

**The Paradox of Consumer Engagement in Ultra-Fast Fashion
Consumption**

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The Paradox of Consumer Engagement in Ultra-Fast Fashion Consumption.

Abstract: *This research investigates the effects of consumer psychological motivators on engagement with social media ultra-fast fashion content while evaluating the mediating role of sustainable perceptions. Grounded in Social Identity Theory, the study employs a web-based survey and Structural Equation Modelling to analyze data from 417 USA and UK participants. Findings evidence that psychological motivators, such as Need to Belong and Fear of Missing Out, are significant drivers of engagement, while consumer sustainability perceptions mediate these relationships positively. The study suggests that consumers' psychological need for social validation and fear of exclusion can partially outweigh sustainability-oriented principles, creating a contradictory engagement pattern. We evidence the complex interaction between social identity-driven factors and sustainable consumption, shedding light on a behavioral paradox within the globalized marketing of ultra-fast fashion.*

Keywords: *Need to Belong, Fear of Missing Out, Consumer Engagement, Ultra-Fast Fashion, Social Identity Theory, Consumer Environmentalism, SEM, International Marketing.*

1. Introduction

Global marketing has significantly shifted toward digital paths, which allows brands to interact with customers worldwide in ways that go beyond conventional limits (Shankar et al., 2022; Varadarajan et al., 2022). This new norm is noticeably reflected in ultra-fast fashion (UFF), a market that heavily relies on digital technologies to establish real-time trend identification, quick production, and responsive marketing activities (Gurova, 2024). Companies in this industry (e.g., Shein and Boohoo) operate within a data-driven digital framework. They manage to produce thousands of new products every week to meet the global consumer demand, instantly (Turunen, 2024). According to recent industry reports, Shein's unmatched speed-to-market and focused digital marketing tactics aided in reaching a valuation of over \$100 billion in 2022 alone, with an annual revenue increase of 50% (McKinsey, 2022; Business of Fashion, 2022).

Despite these unprecedented changes, digital-based practices have led to reformulation of how global consumers and international brands interact; they have also initiated substantial challenges related to consumption, sustainability, and cross-cultural dynamics (Nam & Kannan, 2020; Katsikeas et al., 2020). Ultra-fast fashion consumers are, by default, heavy social media users (Hasbullah et al., 2020)

who simultaneously represent Gen Z's distinctive combination of psychological, environmental, and green value-based drivers (Coughlin & Dorner, 2023). On one hand, intrinsic motivators such as the Need to Belong (NtB) and Fear of Missing Out (Fomo) amplify engagement with UFF content on social media platforms (Bazi et al., 2020), where peer validation and digital exclusivity are pivotal (Dobre et al., 2021; Dahiya et al., 2022). On the other hand, the current environmental agenda calls for alignment with societal ethical beliefs (Hosta & Zabkar, 2021). As social consciousness and environmentalism grow, consumers are arguably faced with a mandate to resist unsustainable practices. Hence, consumers' need for social acceptance and inclusion collides with sustainability values, often dictating a cognitive dissonance state within consumer behaviour (Pandey & Pandey, 2024; Longo et al., 2019).

This contradiction between the psychological forces behind social validation and the growing consumer demand for sustainability constitutes a behavioral paradox that remains under-explored in current literature on digital consumer engagement (Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2016; Hollebeek, 2018). While consumers increasingly endorse pro-environmental attitudes, they continue to engage with UFF brands that contradict those values. This inconsistency raises critical questions about the stability of ethical consumption preferences in digitally mediated environments. Thus, the primary objective of this study is to examine how these competing drivers, social identity and sustainability values, interact to shape engagement with ethically questionable brands. Our research responds to recent calls for more granular examinations of consumers' paradoxical behavior in sustainability contexts (Celik & Ekici, 2024; Fischer et al., 2021) and for greater theoretical integration between identity-based motivations and value-driven consumption (Sheth et al., 2011; Vivek et al., 2022).

Previous studies have broadly explored the impact of consumer psychological motivators on brand engagement, particularly on social media (Santos et al., 2022; Vander Schee et al., 2020), and the effects of sustainable consumption on engagement (Fischer et al., 2021; Kadic-Maglajlic et al., 2019; Salciuviene et al., 2024). However, less is understood about how psychological factors and sustainability perceptions jointly affect consumer engagement, particularly when brands are perceived as environmentally or ethically challenging. Moreover, fewer studies examine the mediating role of sustainability concerns in attenuating or reinforcing the effects of identity-based engagement drivers (Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2018; Gummerus et al., 2017), especially within highly digitized sectors such as UFF.

Building on Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Harwood, 2020), this research offers a critical step towards understanding the interplay between psychological and value-based drivers in consumer engagement. Need to Belong (NtB) and Fear of Missing Out (Fomo) represent the abovementioned internal drivers, shedding light on the ways individual consumers associate themselves with brands, particularly in

contexts like UFF that are formed by immediacy and peer validation through social media. Equally, Social Consciousness (SC) and Environmentalism (Env) are immediately relevant to the societal pressures deriving from the central consideration of green values and the growing need for environmental concern (Testa et al., 2021).

