demographic and fashion preferences, and the second type of models pushed further with the inclusion of geographic location and gender variables into the model, explaining a multifaceted digital landscape where fashion preferences are diversely expressed.

Particularly well-suited for this study, logistic regressions were used to determine the probability that a sample to exhibit a characteristic based on a vector of explanatory factors, therefore, a useful instrument to determine the probability of the presence (or absence) of a

particular characteristic of a sample. The first type of logistic regression models was constructed to analyze the likelihood of a sample belonging to certain age groups based on fashion preferences. The second type of models were crafted to estimate the likelihood of a sample belonging to certain EU regions based on fashion preferences, gender, and age groups. These models operate by estimating the odds of the occurrence of an event relative to its non-occurrence, by resorting to a logistic function to ensure that the predicted probabilities are bounded between 0 and 1.

In this study, two pivotal variables consistently feature across all models: the fast fashion preference score (FFPS) and the sustainable fashion preference score (SFPS). These scores were calculated to provide a quantifiable measure of interest in fast and sustainable fashion, respectively, within the samples analyzed. The FFPS represents the percentage of individuals within a given sample who have shown interest in fast fashion based on their engagement with specific fast fashion-related content on Meta platforms from the total sample with a linked Meta account, multiplied by 100, with the aim to make this measure more interpretable and to standardize it across different samples. Similarly, the SFPS is calculated in the same manner, but in the case of a sustainable fashion.

The first category of models focused on discerning the influence of fashion preferences on the probability of a sample being classified into specific age groups, Equation 1 delineates the logistic regression formula, where $y_{age_group_membership}$ is the binary dependent variable in connection with the age groups defined in Table 1, and it takes the value of 1 if the sample belongs to the age group, and 0 otherwise. β_0 is the intercept of the model, providing the baseline log odds of a sample belonging to the age group when FFPS and SFPS are zero. The coefficient β_1 measures the strength and direction of the relationship between the FFPS and the log odds of a sample's membership in a particular age group. A larger absolute value of β_1 denotes a more substantial impact, indicating that variations in FFPS significantly influence the likelihood of age group classification. Specifically, a positive β_1 implies that as FFPS increases, the log odds of being classified into the age group also increase, suggesting a direct relationship. Conversely, a negative β_1 indicates an inverse relationship, where a higher FFPS is associated with a lower log odds of belonging to the age group. In parallel, β_2 gauges the strength and direction of the association between SFPS and the log odds of age group classification. The magnitude of β_2 highlights the degree of influence SFPS has on determining age group membership. A positive β_2 denotes a positive association, implying that a higher SFPS increases the log odds of being in the age group, while a negative β_2 signifies that a higher SFPS is associated with lower log odds of age group classification. Lastly, ε represents the error term, capturing the variation in y not explained by the model.

$$y_{age_group_membership} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times FFPS + \beta_2 \times SFPS + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

In the case of the second category of logistic regression models, Equation 2 presents the econometric formula, where $y_{EU_region_membership}$ is the binary dependent variable associated with the EU regions as defined in Table 1, taking the value of 1 if the sample belongs to one of the specific regions, and 0 otherwise. β_0 is the intercept of the model, offering the baseline log odds of a sample's membership when all other predictor variables are set to zero. The coefficient β_1 measures the strength and direction of the relationship between the FFPS and the log odds of a sample's membership in a particular EU region. A larger absolute value of β_1 denotes a more substantial impact, indicating that variations in FFPS significantly

influence the likelihood of EU region classification. Specifically, a positive β_1 implies that as FFPS increases, the log odds of being classified into the age group also increase, suggesting a direct relationship. Conversely, a negative β_1 indicates an inverse relationship, where higher FFPS is associated with lower log odds of belonging to the EU region. In parallel, β_2 gauges the strength and direction of the association between SFPS and the log odds of EU region classification. The magnitude of β_2 highlights the degree of influence SFPS has on determining EU region membership.

The model also incorporates gender and specific age groups as predictor variables. The coefficient β_3 associated with the dummy variable for gender quantifies the gender-specific differences in regional membership likelihood (value 1 corresponds to male and 0 to female). Additionally, coefficients β_4 through β_8 correspond to different age groups (18-21, 27-32, 33-40, 41-50, 50+), capturing the distinct influences of each age bracket on the probability of a sample being from a particular EU region. To avoid the issue of multicollinearity, the 22-26 age group was deliberately omitted to serve as the reference category. This decision adheres to technical requirements imposed by logistic regression to ensure the model's stability and interpretability. The omission of the 22-26 age group allows for the coefficients of the included age groups (β_4 through β_8) to be interpreted in relation to this reference category. Essentially, the coefficients for the age groups 18-21, 27-32, 33-40, 41-50, and 50+ reflect how the log odds of a sample being from a specific EU region compare to the log odds for the 22-26 age group. This comparative approach is a standard technique in logistic regression (Shi et al., 2020), providing a clear and meaningful interpretation of the coefficients in relation to a baseline category.

$$\begin{aligned}
 Y_{EU_region_membership} &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times FFPS + \beta_2 \times SFPS + \beta_3 \times dummy_for_gender \\
 &+ \beta_4 \times age_group_{18-21} + \beta_5 \times age_group_{27-23} \\
 &+ \beta_6 \times age_group_{33-40} + \beta_7 \times age_group_{41-50} \\
 &+ \beta_8 \times age_group_{50+} + \varepsilon
 \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

Therefore, while the 22-26 age group is not explicitly included in the model as a separate predictor, it plays a crucial role as the baseline against which the effects of other age groups on regional membership likelihood are measured. This methodological approach enhances the model's efficacy and ensures that the coefficients for the included age groups offer valuable insights into their distinct influences on the probability of a sample being from a particular EU region. The Wald statistic was computed for each coefficient in the logistic regression models to test the significance of coefficients. A large Wald statistic indicates that the predictor is a significant contributor to the model. In addition, odds ratios were calculated to measure the strength and direction of the association between the predictor variables (FFPS, SFPS, age groups, gender) and the dependent variable (age group membership or EU region membership). The odds ratio quantified how the odds of the outcome change with a one-unit increase in the predictor variable, offering an intuitive interpretation of the model's findings. Moreover, this study includes the assessment of the goodness-of-fit of the logistic regression models by employing a suite of statistical metrics, each providing unique insights into the model's performance. Firstly, McFadden R^2 is into the research spotlight, serving as a robust measure of the model's explanatory power. By juxtaposing the likelihood of the logistic regression models against that of a simplistic null model, which comprises only the

intercept, McFadden R^2 shed light on the extent to which the models succeeded in capturing the variance of the dependent variable. Values approaching 1 signal an exemplary model fit and suggest that the inclusion of predictors significantly enhances the model's explanatory capability.

Transitioning to the likelihood ratio (LR) test, the assessment of the logistic regression models was pushed further. The LR test consisted of a comparative analysis, pitting the comprehensive fit of the models with all predictors against the reduced models. This comparison adds value to the econometric framework with a rigorous evaluation of how the collective array of predictors enriches accuracy of the models. The LR probability resulted from this test offered a statistical verdict on significance. *P*-values below the 0.05 threshold mark superior model fit, confirming meaningful predictors' contribution.