In essence, we reveal the complex ways in which psychological drivers uphold consumer-brand relationships in contexts where society-imposed dilemmas influence consumption. This is where this study adds new knowledge by challenging the assumption that greater sustainability awareness leads to disengagement from unsustainable brands, and by demonstrating that identity-related motivations may override or coexist with ethical concerns (Jacobson & Harrison, 2022; Hollebeek et al., 2014). We address critical questions to understand how psychological and ethical factors interact in defining consumer engagement within global digital markets. Therefore, the study offers valuable insights into how these dynamics are formed across two distinct markets (the United Kingdom and the United States). The research also offers relevant implications for managers who aim to find a viable balance between sustainability imperatives and high volumes of consumer demand for their brands.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 offers the literature review and hypothesis development, Section 3 explains the study's methodology and presents data analysis and results, and Section 4 discusses results, implications, and presents conclusions. Limitations and suggestions for future research are also offered in this section.

2. Literature review

2.1 Psychological Motivators and Social Identity Theory

Consumer psychological motivators are the forces that drive behaviour based on emotional, cognitive, or social needs (Griskevicius & Kenrick, 2013; Kimmel & Kimmel, 2018). They often involve reinforcement of inclusion, status, and self-concept, especially in fast-changing environments (Dogan, 2019; Harrison-Walker & Mead, 2024; Liu, 2025). Such motivators can explain the mechanisms behind consumers' attachments to brands, especially in the digital environments where social interaction and validation have significant roles (Japutra et al., 2014; Kumar & Nayak, 2019). Social Identity Theory (SIT) offers a theoretical background to deepen the understanding of these mechanisms. SIT posits that individuals derive a significant part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). These group affiliations provide not only a sense of belonging but also inform researchers on how individuals perceive themselves and behave in social contexts (Hunter et al., 2004). When applied to this study context, SIT suggests that consumers engage with brands because they represent social categories or communities with which they desire to be associated. By internalizing the identity of the brand community, individuals align their attitudes and behaviors with those of the group, thereby reinforcing a firm sense of inclusion

and validation (Gruss et al., 2020; Quach & Thaichon, 2017; Reed et al., 2012). This is also applicable to digital environments, where social networking itself amplifies the need for validation and social interaction, promoting behaviors that influence connections with others (Ortiz et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2020).

In the social media context, specific psychological motivators emerge as particularly influential in shaping consumer behavior. Among these, need to belong (NtB) and fear of missing out (Fomo) have a key role in defining consumer engagement on social media platforms (Bui et al., 2022; Tandon et al., 2021). Investigating the latter becomes critical in the context of consumers' engagement with UFF brands, which are characterized by their extensive use of strategies aimed at amplifying the psychological motivations.

2.2 Need to Belong

The Need to Belong is one of the most basic motivations of humankind, as people want acceptance, connection, and meaningful interpersonal relationships (Baumeister et al., 2007). This psychological construct is embedded in Social Identity Theory (SIT), which states that individuals achieve a sense of self thanks to their membership in social groups (Tajfel, 1979). In other words, SIT suggests that belonging to a brand community provides consumers with a sense of social identity reinforcement. Importantly, individuals seek out groups that reflect aspirational values or enhance their self-image, and in doing so, they internalize group norms, including those shaped by brand culture and peer behavior (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). In the UFF context, consumer engagement is not only transactional but also a form of social alignment, which is particularly relevant when consumer participation in the brand's digital ecosystem enhances the sense of group belonging (Ahn, Kim, & Aggarwal, 2014). For consumers, NtB manifests itself as a branded engagement with those online communities that encourage inclusion and acceptance. Social media platforms have a critical role in enabling these interactions, as brands use influencer marketing (Vrontis et al., 2021), user-generated content (Naeem & Ozuem, 2021), and social campaigns (Ashley & Tuten, 2015) to create a sense of belonging. In the context of UFF, brands can leverage consumers' need for acceptance and validation and enhance customer engagement, particularly on digital platforms. According to Mrad et al. (2020), a person's understanding of sustainability concerns may occasionally be overshadowed by their desire to belong to an exclusive community. In social media settings, since social inclusion drives behavior, this may motivate consumers to prioritize social approval over ethical considerations (Sallaku et al., 2024). Therefore, belonging to trendy groups can become central to individual self-image, influencing an overall critical thinking on ethical issues. This consideration highlights the importance of investigating NtB as a driver of the engagement behaviour in the UFF industry.

2.3 Fear of Missing Out

Fomo refers to the pervasive feeling that other members of a social group are having better experiences than oneself (Przybylski et al., 2013). Following this conceptualization, further research has associated Fomo with the feeling of being excluded from a desirable experience or a persistent need to stay continuously connected to what others are doing (Buglass et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2020). Fomo is particularly relevant in digital environments where social comparison is apparent and immediately communicated (Buglass et al., 2017; Tandon et al., 2022). Social media platforms further intensify this effect by allowing consumers to see the wide range of experiences that other people enjoy, heightening the fear of being left out (Tandon et al., 2022).

In the UFF industry, brands strategically leverage Fomo to trigger impulsive behaviours (Wu et al., 2024). For instance, limited-time promotions create flash sales or trend-driven campaigns. This urges consumers to do things “fast” so as “not to stay behind” or “miss out.” This is evident among relevant platforms (e.g., Shein), which offer short-term discounts and exclusive collections to encourage customers to act quickly and make purchases (Buck, 2024). This sense of scarcity is ideal for making consumers feel Fomo and increasing their engagement toward those brands (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Hodgkinson, 2019). Fomo not only influences customer behaviour in terms of transactions but also leads to feelings of regret and guilt due to the unsustainable nature of such consumption (Bläse et al., 2024). However, the ethical challenges induced by Fomo prompted behaviour are only little researched, therefore calling for further examination.

2.4 Sustainable Consumption

Sustainable consumption is considered essential in guiding consumer behaviour toward achieving broader social and environmental objectives (Lee, 2014; Ishaq et al., 2021). Its primary focus is on promoting consumption patterns that minimize harmful environmental and social effects, encouraging consumers to make more ethical and responsible choices (Quoquab & Mohammad, 2020; Fischer et al., 2021). Higher ethical concerns, where ideals such as social consciousness and environmental responsibility influence decision-making, often form the foundation of consumer involvement with sustainability-focused firms (Lin & Huang, 2012; Roling et al., 2020; Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2016).

Recently, a growing interest has been shown in research on the factors influencing sustainable consumption, pointing out how engagement levels, personality, culture, and technology impact consumers’ attitudes towards sustainable practices.

Highly involved customers are more inclined to adopt sustainable purchasing behaviors, as they tend to identify with a brand's values, innovation, and environmental goals, which foster a stronger sense of alignment with their moral principles (Batat, 2024). In this sense, customers' engagement determines greater awareness and responsiveness to brands' sustainability initiatives, such as the use of eco-friendly products, sustainable packaging, and ethical sourcing (Banik & Gao, 2023).

While some cultural values may not have a direct and strong effect on sustainable consumption, developing a pro-environmental self-identity can serve as a mediating factor influencing five dimensions of sustainable behavior, including sustainable purchasing, consumption reduction, product life cycle extension, food waste reduction, and bag reuse (Zhao et al., 2024).

Besides, a cross-cultural lens, incorporating individualism and collectivism, illustrates how cultural orientations influence openness to sustainable practices (Ur Rahman et al., 2023). Individualism emphasizes personal goals, uniqueness, self-reliance, and independent identity, whilst collectivism refers to group goals, interdependence, conformity, and social harmony.

The need for companies to customize their sustainability messaging and engagement strategies is expressed to fit the cultural contexts of the markets they are targeting. Maduku (2024) examines how anticipated emotions serve as mediators between environmental concern and behavioral intent, highlighting the need for interventions that consider not only the cognitive aspects but also the emotional drivers behind consumer motivation. Moreover, the role of consumers goes beyond individual purchasing decisions, including broader engagement with circular economy models. Santos-Corrada et al. (2024) suggest that managers should pay more attention to the power consumers have in driving circularity.

The centrality of innovation has led to the rise of “phygital” consumption, which merges hands-on interaction with the ease of digital access, encouraging more sustainable consumer habits. Innovation and involvement are key factors in whether consumers are willing to embrace these new offerings, indicating a shift towards more participatory and experience-focused consumption. Indeed, consumers' commitment to sustainability amplifies the impact of personalized, innovative phygital experiences on brand loyalty (Anwar et al., 2025).

Consumers seeking personalized experiences frequently favor products and services that align with their beliefs, including a commitment to sustainability (Hagen et al., 2024). This idea is essential in the fashion industry, where strong pressure emerges about practices aimed at reducing the sector's significant environmental and social impacts. Kang et al. (2023) suggest that subscription models support a broader transition from simply acquiring products to accessing them, which can greatly cut down on the environmental impact linked to overproduction and waste. These models can help foster a psychological connection to products rather than just ownership, paving the way for more eco-

friendly business practices. Furthermore, values related to the environment and altruism, along with social trust and perceived norms, shape sustainable practices in the fashion industry (Hong et al., 2024).

This study employs environmentalism and social consciousness as key proxies to investigate sustainable consumption practices. According to Walker and Kent (2013), social consciousness refers to an individual's propensity to behave properly and their understanding of social and environmental challenges. In addition, Haws et al. (2014) state that environmentalism mainly considers attributing a specific value to sustainability in consumer actions, especially when purchasing decisions. Participation in sustainable consumption is embedded in a consumer's personality and beliefs (Luchs et al., 2015; Salciuvienė et al., 2024). Individuals who strongly connect with sustainability tend to act in ways that reinforce their sense of responsibility, as this aligns with their self-image. Thus, the SIT explains sustainable consumption since it encourages a participative and cohesive customer base (Razmus and Fortuna, 2022). This involvement goes beyond consumer behaviour to include collective efforts, strengthening common identities based on sustainability (Kadic-Maglajlic et al., 2019).

2.5 Consumer Engagement

Consumer engagement (CE) is widely regarded as a robust, multidimensional construct. It embraces emotional, cognitive, and behavioural components in the quality and intensity of interactions between the consumer and the brand (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014). CE is a measure of a consumer's willingness to spend time, energy, and emotional commitment to one's interaction with a brand (Kumar & Pansari, 2016).