Finally, the evaluation of the models consisted of the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), a criterion of that did not only appraise the models based on their fit; but it also implied penalizing undue complexity – thereby safeguarding against the pitfalls of overfitting. Models registering lower AIC values are desirable, not just for their adeptness at fitting the data, but for achieving this result without succumbing to complexity.

In integrating these metrics together, the research framework attains both rigor and subtlety. This comprehensive study was strategically designed to detail the complex interplay of socio-demographic factors and fashion preferences within the EU. The carefully selected metrics collectively ensure that the logistic regression models go beyond mere econometrical constructs, evolving into coherent narratives concerning the EU fashion landscape. This approach ensured that the models did not only quantify, but also spotlighted the intricate dynamics between consumers' preferences for fashion and socio-demographic variables.

Results and discussion

Findings from the descriptive statistics analysis – fast fashion versus sustainable fashion

The descriptive statistics for fashion preferences among the EU-27 based on various demographics reveal complex consumer profiles. Starting with the fast fashion category from Table 2, the preference distribution exhibits a slight leftward skew, especially among females (−0.5043). This skewness suggests a distribution where the bulk of the EU populations have a higher affinity for fast fashion, with fewer expressing significantly lower preferences. The higher kurtosis values indicate a distribution with fatter tails, revealing that while most populations might hover around a central tendency, there are countries with extreme preferences for fast fashion, particularly among females (3.7937). It is important to mention that these results are based only on what the sample expressed on social media through their engagement with fast fashion-related accounts and brands.

On the other side of the preferences spectrum, sustainable fashion is the subject of a different story. The skewness values are very close to zero, hinting at a more symmetric distribution across genders, with a slight positive skew among males, suggesting a few outliers with a particularly strong preference for sustainability in some EU countries, like France and Belgium. The kurtosis for sustainable fashion across all groups scored values below the threshold of three, indicating the occurrence of fewer peaks and lighter tails compared to a normal distribution, suggesting a more even spread of preferences. The Jarque-Bera values are slightly higher in the case of sustainable fashion than in the case of

fast fashion, indicating that less consistency is observed within the sustainable fashion sample compared to the fast fashion sample.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of fashion preferences across EU countries based on the gender demographic

Fashion Preference	Gender	Mean	Median	Maximum	Minimum	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of Variation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Jarque Bera	Probability
Fast fashion preference	Total	0.4188	0.4289	0.5279	0.2720	0.0562	13.43%	-0.3708	3.4742	0.8717	0.6467
	Male	0.2862	0.2874	0.3981	0.1500	0.0594	20.76%	-0.1570	2.7014	0.2112	0.8998
	Female	0.5361	0.5380	0.6408	0.3677	0.0601	11.22%	-0.5043	3.7935	1.8530	0.3959
Sustainable fashion preference	Total	0.2387	0.2470	0.3604	0.1381	0.0699	29.29%	-0.0278	1.7819	1.6728	0.4333
	Male	0.1762	0.1766	0.3069	0.0971	0.0561	31.86%	0.3943	2.3422	1.1833	0.5534
	Female	0.2936	0.3033	0.4395	0.1587	0.0862	29.35%	0.0102	1.8651	1.4494	0.4845

Source: Authors' own calculations.

Regardless of gender, 41.88% of the EU population with Meta accounts expressed their preferences for fast fashion according to their engagement with content, pages, or events related to fast fashion. However, dissecting by gender, a contrast was noticed: males show a considerably lower mean preference (28.62%), which could suggest a more conservative stance towards fast fashion, while the pattern was different in the case of females (53.61%), indicating a robust enthusiasm for fast fashion among the EU female demographic. Their social media engagement style could also influence these results.

The median values closely mirror the means for both genders, reinforcing the observed trends. The relatively higher minimum for females (36.77%) compared to males (15.00%) further underscores the more widespread appeal of fast fashion among females within the EU-27.

Sustainable fashion preferences show some similarities with fast fashion preferences. The overall mean preference is 23.87%, which is lower than that for fast fashion, reflecting a more tempered approach to sustainable fashion across the EU. Gender-specific analysis again shows divergence: males exhibit the lowest mean preference (17.62%), which could reflect either a lower awareness or prioritization of sustainability in fashion choices among males. Females, on the other hand, show a significantly higher mean preference (29.36%), indicating a greater inclination towards sustainable fashion options. The medians align with the means. The higher minimum for females (15.87%) as compared to males (9.71%) in sustainable fashion parallels the trend seen in fast fashion preferences, suggesting that females in the EU may have a stronger and more consistent commitment to sustainability in their fashion choices. These findings reflect an EU marketplace where, despite individual and regional differences, the collective behavior might be more predictable and less prone to extreme variability than initially assumed. This could imply that while personal values and cultural influences shape fashion preferences, the aggregated effect may lead to more stable and homogenous EU market dynamics, which is convergent with other research findings from the literature (Aspers et al., 2020; Schöps et al., 2022). These statistical insights, paired with the understanding of underlying cultural and economic currents, provide a robust foundation for strategic planning for increasing the awareness concerning the needs for a paradigm shift in the direction of sustainability in the fashion industry in the EU.

Findings from the descriptive statistics analysis – the age factor

Bridging the discussion on fashion preferences expressed on social media in junction with age demographics in Table 3, the descriptive statistics analysis has shown that age-related patterns distinctly influence the engagement with fast and sustainable fashion. The data collected from users with Meta accounts, shows that there is a noticeable increase in the average among the age groups of 18-21 and 27-32, indicating a growing preference for fast fashion. These findings indicate that active participation on social media, namely on platforms like as Meta, greatly influences the emergence of fast fashion industry preferences among young adults in Europe. However, as we examine the age groups of 33-40, we notice a gradual decrease in the demand for fast fashion, which becomes more pronounced among individuals aged 41-50 and reaches its lowest point among those who are 50 years old or older. The graph demonstrates a gradual decline in engagement with fast fashion firms on social media as consumers get older. The decreased involvement of older individuals in social media can be ascribed to various factors, such as shifting priorities or a divergence in the ways different age groups employ social media to express and satisfy their fashion preferences. The insights obtained from the Meta account data not only provide valuable information about the digital behavior of various generations, but also emphasize the influence of online platforms in creating fashion trends.