Consumer engagement (CE), while often recognized as a positive force in brand-consumer relationships, is now undergoing scrutiny for its complex ethical implications in industries deemed unethical, such as ultra-fast fashion (UFF). Increased CE was found in empirical studies at the expense of consumers' ethical beliefs, especially if the brands were not aligned with it (e.g., Longo et al., 2019). In other words, consumers can become excited about UFF brands after being exposed to social media promotions, but they may face cognitive dissonance when information about environmental impacts and social costs related to fast fashion is disclosed (Papasolomou et al., 2023). This contradiction creates critical issues concerning the sustainability of CE in those sectors where ethical issues will become increasingly profound in the years to come. As such, socially aware consumers or individuals with strong environmental values are expected to be less likely to engage with unethical brands (Walker & Kent, 2013; Haws et al., 2014).

According to Hollebeek et al. (2014), consumer psychological triggers are significantly central in sustaining engagement over time because they bind consumers and brands into more meaningful relationships than other forms of connection (Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011; Yunus et al., 2022). This becomes even more evident in digital environments where immediacy and interactivity are the major driving features (Dessart et al., 2015). Developing interactive campaigns, influencer partnerships, and gaming strategies enhances consumer engagement and ties them more to a brand (Brodie et al., 2013). Additionally, it is well established in extant research that these strategies increase brand loyalty and word-of-mouth advocacy as engaged consumers are more likely to share their experiences and recommend brands to their social networks (Vivek et al., 2012).

Earlier studies also reveal that psychological motivators primarily drive emotional and behavioural dimensions in tandem with engagement through influencer marketing campaigns (Przybylski et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2018) and tactics (e.g., flash sales) that include social validation, prompt consumer participation and advocacy (Mrad et al., 2020). The Need to Belong drives consumers to engage with brands that thrive in online communities, particularly within social media networks where group validation is a salient feature (Baumeister & Leary, 2017). FOMO, similarly, invokes a sense of urgency and scarcity that induces consumers' active participation and involvement in corresponding activities to avoid feeling excluded (Przybylski et al., 2013). So, it has become increasingly important to understand the drivers and dynamics of consumer engagement (CE) in digital contexts (Dessart et al., 2015).

This study aims to enhance the existing literature on CE in ethically challenging industries such as UFF. It builds upon the work of Brodie et al. (2013), Hollebeek et al. (2014), and Dessart et al. (2015) and adds new discussion points, including the interplay between internal psychological drivers such as NtB and Fomo with extant concerns in the ethical agenda (i.e., social consciousness and environmentalism). Matching these decisions aids in supporting clarity and understanding towards evolved strategies for more sustainable and consumer-focused engagement in the rapidly evolving digital marketplace.

2.6 Hypothesis Development

As discussed, the Need to Belong (NtB) reflects a central human motivation for founding and preserving meaningful relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 2017). NtB's role in marketing is particularly evident in the digital context, and recent studies show its relevance for improving CE in various digital settings (Aw & Labrecque, 2020; Lim et al., 2023). Social belonging is a major motivator of participation in online brand communities, where customers have a deep bond with the group and the brand (Dessart et al., 2015); with consumers actively participating in virtual

communities, it becomes easier for brands to establish emotional ties and, in turn, increase consumer engagement (CE). When consumers perceive opportunities to satisfy their need for inclusion and social validation, their level of engagement typically increases (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Similarly, Leung et al. (2015) note that companies that utilize social identity to foster communities are more likely to enhance customer engagement. In addition, the nature of social media platforms to favour peer endorsement and acknowledgement through shares or likes (Le et al., 2022) offers the perfect setting for achieving NtB (Zaveri & Wilk, 2024). In the UFF context, we regularly witness efforts to enhance customer engagement through building a sense of community. To achieve this, UFF platforms use influencer partnerships, interactive content, and tailored promotion (Wu & Doodoo, 2020; Vladimirova et al., 2024). NtB is found to encourage this engagement; therefore, it is essential to give meaning to consumers enthusiastically, dedicating time and effort to such digital brand interactions (Lim & Rasul, 2022). Considering this evidence, NtB is expected to improve consumer engagement in UFF contexts. Thus, we advance that:

H1a: Need to Belong has a positive effect on Consumer Engagement.

As individuals get their sense of self from their groups, they are more likely to incorporate social consciousness into their identities when group norms strongly emphasize it (Balundė & Perlaviciute, 2023). Naturally, consumer sensitivity to societal issues will rise as they interact with communities and groups, prioritizing shared values and a sense of collective identity (Chalmeta & Barbeito-Caamaño, 2024). This relationship between social belonging and social consciousness has received growing attention in the literature. Consumers who feel an active part of environmentally conscious or ethical communities are more sensitive to social and environmental issues, more inclined to participate in the related activities, and prioritize ethical consumption (Gummerus et al., 2017; Park & Yang, 2012). Similarly, brands that establish communities through moral practices and initiatives are more likely to inspire consumers to become socially conscious (Schultz et al., 2023). Therefore, by encouraging group values and common ethical concerns, we propose that:

H1b: Need to Belong has a positive effect on consumer Social Consciousness.

Moreover, consumers associated with groups that value sustainability show increased environmentalism orientations, which is a person's dedication to ecologically friendly behavior (Bintara et al., 2023; Haws et al., 2014). NtB significantly predicts environmentally friendly behaviour as it is based on the notion of social influence, where individual attitudes and actions are heavily shaped by group dynamics (Cho et al., 2013; Schultz et al., 2023). Members of online communities with shared environmental missions are more likely to act in an environmentally

conscious manner when they have a strong sense of belonging and group identity (Sağkaya Güngör & Ozansoy Çadırcı, 2022). Given that NtB fosters a sense of accountability and responsibility toward the group (Baumeister, 2012; Laor, 2024), members are more likely to internalize values when brands promote a sense of belonging and highlight shared environmental goals (Ishaq & Di Maria, 2020). Although most UFF brands do not operate sustainably, brands that aim to promote environmental responsibility can draw on social identity cues to foster pro-environmental attitudes. When consumers perceive that sustainable behavior aligns with the norms and values of their peer group, NtB can motivate them to adopt those expectations (White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019). Thus, we posit:

H1c: Need to Belong has a positive effect on Consumer Environmentalism.

As previously discussed, Fomo is a critical driver of various behavioural mechanisms, particularly in digital environments. In these contexts, users often interact with brands and participate in online communities to avoid a feeling of exclusion. CE is highly influenced by the sense of missing out, as consumers are highly reactive to the urgency that FOMO-oriented marketing strategies tend to evoke (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Evidence suggests that FOMO is a significant driver of active consumer participation in online brand communities, particularly when FOMO strategies are employed (i.e., limited-time deals or exclusive offers are involved) (Lim et al., 2023). In this vein, social media users are particularly susceptible to advertisements that allegedly include claims of urgency about product purchases (Good & Hyman, 2021). In addition, research suggests that social platforms tend to intensify FOMO since users are massively exposed to countdown deals, product flash sales, and testimonials, resulting in increased engagement intensity (Jacobson et al., 2022). Thus, we suggest:

H2a: Fear of Missing Out has a positive effect on Consumer Engagement.

In digital environments such as social media, where sustainability concerns are prevalent and societal norms are intensively promoted, individuals experiencing Fomo are more likely to align with collective values (Buglass et al., 2017). Thus, campaigns that incorporate environmental cues are more engaging, as consumers' concerns resonate strongly with their desire to support social causes (Walker & Kent, 2013). Accordingly, individuals who fear exclusion from their communities are more likely to conform to their group's ethical values (Singh & Banerjee, 2024). Therefore, digital marketing strategies that integrate FOMO with ethical appeals are expected to drive consumer social consciousness. Fomo can, therefore, increase consumers' likelihood of supporting socially responsible brands, particularly when the latter are digitally promoted. Based on this, we posit:

H2b: Fear of Missing Out has a positive effect on consumer Social Consciousness.

Similarly, Fomo-induced behaviours can amplify consumers' commitment to environmentally sustainable practices (Haws et al., 2014). It can act as a catalyst for pro-environmental behaviours increasingly affected by digital marketing strategies. Consumers are more prone to adopt pro-environmental norms if they experience a fear of losing group acceptance (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014). Fomo-driven social interactions increase consumers' awareness of environmental issues as the understated risk of exclusion from social media communities leads to greater participation in sustainable practices. (Testa et al., 2022; Graham & Abrahamse, 2017). We posit that:

H2c: Fear of Missing Out has a positive effect on Consumer Environmentalism.

The commitment to sustainable consumption often clashes with consumers' engagement with brands that prioritize mass production and affordability over sustainability (Haws et al., 2014). Previous research supports this notion, showing that as consumers become more aware of environmental issues, they are less likely to engage with brands not aligned with their values (Longo et al., 2019). Further, environmentally conscious consumers tend to reduce their interactions with such brands or industries to minimize the cognitive dissonance between their values and behaviour (Rolling et al., 2020). This is highly applicable to the fast fashion industry, including UFF, which is notorious for prioritizing mass production and rapid consumption, often at the expense of sustainability. In this regard, some studies show that environmentally conscious consumers criticize and even avoid fast fashion brands (Mehta et al., 2023). Moreover, evidence from digital behaviours indicates that eco-conscious consumers are more likely to withdraw from online communities and reduce social media engagement with unethical brands (Graham & Abrahamse, 2017). Consequently, we suggest that:

H3: Consumer Environmentalism has a negative effect on Consumer Engagement.

Socially conscious consumers are guided by a rational process influenced by experience, information, and opportunities (Walker & Kent, 2013). These consumers are aware of the broader societal impacts of their purchasing decisions, considering the ethical consequences on society, the environment, and others beyond personal benefits (Auger et al., 2003). Such consumers support companies with strong philanthropic actions (Roberts, 1993; Rolling et al., 2020) and align themselves with brands that demonstrate ethical responsibility (Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2016). In contrast, the UFF industry, characterized by rapid consumption, short product lifecycles, and overproduction, strongly opposes these ethical principles (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2010; McNeill et al., 2020). This contradiction is further reinforced by fast fashion retailers' use of image-heavy, appealing, and shareable social media content designed to boost engagement (Chang & Fan, 2017; Yoo, 2023). To stay aligned with the latest fashion trends, consumers prefer to wear their clothing for a brief period