To further examine the correlation between age and fashion preferences among Meta users in the EU-27, the coefficient of variation provides more valuable information. The values recorded by this coefficient significantly increase when one transitions from the younger to older age groups in terms of both fast and sustainable fashion choices. This implies that as individuals age, there is an increase in the variety of fashion tastes. This could be attributed to a more personalized approach to fashion among older users or varying levels of involvement with social media as a means of exploring fashion.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of fashion preferences across EU countries based on the age demographic

Fashion Preference	Age Group	Mean	Median	Maximum	Minimum	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of Variation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Jarque Bera	Probability
Fast fashion preference	18-21	0.4437	0.4300	0.5517	0.3104	0.0570	12.84%	-0.1234	2.6174	0.2332	0.8899
	22-26	0.4633	0.4549	0.5756	0.3099	0.0584	12.61%	-0.3264	3.4707	0.7288	0.6946
	27-32	0.5067	0.5140	0.6207	0.3417	0.0591	11.66%	-0.4215	3.9046	1.7202	0.4231
	33-40	0.4720	0.4778	0.5932	0.3109	0.0622	13.17%	-0.1517	3.4894	0.3731	0.8298
	41-50	0.4119	0.4068	0.5714	0.2697	0.0671	16.30%	0.2244	2.8942	0.2396	0.8871
	50+	0.3038	0.2910	0.4667	0.1860	0.0654	21.52%	0.6006	2.8521	1.6482	0.4386
Sustainable fashion preference	18-21	0.3012	0.2962	0.4808	0.1875	0.0870	28.88%	0.3454	1.9137	1.8646	0.3936
	22-26	0.2990	0.3018	0.4767	0.1801	0.0865	28.94%	0.3120	1.8895	1.8254	0.4014
	27-32	0.3085	0.3122	0.4533	0.1793	0.0845	27.40%	0.0824	1.7571	1.7685	0.4130
	33-40	0.2600	0.2569	0.3877	0.1441	0.0767	29.51%	0.0268	1.9247	1.3041	0.5210
	41-50	0.2137	0.2105	0.3495	0.0969	0.0704	32.96%	0.0151	2.0424	1.0327	0.5967
	50+	0.1449	0.1416	0.2729	0.0539	0.0577	39.81%	0.0941	2.2662	0.6457	0.7241

Source: Authors' own calculations.

An observed deviation to the left in skewness test was observed among younger age groups in terms of their taste for fast fashion, suggesting a clustering of countries with higher preferences. Conversely, the skewness of sustainable fashion preference is around zero or

slightly positive across all age groups, suggesting a more uniformly distributed range of preferences that are not strongly biased towards higher or lower values. The presence of this symmetry implies that sustainable fashion possesses a wide and enduring appeal throughout many age groups within the Meta user base. The kurtosis values indicate that the distribution does not have abnormally heavy tails. The 27-32 age group stands out as an anomaly in terms of their affinity for fast fashion; also this group exhibits a larger kurtosis, indicating a distribution that is more peaked, with certain countries showing particularly strong preferences. Ultimately, the Jarque-Bera test, which evaluates the similarity of data distribution to a normal distribution using skewness and kurtosis, typically suggests that we cannot dismiss the normalcy of the distribution of fashion preferences among different age groups. This suggests that the variation in fashion preferences among the Meta-using individuals in the EU-27, irrespective of age, is reasonably uniform and lacks extreme patterns.

The descriptive statistics reveal the diverse and intricate nature of the digital fashion environment in the EU. Meta, along with other social media platforms, provides a favorable space for younger individuals to showcase their fashion preferences. However, the senior users of Meta platforms exhibit a more diverse range of fashion interests and engagements. The data highlights the importance for fashion brands to customize their digital strategies to suit the specific habits and preferences of each age group. It is important to acknowledge that the older demographics, although less involved, have a wide range of interests that are ready to be explored.

Findings from the descriptive statistics analysis – the regional factor

By examining the correlation between fashion involvement on social media and geography, one may observe a complex connection between regional factors, cultures, trends, and fashion preferences throughout the EU, as depicted in Table 4. An evident regional divergence in fashion tastes throughout the EU was noted. Southern Europe exhibits a notable and unwavering predisposition to fast fashion, potentially influenced by cultural preferences for current trends and designs. The preferences for both fast and sustainable fashion show wider variations in the North and West regions, which may be indicative of various economic conditions and a unique socio-environmental mindset. Furthermore, the Western EU region exhibits a significantly higher average inclination towards sustainable fashion, as evidenced by the minimum coefficient of variation. This insight suggests a consistent preference for sustainability across Western countries, indicating regional uniformity in the affinity for sustainability within the fashion industry.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of fashion preferences across EU countries based on geographical location

Fashion Preference	EU Region	Mean	Median	Maximum	Minimum	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of Variation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Jarque Bera	Probability
Fast fashion preference	North	0.3790	0.3791	0.4735	0.2720	0.0678	17.88%	-0.1696	2.1086	0.2653	0.8758
	South	0.4754	0.4485	0.5279	0.4426	0.0382	8.03%	0.3757	1.2739	1.0337	0.5964
	East	0.4203	0.4242	0.4515	0.3916	0.0188	4.48%	0.0364	2.3007	0.1648	0.9209
	West	0.3928	0.3814	0.4361	0.3550	0.0405	10.30%	0.2242	1.2282	0.6959	0.7061
Sustainable fashion preference	North	0.2222	0.2047	0.3231	0.1322	0.0699	31.45%	0.2635	1.7276	0.5532	0.7584
	South	0.2264	0.2329	0.3341	0.1318	0.0716	31.61%	0.1248	1.9362	0.3482	0.8402
	East	0.2145	0.2244	0.2891	0.1487	0.0553	25.80%	-0.0510	1.3940	0.8632	0.6495
	West	0.3174	0.3118	0.3604	0.2795	0.0306	9.63%	0.2472	1.9996	0.2594	0.8784

Source: Authors' own calculations.

Regarding sustainable fashion, the Western of EU-27 regions stand out due to their greatest average preference and lowest variability, which suggests a consistent and strong dedication to sustainable fashion. This could be attributed to a greater understanding of environmental issues and the influence of policies that promote sustainability in these areas. The Eastern region consistently demonstrates a coherent pattern, but with a comparatively lower level of involvement in sustainable fashion. This observation may indicate divergent objectives or economic limitations. Furthermore, the Eastern EU region exhibits a consistent preference for fast fashion, as seen by its exceptionally low coefficient of variation. This suggests that the fashion preferences among the countries within this region are quite uniform. However, it is essential to recollect that over the past few decades, several Eastern European states have experienced significant economic changes, shifting from centrally controlled economies to market-oriented systems. This transition has led to an increase in consumerism and the adoption of Western-style purchasing patterns, particularly a strong inclination towards quick fashion. Consumers in these locations, in comparison to their Western European counterparts, tend to prefer more affordable clothing options that are focused on current trends due to their lower purchasing capacity. In addition, Eastern European countries have limited availability of renowned luxury fashion brands, which are primarily concentrated in the fashion hubs of Western Europe, such as Paris, Milan, and London. As a result, shoppers in Eastern Europe often rely on fast fashion companies as their main providers of stylish yet reasonably priced goods (Zhang et al., 2021). Cultural influences have a substantial role in shaping consumer tastes, as the idea of quick fashion as stylish and desired is particularly strong in Eastern European nations. This tendency is frequently intensified by social media, celebrity endorsements, and targeted advertising initiatives, available on Meta platforms, all of which contribute to the widespread prevalence of fast fashion in contemporary cultural environments (Savelli et al., 2024).