(Gabrielli et al., 2013; Papasolomou et al., 2023), leading to environmental degradation and unethical practices (McNeill & Moore, 2015). Ultimately, the industry's focus on speed and cost efficiency creates a culture of overconsumption, resulting in serious environmental and social degradation (Murphy & Schlegelmilch, 2013; Wang et al., 2019). According to the cognitive dissonance theory, consumers tend to avoid information or brands that conflict with their ethical beliefs (Festinger, 1957; Stone & Cooper, 2001; Rolling et al., 2020). Consequently, socially conscious consumers will disengage with brands associated with unsustainable practices as a means of reducing dissonance, staying aligned with their ethical values (Sudbury & Riley & Kohlbacher, 2018; Celik & Ekici, 2024). In this regard, previous research indicates that consumers with a positive attitude toward sustainability avoid fast fashion brands (Stringer et al., 2020). Therefore, we posit:

H4. Social consciousness has a negative effect on Consumer Engagement.

Interpreting culture inseparably from a country has become so common that the two concepts are often used interchangeably (Taras et al., 2016). For instance, the term "culture" has frequently appeared in publications that focus on cross-country comparisons, even when they don't specifically address cultural differences (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1999; Sturman et al., 2012). The tendency to treat these two concepts as synonymous frequently stems from the belief that national borders shape cultural identity, practices, values, and behaviours.

Culture is a significant predictor of consumer choices (Solomon et al., 2010; Soye, 2012). Previous studies have confirmed its influence on various brand-related behaviours, including brand perceptions (Torelli et al., 2012; Krautz, 2017), attitudes toward brands (Gonzalez-Jimenez et al., 2019; Park & Jeon, 2018), and even brand engagement (Hollebeek, 2018; Tsai & Men, 2017). This study proposes that the level of engagement with ultra-fast fashion brands significantly varies across nations due to cultural differences. In some countries, fast fashion principles are strongly interested in delivering the latest designs (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). Conversely, other countries prioritize sustainability, ethical production, or quality over quantity (Joergens, 2006; King, 2024), encouraging customers to support brands that focus on fair labour practices and sustainable sourcing (Campos et al., 2023) and resulting in less engagement or even avoidance of fast fashion brands (e.g., Lee et al., 2009; Stringer et al., 2020). Furthermore, engagement with UFF brands may vary across countries due to differences in consumer digital behaviour and social media usage preferences. While social media plays a central role in the engagement with fast fashion brands (Chang & Fan, 2017; Pantano et al., 2018), its effects differ across countries depending on local consumption preferences, cultural norms, and global marketing strategies (Alsaleh et al., 2019; Silva et al., 2023). Based on this, we propose:

H5: Country serves as a significant control variable in the model, affecting Consumer Engagement.

As discussed in the previous hypotheses, fast fashion brands leverage psychological factors like NtB and Fomo to effectively stimulate consumer engagement (Wu & Dodoo, 2020; Vladimirova et al., 2024; Jacobson et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2023). The need to belong influences consumers to follow the newest trends and engage with brands that are viewed as stylish or socially prominent (Vladimirova et al., 2024), while FOMO prompts them to act quickly, fearing they might miss out on trendy items (Lim et al., 2023). This aligns with social identity theory, which posits that even in digital environments where participation offers mostly symbolic and reputational benefits and hazards, people still crave social validation and group acceptance (Turner & Oakes, 1986; Brown, 2000; Dhir et al., 2018).

The current environmental agenda emphasizes the need to align with broader societal ethical values, thereby encouraging consumers to develop their social consciousness and environmental awareness (Hosta & Zabkar, 2021). The UFF industry, often criticized for unethical labor practices, environmental harm, and overconsumption, stands in direct opposition to the values held by socially conscious and environmentally aware consumers (McNeill & Moore, 2015; Campos et al., 2023). In this regard, previous research indicates that consumers are increasingly aware of environmental and social issues associated with the fast-fashion industry (Lundblad & Davis, 2016). This tendency is evident in brand choice and sustainable behavior preferences (Huang, 2016; Kumar et al., 2017; San Martin et al., 2021). In this context, we propose that social consciousness and environmentalism act as moral filters. While the NtB and Fomo initially increase the likelihood of engaging with UFF content on social media, it will be counterbalanced by consumers' broader ethical concerns. To minimize their cognitive dissonance, socially conscious and environmentally aware consumers will intentionally reduce their engagement with UFF brands' content to preserve their ethical self-concept (Stone & Cooper, 2001; Stringer et al., 2020; Celik & Ekici, 2024). Supporting this, Sudbury & Riley and Kohlbacher (2018) found that ethical and environmental beliefs act as motivators for moral avoidance of both ecosystem exploitation and human exploitation behaviours. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H6a: Social Consciousness negatively mediates the relationship between Need to Belong and Consumer Engagement.

H6b: Environmentalism negatively mediates the relationship between Need to Belong and Consumer Engagement.

H7a: Social Consciousness negatively mediates the relationship between Fomo and Consumer Engagement.

H7b: Environmentalism negatively mediates the relationship between Fomo and Consumer Engagement.