The Jarque-Bera test consistently indicates that there is no substantial departure from normality in the distribution of fashion preferences. This confirms that although preferences may differ, they do not exhibit severe variations. Therefore, it is advisable for any marketing or policy strategy targeting fashion consumption in the EU to take into account these subtle variations, respecting the distinctiveness of each region while also recognizing the general inclination towards a more balanced approach to fashion consumption. In summary, the regional data provides an overview of a varied EU where local identities and preferences influence the fashion industry. Policy makers and enterprises must comprehend these subtleties in order to develop strategies that align with regional attributes and customer tendencies. The analysis shifts from general regional preference trends to specific logistic regression modeling, examining how age and social media behavior intersect to uncover the unique and diverse ways fashion preferences are represented across different generations across the EU. Therefore, it is worthwhile to thoroughly examine the close connection between age and fashion preferences as observed on Meta social platforms as digital engagement provides an ideal opportunity to gain insights into the extensive and profound appeal of fashion preferences across EU countries.

Findings from the logistic model concerning the relationship between the age demographic and fashion preferences

The output from the logistic regression models' studying the relationship between age demographic and fashion preferences are presented in Table 5. The intercept is statistically significant for all age groups analyzed, while the FFPS is not statistically significant in the case of the 22-26 and 41-50 age groups, and the exceptions regarding SFPS were noticed only in the case of the 33-40 age group. Additionally, the likelihood ratio of the model corresponding to the 18-21 age group confirmed that the model is significantly better than the null model, the one without predictors. The low probability indicated that both predictors (FFPS and SFPS) are meaningful in explaining the variation in this age group's fashion preferences. Regarding the likelihood ratio, the models designed for the 22-26, 27-32, 41-50 age groups follow the same patterns. The model corresponding to the 33-40 age group is marginally significant due to the probability of the likelihood ratio, slightly above the traditional 0.05 threshold, suggesting weaker predictive power compared to other models. The model designed for the 50+ age group demonstrated a very strong improvement over the null model, which means that the predictors are highly effective for this age group.

The intercept represents the log-odds of being in a particular age group when FFSP and SFPS are zero. Thus, higher intercept coefficients suggest higher baseline likelihoods of a sample being in that age group, independent of fashion preferences. The negative intercepts in the younger age groups (18-21, 22-26, 27-32, 33-40, and 41-50) could indicate that, generally, these groups have lower baseline probabilities of being identified without FFSP and SFPS being taken into consideration. At the opposite side, the positive intercept coefficient for the 50+ age group suggests a higher baseline likelihood of a sample being in this particular age group, which might express a larger and general tendency towards a distinct fashion preference profile, more static to trends. Research results suggest that the elder population's resistance to fashion trends can be attributed to a combination of personal preferences, self-confidence, and cultural influences (Huang, 2021; Japutra et al., 2021).

Table 5. The logistic regression models studying the relationship between age demographic and fashion preferences

	Dummy Variable: 18-21 Age Group					Dummy Variable: 22-26 Age Group				
	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Odds Ratio	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Odds Ratio
Intercept	-2.0637	0.0000	0.4573	20.3683	0.1270	-2.6236	0.0000	0.4842	29.3599	0.0000
FFPS	-0.0242	0.0512	0.0124	3.8004	0.9761	-0.0016	0.8946	0.0119	0.0175	1.2376
SFPS	0.0556	0.0004	0.0158	12.3562	1.0572	0.0403	0.0089	0.0154	6.8422	0.9600
McFadden R ²	0.0435					0.0337				
Likelihood ratio (LR)	12.6960					9.8255				
LR Probability	0.0018					0.0074				
Akaike info criterion (AIC)	0.8805					0.8893				
	Dummy Variable: 27-32 Age Group					Dummy Variable: 33-40 Age Group				
	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Odds Ratio	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Odds Ratio
Intercept	-3.7139	0.0000	0.5599	43.9940	0.0244	-2.3912	0.0000	0.4741	25.4330	0.0915
FFPS	0.0285	0.0196	0.0122	5.4471	1.0289	0.0265	0.0235	0.0117	5.1311	1.0269
SFPS	0.0288	0.0602	0.0153	3.5319	1.0293	-0.0156	0.3318	0.0160	0.9417	0.9846
McFadden R ²	0.0698					0.0185				
Likelihood ratio (LR)	20.3854					5.3979				
LR Probability	0.0000					0.0673				
Akaike info criterion (AIC)	0.8567					0.9030				

	Dummy Variable: 41-50 Age Group					Dummy Variable: 50+ Age Group				
	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Odds Ratio	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Odds Ratio
Intercept	-0.8799	0.0366	0.4211	4.3673	0.4148	2.1411	0.0000	0.5105	17.5902	8.5090
FFPS	0.0097	0.4102	0.0118	0.6781	1.0098	-0.0314	0.0388	0.0152	4.2717	0.9691
SFPS	-0.0486	0.0074	0.0181	7.1816	0.9525	-0.1330	0.0000	0.0281	22.4386	0.8755
McFadden R ²	0.0317					0.2821				
Likelihood ratio (LR)	9.2443					82.3535				
LR Probability	0.0098					0.0000				
Akaike info criterion (AIC)	0.8911					0.6655				

Source: Authors' own computation.

The coefficients corresponding to FFSP are mixed based on different age groups. The models demonstrate that the relationship of EU citizens with fast fashion is complex and that this is not the most impactful variable able to increase the likelihood of a sample to be fit into an age group, when simultaneously considered with the preferences for SFPS, sustainable fashion. Taking into account the coefficients of FFSP and SFPS, they show that SFPS is the most impactful among young population (18-21, 22-26), whereas FFSP is the most impactful among older population (41-50, 50+), reflecting different lifestyle, socio-economic and environmental priorities. Studies indicate that there are differences in lifestyle, socio-economic status, and environmental concerns among various age groups. The variation can be attributed to multiple factors, such as discretionary income, lifestyle preferences, and exposure to sustainability initiatives. Younger individuals frequently possess fewer expendable financial resources compared to older demographics, resulting in a tendency to prioritize cost-effectiveness rather than sustainability when making fashion decisions (Bezbaruah & Trivedi, 2020; Huaman-Ramirez et al., 2020). In the case of the 27-32 age group, the coefficient of FFSP and SFPS are almost the same, although in favor of sustainable preference versus unsustainable with just 0.0003. After this point, the sign of the SFPS coefficient becomes negative (minimum in the case of the 50+ age group), which highlights the overall lack of interest for sustainability in the apparel industry in the case of the older population. The 27-32 and 33-40 age groups are the ones that registered the highest FFPS coefficients from all the age groups, which leads to the finding that EU citizens aged 27-40 are the most susceptible to fast fashion, in contrast with EU citizens aged 18-26, as they are more responsive to the sustainable fashion movement (Blazquez et al., 2020; Musová et al., 2021; Ziesemer et al., 2021), as per the highest SFPS coefficients: 0.0556 (age group 18-21) and 0.0403 (age group 22-26).

The variation in coefficients across age groups reflects diverse fashion preferences and priorities in the EU-27 sample. Younger age groups manifest an inclination towards sustainable fashion, driven by many factors, as identified in the literature (Cairns et al., 2022), greater environmental awareness, social responsibility, and a desire for ethical consumption practices (Dhir et al., 2021). Older age groups' engagement with fast fashion and their response to sustainable fashion could reflect more established preferences and different lifestyle priorities.