3.Methodology and Findings

3.1 Methodology

This research aims to understand the effects of distinct consumer psychological motivators, such as the Need to Belong and the Fear of Missing Out (Fomo), on consumer engagement in the context of ultra-fast fashion (UFF). In addition, the mediating role of Consumer Social Consciousness and Consumer Environmentalism is explored in the model. The study implemented an empirical quantitative approach through a web-based survey to perform a Sem (Structured Equation Modelling) for testing the hypothesis on Smart PLS, 4 following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2021). We recruited participants from Amazon MTurk (Ford, 2017) to collect data, ensuring a diverse and representative sample. The study involved a sample of 417 participants from two countries, the USA and the UK. These countries were chosen due to their high levels of social media usage across consumers, strong exposure to ultra-fast fashion brands, and cultural relevance to sustainability discourse policies. According to Statista (2025a, 2025b), the active social media users in UK are 54.2 million and in USA they count for 331 million. There are relevant differences among USA and UK when it concerns sustainability behaviors and attitudes. For example, FirstInsight (2022) found that 80% of US consumers consider carbon footprint upon their purchasing decisions compared to only a 22% share of USA consumers. This insight identifies key variations in terms of sustainable consumption motivations, relevant for this research. Also, prior studies have documented distinct but comparable patterns in terms of individualistic cultural orientation, digital consumer engagement, and environmental awareness (e.g., Solomon, 2020; Papasolomou et al., 2023; Busalim et al., 2022). Additionally, both countries represent key markets for ultra-fast fashion brands such as Shein, Boohoo, and PrettyLittleThing. For instance, Shein's sales reached 28.2% in USA and 6% in the UK market (Reid, 2024), representing two of the biggest global markets for the brand. UK is also the leading European country in online retail sales, with the ultra-fast fashion sector reaching 67 billion of pounds, and a growth rate of 26.5% between 2012 and 2022. Similarly, Boohoo, which acquired 66% of PrettyLittleThing.com, reached revenues of 364 million in the USA (Statista, 2025c). Overall, the choice of this sample provides the study with both relevance and a diverse consumption context, which allowed us to control the model for the country variable.

3.2 The Questionnaire

To align the sample with the study goals, we implemented a purposive sampling with participants (1) being from the United States and the UK, (2) being more than 18 years old, and (3) being active daily users on social media. In the survey design, the anonymity and confidentiality of the responses were ensured, and to minimize social desirability biases, we required mandatory responses for all items (Nederhof, 1985). To achieve data quality, several protocols were implemented, such as MTurk ID authentication (to avoid repeated responses), attention questions (to exclude inattentive responses), and time-completion verification (to exclude anomalies in time duration). From an initial 443, only 417 valid responses were included for further analysis.

The survey was designed across several sections. Data confidentiality and ethical considerations are covered in the first section. In the second part, participants were introduced to the Ultra-Fast Fashion (UFF) topic by briefly describing its concept, accompanied by examples from three very popular UFF brands, such as “Shein”, “Boohoo”, and “PrettyLittleThing”. Finally, participants were presented with the study questions. Specifically, we adopted as independent variables: *Need to Belong* (NtB) from Leary et al. (2013) with ten items and *Fear of Missing Out* (Fomo) from Przybylski et al. (2013), also with ten items. As mediators: Social Consciousness (Scon) with one item from Walker and Kent (2013) and Environmentalism (Env) with six items from Haws et al. (2014). As a dependent variable, Consumer Engagement (Eng) with twelve items from Kumar and Pansari (2016) was adopted. Finally, the Country (Cou), with binary values, was included in the model as a control variable (see Appendix 1).

3.3 The Sample

The final sample (Appendix 2) resulted in 417 participants showcasing the following demographics: Age: $M = 28.86$; $SD = 8.44$; Gender: male = 44%; female = 56%; $M = 1.56$, $SD = .49$; Education: high school = 61%, graduate = 37%, Master/PhD = 2%, $M = 2.41$, $SD = .52$; Occupation: student = 20%, employee = 64%; self-employed = 13%, unemployed = 3%, $M = 1.99$, $SD = .67$). This demographic distribution enabled a balanced sample for understanding the effects of individual psychological motivations and social-environmental perceptions on consumer engagement behaviour with Ultra-Fast Fashion social media content.

3.4 Hypotheses Testing

To test the hypotheses, we implemented SmartPLS, 4 following the guidelines of Sarstedt et al. (2022). Firstly, we evaluated the indicators' validity by removing items with factor loading below .70 (Hair et al., 2021). This step resulted in two final independent variables (*NtB* with 8 items, *Fomo* with 10 items), two mediators (*Scon* with 1 item, *Env* with 6 items), one dependent variable (*Eng* with 12 items), and one control variable (*Cou*) (Appendix 3). Subsequently, we assessed construct reliability and validity with Cronbach's Alpha ($> .70$; $\text{Rho_A} > .70$) and convergent validity ($\text{AVE} > .50$) (Hair et al., 2021). Discriminant validity was assessed based on the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), and all the values resulted below .85 (Henseler et al., 2015). Overall, the results evidenced satisfactory values for testing the hypotheses (Table 1, Table 2).