Regarding the logistic regression model specific to the 50+ age group, this model has the highest McFadden R² of all the models designed for the analysis focused on the age factor. This model shows a relatively high level of explanatory power (0.2821) compared to the others models, which indicates that the predictors (FFPS and SFPP) in the 50+ age group

model are relatively effective in explaining if a sample belongs to the 50+ age group. The reason why other the samples from younger age groups scored low McFadden R^2 in comparison with the 50+ age group could involve the fact that the data from this group might have been more consistent or less noisy compared to other age groups. Consistency and lower variability within the group could have led to clearer patterns that the model effectively captured. The participation of older age groups with fast fashion and their response to sustainable fashion may reflect well-established preferences and distinct lifestyle goals. Farinosi & Fortunati (2020) conducted research demonstrating that senior consumers place greater importance on comfort, utility, and own style rather than following temporary fashion trends. This shows a preference for apparel goods that are timeless and long-lasting. In addition, other research (Guido et al., 2022; H. Kim et al., 2022) demonstrated that older persons often show less receptivity to fashion trends and are less impacted by external influences such as celebrity endorsements or social media campaigns. Instead, older shoppers generally opt for traditional styles and high-quality items that give longevity and diversity in their wardrobes. They prioritize functionality and fit over following fashion trends. Hence, existing research indicates that the involvement of older individuals with fast fashion and their reaction to sustainable fashion can be impacted by well-established tastes, lifestyle priorities, and a need for enduring sophistication and functionality in their clothing selections. However, it is still important to acknowledge the divergence among the young EU fashion consumers in relation to the two types of patterns: fast consumption versus sustainable consumption. The disparity in FFPS and SFPS among young customers in the EU underscores the socio-economic and cultural variances. More affluent EU inhabitants, particularly individuals aged 18 to 26, exhibit a higher level of environmental and ethical awareness, leading them to purchase sustainable clothing. The target demographic is inclined to purchase premium, environmentally sustainable apparel that aligns with their principles and way of life. Nevertheless, due to economic constraints and a lack of sustainable fashion alternatives, young consumers hailing from Eastern European member states are inclined to favor fast fashion (Sun et al., 2021). Due to economic constraints and a lack of sustainable fashion alternatives, they are inclined to favor fast fashion. Consumer behavior is influenced by cultural factors, such as the Eastern Europeans' affinity for fast fashion (Eversberg & Fritz, 2022). While wealthier youth in the other parts of EU tend to favor sustainable fashion. This highlights the socio-economic and cultural divide among young people in the EU (Peleg Mizrahi & Tal, 2022).

To add robustness to the findings derived from this part of the empirical research that had a particular focus on the age factor, the Wald statistic and the odds value were computed for each of the logistic regression model in Table 5. High Wald statistics for the intercept term across all age groups suggest that, when FFPS and SFPS are zero, the baseline probability of belonging to each age group is significantly different from zero. This validated that there is a baseline effect in the models that is not due to the analyzed predictors. However, it is important to note that the lower Wald value (4.3673) for the 41-50 age group intercept could be a sign of a less distinct baseline probability compared to other age groups. The 18-21, 27-32, and 33-40 age groups have higher Wald statistics for FFPS, indicating that this predictor is more significant in these models than in the case of the other age groups. If compared to the Wald statistics for FFPS, very high Wald statistics were registered for the SFPS predictor in the case of the all age groups, with the exception of the 27-32 and 33-40 age groups. This means that the population's preference for sustainable fashion is

more significant than the one for fast fashion when determining the belonging of a sample to an age group. This finding is convergent with the one derived earlier from the coefficient analysis regarding the very small difference (0.0003) between SFPS and FFSP, which sheds light on the fact that EU citizens aged 27-32 are equally susceptible to both fast and sustainable fashion (Gazzola et al., 2020).

In addition to the robustness checks based on Wald statistics, odds ratios were also calculated. The previously explained results are even more consolidated based on the odds ratios analysis. The odds ratios close to one across all age groups in the case of FFPS suggest that changes in this predictor do not drastically change the odds of a population to be in any particular age group, with a slight tendency to decrease the odds in the 50+ group (0.9691) and to increase in the case of the 22-26 age group (1.2376). Regarding the predictor specific to sustainable fashion preference, a light tendency to increase the odds was noticed in the case of the 18-21 age group (1.0572) and a decrease in the case of the 50+ age group (0.8755). This means that SSPS acts as a significant and positive predictor of belonging to the young EU population group. At the same time, the 50+ age group shows significant, but divergent, influence of both SSPS and FFPS on the likelihood of belonging to this age group, with a particular emphasis on sustainable fashion as a negative predictor, which aligns with the higher McFadden R^2 value observed for this group. These results based on the odds ratios analysis is coherent with the rest of the econometric research findings.

The Akaike info criterion (AIC) values suggest that the 50+ age group model has the best relative quality among all the models from Table 5, followed by the 27-32 age group model. Besides the fact that the 33-40 age group model is only marginally significant, the same model registered the highest AIC, indicating it might be the least effective in terms of the trade-off between model complexity and fit. Consequently, the AIC values further support the effectiveness of these models, especially for the 50+ age group model, which appears to be the best-fitting model, while the 33-40 age group model could benefit from further refinement or additional predictors to improve its fit and predictive power.

To conclude the findings derived from the age-focused regression models, the statistical significance of the intercepts underlines an intrinsic, age-related predisposition towards specific fashion trends, which could be deeply rooted in the socio-economic environment and cultural milieu of the EU. Younger demographics exhibit, on the one hand, negative reactions to FFPS, and positive reactions to SFPS on the other hand, which could be reflective of a larger, generational pivot towards mindful consumption (Jimenez-Fernandez et al., 2023). This shift is potentially fostered by the increased exposure of young EU citizens to global conversations on sustainability and a robust ethical consumer movement, amplified by social media and educational campaigns (Blasi et al., 2020; Koszewska et al., 2020). These patterns are emblematic of a broader societal evolution where environmental implications of fashion consumption are increasingly at the forefront of consumer decision-making processes, reshaping the industry's dynamics.

Findings from the logistic model concerning the relationship between social demographics and fashion preferences

The initial logistic regression models provide insight into the intricate relationship between age demographics and fashion preferences as expressed through consumers' interactions on Meta social platforms. These models reveal certain patterns that emphasize the importance of age in predicting fashion preferences in the EU countries. Despite their complexity and

multidimensionality, these dynamics are interconnected with local nuances. Fashion tastes are influenced by area culture, as well as generational and gender identity. Therefore, in order to expand the econometric research analysis, more layers were incorporated after shifting the focus from logistic regression analysis on the age factor. Connecting the insights from age-specific models to those accounting for geographical location and gender variables, it was acknowledged that while age might be a predictor of fashion preferences in the case of specific age groups, the analysis is enriched and expanded when the geographic and gender lens are applied. The empirical output from Table 6 reveals a multivalent digital environment where fashion preferences are the sum of diverse social demographic and identities.

The McFadden R^2 values emphasize that the logistic regression model, specifically designed to forecast the probability of a sample originating from the Western European region (0.3037), exhibits the highest explanatory power among all the constructed models. This underscores a strong relationship between the independent variables and the likelihood of an individual belonging to this region, suggesting that factors such as fashion preferences, gender, and age demographics are particularly indicative of Western European regional affiliation. The models dedicated to the Southern Europe region (0.2416) and Northern Europe region (0.1905) also demonstrate good explanatory power, reinforcing the relevance of the chosen predictors in these regional contexts.

In contrast to these models, the one specific to the Eastern Europe region yielded a McFadden R^2 value of only 0.0279, which signifies a low level of variance in the regional belonging explained by the model. In addition, the probability of the likelihood ratio validated all the models from Table 6, with the exception of the model dedicated to the Eastern European region, considering that its corresponding likelihood ratio probability (0.2034) exceeds the conventional significance threshold of 0.05.

This lack of validation from a statistical standpoint suggests that the model does not provide a meaningful or reliable interpretation for the Eastern European context and warrants a more nuanced approach to understanding the predictors of regional belonging in this area. The unique historical and socio-economic trajectory in the Eastern Europe region, particularly the impact of communism, may explain the observed discrepancy and may be one of the reasons why the current predictors might have not successfully captured the key factors influencing regional belonging in Eastern Europe. The communist regimes, with their distinctive socio-economic policies, have left an enduring imprint on the cultural fabric and consumption patterns in this region. These influences have shaped consumer behavior and fashion preferences in such a way that they diverge significantly from other regional European trends.

Moreover, when it comes to the nature of fashion preferences of the populations from Eastern European region, it is more complex and heterogeneous than in the case specific to the Western Europe region, for example, where a more homogeneous set of cultural and economic factors contribute to following a unified fashion trend (Thomas et al., 2020). Eastern Europe is characterized by a wide spectrum of influences, different levels of economic development, different political affinities and many other factors that have all led to divergent trends within the region itself (Jansen, 2020). The presence of such intra-regional divergence is a compelling reason to consider a more granular approach when analyzing fashion consumers' preferences in the case of Eastern European countries, yet national-level analyses are not part of this research's objectives. Thus, given the current

model's inability to capture these intricate intra-regional divergences in post-communist societies, it is not beneficial to include it as a focal point in the analysis.

Returning to the analysis of the remaining three logistic regression models, more valuable insight can be derived. The coefficient associated to the FFPS variable in the Southern European model stands out with its highest value (0.2132) among the models, and it is statistically significant. This indicates that in Southern Europe, preferences for fast fashion have a positive and notable impact on the likelihood of a sample's regional affiliation, with an odds ratio of 1.2376 suggesting a strong influence. In contrast, the preference for sustainable fashion, as indicated by the SFPS coefficient, has a negative impact (−0.0408), yet to a lesser extent and statistically significant, on the likelihood of a sample's regional affiliation. These results signal that, in Southern Europe, while there is a notable consumer inclination towards fast fashion, sustainable fashion preferences are less predictive of regional belonging. When juxtaposing these findings with those from Northern and Western Europe, an intriguing contrast emerges – in Northern Europe, both FFPS and SFPS have negative coefficients, with the SFPS presenting a greater magnitude than FFPS, hinting at a stronger inclination towards sustainable fashion. This aligns with the widely perceived environmental sensibility and consciousness of the Northern European region (Rotaris et al., 2021). Similarly, in Western Europe, the SFPS has a positive coefficient and a considerable odds ratio (1.2371), therefore reinforcing this region's reputation for the same values noticed in Northern Europe – environmental awareness and sustainable consumer behavior (Murzyn-Kupisz & Hołuj, 2021).

Table 6. The logistic regression models studying the relationship between social demographics and fashion preferences

Variable	Dummy Variable: Northern Europe (Outcome variable)					Dummy Variable: Southern Europe (Outcome variable)				
	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Odds Ratio	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Odds Ratio
Intercept	11.5741	0.0000	1.8058	41.0822	106,310	−12.4687	0.0000	1.7746	49.3689	0.0000
FFPS	−0.1798	0.0000	0.0269	44.7215	0.8354	0.2132	0.0000	0.0281	57.7056	1.2376
SFPS	−0.0668	0.0003	0.0187	12.8038	0.9354	−0.0408	0.0372	0.0196	4.3431	0.9600
Dummy for Gender (Male = 1; Female = 0)	−5.4583	0.0000	0.8346	42.7703	0.0043	4.9308	0.0000	0.7648	41.5624	138.4914
Dummy for 18-21 age group (Yes = 1; No = 0)	−0.6299	0.2190	0.5124	1.5109	0.5327	0.6066	0.2438	0.5205	1.3584	1.8342
Dummy for 27-32 age group (Yes = 1; No = 0)	0.9837	0.0587	0.5204	3.5734	2.6744	−0.9706	0.0622	0.5205	3.4775	0.3789
Dummy for 33-40 age group (Yes = 1; No = 0)	−0.0824	0.8694	0.5013	0.0270	0.9209	−0.4650	0.3757	0.5249	0.7848	0.6282
Dummy for 41-50 age group (Yes = 1; No = 0)	−1.5990	0.0035	0.5482	8.5080	0.2021	0.7024	0.2074	0.5571	1.5895	2.0186
Dummy for 50+ age group (Yes = 1; No = 0)	−4.0923	0.0000	0.7692	28.3028	0.0167	2.9251	0.0001	0.7229	16.3733	18.6357
McFadden R ²	0.1905					0.2416				
Likelihood ratio (LR)	70.6309					89.6003				
LR Probability	0.0000					0.0000				
Akaike info criterion (AIC)	0.9821					0.9236				

Variable	Dummy Variable: Eastern Europe (Outcome variable)					Dummy Variable: Western Europe (Outcome variable)				
	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Odds Ratio	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Odds Ratio
Intercept	0.2470	0.8434	1.2504	0.0390	1.2802	-6.6273	0.0005	1.8896	12.3007	0.0013
FFPS	0.0113	0.5377	0.0183	0.3798	1.0113	-0.0617	0.0147	0.0253	5.9495	0.9402
SFPS	-0.0510	0.0017	0.0162	9.8704	0.9503	0.2128	0.0000	0.0297	51.3819	1.2371
Dummy for Gender (Male = 1; Female = 0)	-0.3087	0.5823	0.5613	0.3026	0.7344	1.5338	0.0543	0.7970	3.7040	4.6358
Dummy for 18-21 age group (Yes = 1; No = 0)	0.0203	0.9626	0.4332	0.0022	1.0205	-0.1521	0.8020	0.6065	0.0629	0.8589
Dummy for 27-32 age group (Yes = 1; No = 0)	-0.0004	0.9993	0.4390	0.0000	0.9996	0.0104	0.9866	0.6196	0.0003	1.0104
Dummy for 33-40 age group (Yes = 1; No = 0)	-0.2080	0.6318	0.4340	0.2296	0.8122	0.9714	0.1216	0.6274	2.3971	2.6417
Dummy for 41-50 age group (Yes = 1; No = 0)	-0.3760	0.4136	0.4599	0.6683	0.6866	1.7211	0.0138	0.6990	6.0633	5.5907
Dummy for 50+ age group (Yes = 1; No = 0)	-0.5969	0.3027	0.5792	1.0622	0.5505	2.7224	0.0023	0.8932	9.2904	15.2175
McFadden R ²	0.0279					0.3037				
Likelihood ratio (LR)	10.9708					94.3007				
LR Probability	0.2034					0.0000				
Akaike info criterion (AIC)	1.2371					0.7228				

Source: Authors' own computation.

These discrepancies underscore the diverse cultural and economic landscapes across the EU, where Southern Europe's fashion preferences appear to be driven by different cultural and socio-economic factors compared to its Northern and Western counterparts. The statistical significance of FFPS and SFPS across these models elucidates the regional nuances in fashion preferences. While Southern Europe shows a marked preference for fast fashion, Northern and Western Europe demonstrate a propensity towards sustainable practices. This divergence may reflect underlying economic realities, such as income levels and market maturity, or cultural lifestyles and attitudes, including the societal emphasis on sustainability and environmental responsibility.

Cultural influences, deeply rooted in historical traditions and social norms, could play a pivotal role in the divergent preferences observed when the FFPS and SFPS coefficients were compared. For instance, Southern Europe's rich history of textile and apparel craftsmanship (Bourne, 2021) may have fostered a cultural affinity for fashion, which, when coupled with modern fast fashion's appeal of variety and accessibility (Stenton et al., 2021), could explain the region's leanings. On the other hand, Northern and Western Europe, with their long-standing affinity for environmental conservation and welfare, have fostered a collective sentiment that is reflected in their fashion preference patterns (Jehlička & Jacobsson, 2021).

To further discuss and validate the econometric results through the lens of cultural differences, in some cases, Southern Europe has been characterized in by a flair for fashion as an individualism statement, where attire is often a display of personal style and social standing (Lansford et al., 2021). On another side of the self-expression spectrum, Northern and Western Europe's fashion sensibilities are deeply rooted in principles of egalitarianism and functionality (Palmisano et al., 2022). The populations in these regions often favor a more understated approach to fashion, aimed to harmonize personal commitments with global visions of sustainability and equity. The preference in the Northern and Western European regions for practicality over expressiveness reflects a collective ethos that values

equality and environmental responsibility (Campos & Marín-González, 2020; Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir, 2020). This is in accordance with the findings derived from the logistic regression models, referring to the FFPS – SFPS coefficients comparison at the regional level in the EU. This cultural divergence in fashion reflects broader societal perspectives: Southern Europe's emphasis on individuality through fashion contrasts with the Northern and Western focus on communal ethos, also existing in the direction of sustainability, the fashion realm being no exception.

In addition, income level differences across the analyzed EU regions could explain the differences observed at the level of the FFPS and SFPS coefficients. Higher income levels generally provide greater affinities for ethical consumption choices (Halder et al., 2020), which is reflected in the preferences for sustainable fashion in the more affluent Northern and Western European countries. Conversely, the varied economic conditions in Southern Europe drift the focus on the affordability and accessibility, hallmarks of fast fashion, which could be a response to regional economic constraints, unlike in Northern and Western European regions (Tan et al., 2022).

Regarding the gender factor, within the Southern Europe model, the gender coefficient is positive (4.9308) and statistically significant, indicating that gender has a substantial effect on the likelihood of a sample being from Southern Europe. This could reflect cultural nuances specific to the region, where females are more actively engaged with fashion trends – a sector that is notably vibrant in Southern Europe (Sebald & Jacob, 2020). This increased engagement could be rooted in a long-standing cultural tradition where fashion is more than a form of personal expression, but it is also a means of social communication and identity formation (Hur, 2020). The robust Wald statistic (41.5624) underlines the significance of this variable, and the high odds ratio (138.4914) suggests that females are considerably more likely to identify with being from Southern Europe compared to males, within the context of this specific logistic regression analysis. This significant disparity in regional identification between genders has been previously identified in the literature, and it reflects broader societal norms and roles in Southern Europe, where fashion and personal appearance play a more central role in the female identity than in the male counterpart (Feenstra & Clancy, 2020).

Moving forward with more focus on the Western Europe model, the gender factor analysis brings additional valuable layers of insight not only about the characteristics of this region based on FFPS and SFPS preferences, but it also provides more input on the various cultural differences among EU regions. The gender coefficient, though positive (1.5338), registered a *p*-value (0.0543) that is slightly above the conventional threshold for statistical significance (0.0500), therefore suggesting a potential, yet less definitive, gender influence on the likelihood of a sample being from Western Europe. The Wald statistic (3.7040), while lower than that observed in the Southern Europe model, still indicates a noteworthy relationship between gender and regional affiliation in the case of this model. In addition, the odds ratio of 4.6358, though significant, is less pronounced than in the Southern Europe model, indicating a more moderate difference in the likelihood of regional belonging based on gender. This is reflective of the cultural and societal dynamics within Western European countries, where gender roles and expressions may be more balanced and less tied to traditional norms compared to Southern Europe (Anthias, 2000).

Convergent with existing literature (Abou-Chadi et al., 2021; Amores et al., 2020; Luca et al., 2023), gender equality and progressive social values are part of the Western European

culture and norms, which could lead to a more egalitarian approach regarding the dynamic of personal identity – self-expression through fashion. Thus, in such a Western European context, the impact of gender on fashion trends is less pronounced, especially in comparison with Southern Europe, with both genders having relatively equal inclinations to engage with fashion. However, the presence of a positive coefficient does hint at some level of gender influence, potentially linked to subtle cultural preferences or societal norms that still differentiate the fashion behaviors and identities females rather than males in the Western European region.

This nuanced gender effect in Western Europe highlights the complexity of cultural identities and their expression through fashion. Unlike in Southern Europe, where gender differences in fashion are more starkly defined, Western Europe presents a landscape where gender influences are present but more local, subtle, and intertwined with broader societal values of equality and progressivism. In Western Europe, fashion acts as more than just a vehicle for personal expression, but also as a reflection of a society's evolving narrative – a narrative that celebrates the spirit of equal opportunities in a diverse context. This research finding highlights the vital importance of understanding regional cultural nuances and how they shape individual identities and preferences, particularly in areas like fashion, which is both a personal and cultural artifact.

Next, examining the Northern Europe model, the gender variable introduces, once again, significant insights. Unlike the previous models, the gender coefficient is markedly negative (-5.4583) in the case of the Northern European region, and highly significant (p -value is 0.0000), therefore indicating a pronounced gender influence on the likelihood of identifying with the Northern European region. The substantial Wald statistic (42.7703) further reinforces the significance of this variable in the model. However, the remarkably low odds ratio (0.0043) in the Northern Europe model suggests that, at the level of the sample, being male significantly reduces the likelihood of being from Northern Europe compared to being female. This finding is convergent with the broader socio-cultural context of Northern Europe, yet another region known for its progressive and egalitarian values (Cohn & Upchurch, 2020). The distinct negative influence of the gender predictor on regional identification signals specific socio-cultural characteristics specific to Northern Europe that influence gender self-identification in relation to fashion preferences.

Another predictor worthy of analysis is age. In the Southern Europe model, the 50+ age group shows a significant positive coefficient (2.9251), statistically significant, with a remarkably high odds ratio (18.6357), suggesting a strong association of this demographic with the Southern European region. This empirical finding hints at the fact that fashion is not merely a trend followed by the young; but a lifelong engagement in Southern Europe. Often custodians of tradition, older generations that show consistency are, in some cases, ambassadors of regional styles, blending traditional aesthetics with modern trends (Pozzo, 2020). This finding challenges the stereotypical view of fashion as a youth-centric domain, highlighting the integral role of the older demographic in shaping the fashion identity of Southern Europe. On the other hand, the younger age group (18-21) does not show a significant association, indicated by their non-significant coefficients and odds ratios close to 1. This could suggest a generational divergence within this age group. Thus, the Southern Europe model paints a picture of a region where age is more than a number; it is a marker of cultural identity, with the older generations showing more common traits within the group than in the case of younger generations.

As far as the Western Europe region is concerned, the age group analysis brings more intriguing insights to light. The model shows significant positive coefficients for the 41-50 (1.7211) and 50+ (2.7224) age groups, both statistically significant, with high odds ratios associated, indicating these age groups' strong association with the analyzed region. Following the same patterns observed in the case of the Southern European region, the younger age group (18-21) is not a significant predictor of regional belonging, as the age group coefficient suggests a fragmentation of fashion preferences among the youth, possibly due to socio-economic factors and due to the globalized nature of contemporary fashion trends (Peters et al., 2021). Another similarity to the Southern European region refers to the fashion preferences homogenization among the older population.

The age group variables reveal distinct trends in the Northern European region. The model's significant negative coefficients for all age groups (with the exception of the 18-21 age group), coupled with their low odds ratios, underscore age is not a good predictor of the likelihood for a sample to identifying with Northern Europe. Overall, these findings suggest that in Northern Europe, traditional age-based distinctions in fashion and cultural identity are less pronounced. Thus, this could be hinting to a broader cultural trend in Northern Europe, where age is less of a defining factor in regional identification, possibly due to a more uniform exposure to global cultural and fashion trends across all age groups (Dima et al., 2022; Joanes et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2021).

To conclude and summarize the analysis based on the findings derived from the logistic regression models designed to predict the likelihood of a sample being from specific EU regions. Reflecting upon the age predictor analysis across Southern, Western, and Northern European regions, the empirical data revealed a strong association between the 50+ age group and regional fashion identity in the Southern European region, as well as in the Western European region, where the pattern somewhat mirrors Southern Europe, with significant associations for the 41-50 and 50+ age groups. This indicates a strong regional connection among the observations from this sample and suggests a homogenization of fashion preferences among the older population. The younger age group (18-21), in contrast, does not show a significant association, showing regional divergence in fashion preferences, potentially caused by fast fashion trends, aggressive media campaigns, etc. Northern Europe presents a contrast to these patterns. In this specific case, age is not a strong predictor of regional fashion identity, as evidenced by the significant negative coefficients for most age groups, except the 18-21 cohort. This indicates a lesser emphasis on age-based fashion distinctions and suggests a more uniform approach to fashion. Overall, these findings highlight the diversity in how age groups interact with fashion across the EU. They underscore the importance of considering regional cultural nuances in understanding fashion preferences, revealing a complex European dynamic where age plays varying roles in shaping regional fashion identities.

Conclusion

The demand for sustainable and fast fashion products in the EU is significantly influenced by the existing consumers' preferences. The growing awareness among consumers regarding the consequences of their purchase choices has the potential to exert a substantial influence on the fashion industry's transition towards adopting more socially and ecologically conscientious practices. Nevertheless, the intricacies associated with deciphering customer preferences within the sustainable and fast fashion industry present obstacles in

comprehending the actual market need for environmentally conscious or fashion-forward products.

The research aimed to investigate customer preferences in the sustainable and fast fashion business and determine the market demand for ecologically conscious items compared to fashion-forward ones. The objective was to gain insight into the elements that impact the demand for sustainable and fast fashion products in the EU by conducting a thorough analysis of consumer behavior and preferences. By conducting a comprehensive review of the existing literature, a logistic regression analysis was performed with the objective of predicting the probability of a sample belonging to distinct EU areas, depending on age groups. The empirical data unveiled clear and discernible patterns in the Southern, Western, and Northern European regions. A significant correlation was found in Southern and Western Europe between those aged 50 and above and their regional fashion identity, indicating a convergence of fashion preferences among older demographics. In contrast, the 18-21 age group exhibited regional variation in their fashion tastes, which may have been impacted by the rapid fashion trends and media promotions. Conversely, Northern Europe exhibited a distinct trend, where age did not strongly indicate regional fashion identity. Conversely, a more standardized approach to fashion was seen, where age had a diminished influence on the development of regional fashion identities. These findings highlight the variety of ways in which different age groups engage with fashion across the EU. They also illustrate the significance of taking into account regional cultural differences when studying fashion preferences. The first set of logistic regression models constructed in this empirical paper was aimed at determining the likelihood of populations belonging to distinct age groups, based on EU individuals' preferences for fashion. The second cohort of models were aimed at broadening the socio-demographic perspective with two more factors of influence: gender and geographic location. Subsequently, the scope was expanded in the second set of models by including a broader socio-demographic perspective through the incorporation of two additional influential factors: gender and geographic location. These models were adeptly crafted to evaluate the likelihood of samples to belong to a certain EU region, based on EU individuals' preferences for fashion and other socio-demographic factors: age and gender. This econometric analysis did not only reinforce and complement existing literature by providing empirical evidence on how contemporary sustainability trends are influencing consumer behavior (Backs et al., 2021; Castro-López et al., 2021; Johansson & Henriksson, 2020; Johnstone & Lindh, 2022; Thøgersen, 2021), but it also provided novel, data-proven insights about the EU demographic distribution in relation to fashion preferences. For scholars, the models offer empirical evidence to both support and challenge existing theories in consumer behavior in the fashion industry in the new global paradigm of sustainability. In addition, findings derived from this research provide a solid basis for future scholarly inquiries, relevant to various research fields, including sociology, economics, marketing, and environmental studies, fostering interdisciplinary-focused research collaborations.

Lastly, the nature of social media data introduces its own set of challenges. The preferences and behaviors observed on these platforms may not entirely or accurately reflect offline realities. The discrepancy between online engagements and real-life fashion preferences poses a challenge in drawing definitive conclusions about consumer trends based solely on social media data. Despite its valuable insights, it is imperative to consider and critically evaluate the potential biases and limitations inherited to social media-derived data. Expanding this empirical research through the integration of additional socio-

demographic and psychographic variables would offer a promising avenue for enhancing the framework of decoding consumer preferences in sustainable and fast fashion across the EU. Incorporating more variables relevant to this study, such as income level, education, environmental awareness, and carbon footprint, would boost the predictive power and explanatory depth of logistic regression models. This proposed enriched analytical approach would not only pave the way for more targeted-efficient interventions by industry stakeholders, but would also be a solid contribution to the broader discourse on empowering sustainability and ethical practices in the fashion industry.

Acknowledgments

This research was conducted as a result of Elena-Mădălina Deaconu's Erasmus+ mobility at the Department of Economics, Business and Marketing within the Catholic University of Valencia. The mobility took place between 1 May 2024–29 July 2024.

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