Table 1. Construct Reliability & Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Eng	0.957	0.960	0.963	0.682
Env	0.917	0.921	0.935	0.706
Fomo	0.910	0.918	0.927	0.612
NtB	0.879	0.882	0.904	0.542

Source: SmartPLS, 4

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

	Eng	Env	Fomo	NtB	Scon
Eng					
Env	0.568				
Fomo	0.405	0.198			
NtB	0.619	0.210	0.489		
Scon	0.548	0.618	0.257	0.343	

Source: SmartPLS, 4

To test the relationships between *NtB*, *Fomo*, *Scon*, *Env*, *Cred*, and *Eng*, the structural equation modelling (SEM) was performed while controlling for Country (*Cou*). Results evidenced a good model fit: SRMR (.059), d_ULS (2.286); d_G (1.204), χ^2 (2743.323), NFI (.771), adjusted R² (Eng = .545; Env = .047; Scon = .118) and RAMSEA (Eng = .818; Env = .985; Scon = .946), enabling the assessment of the final hypothesis (Hair et al., 2021) (Table 3a-3b, Figure 1, conceptual model).

Table 3a. Model Fit

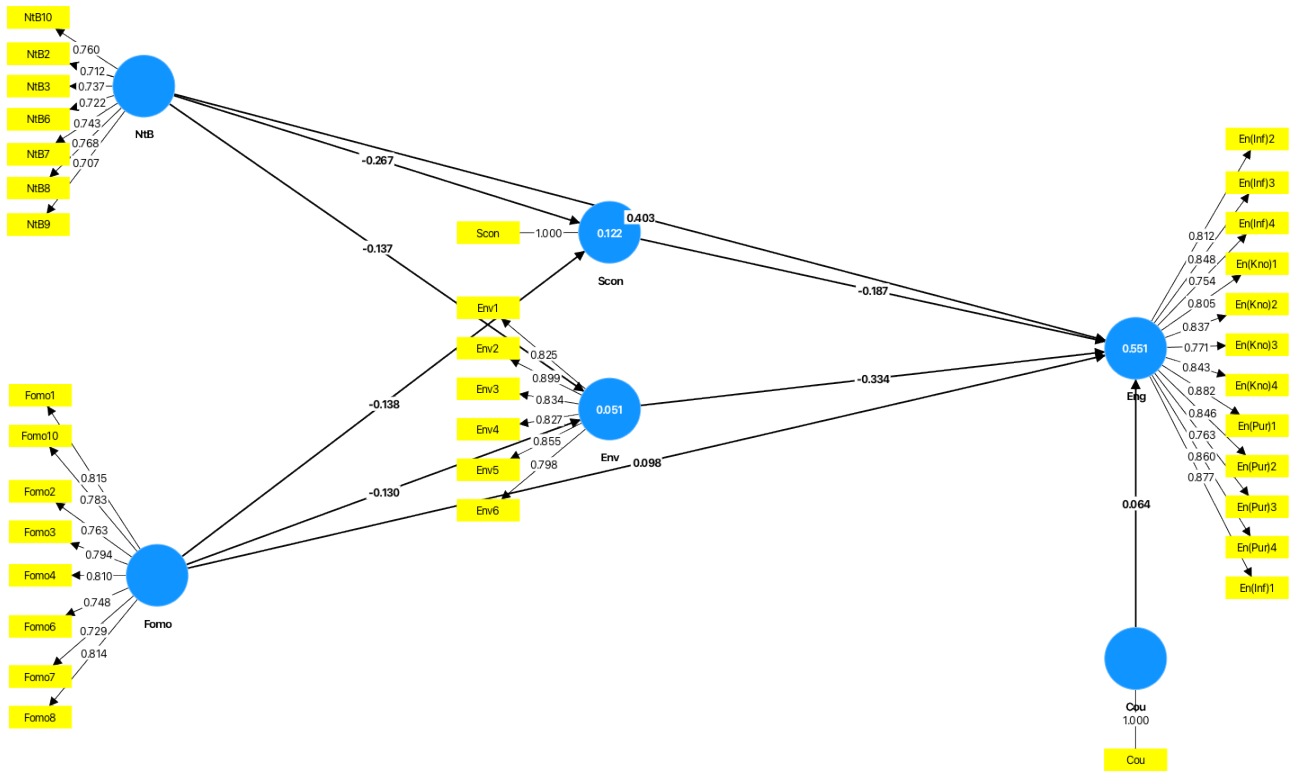
SRMR	0.059
d_ULS	2.286
d_G	1.204
Chi-square	2743.323
NFI	0.771

Table 3b. Model Fit

	R-square adjusted	RMSE
Eng	0.545	0.818
Env	0.047	0.985
Scon	0.118	0.946

*Source: SmartPLS, 4

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



*Source: Smart PLS, 4

From path analysis, hypothesis scores indicated significant effects for *NtB* that resulted in being positively and significantly influencing *Eng* ($\beta=.403$, $p < .001$), negatively influencing *Scon* ($\beta=-.267$, $p = .001$) and *Env* ($\beta=-.137$, $p < .05$). *Fomo* emerged as a significant and positive predictor for *Eng* ($\beta=.098$, $p < .05$), and negative predictor for *Scon* ($\beta=-.138$, $p < .01$), and *Env* ($\beta=-.130$, $p < .05$). Moreover, *Env* resulted to influence *Eng* negatively and significantly ($\beta=-.334$, $p < .001$) and *Scon* also showed to be a significant and negative predictor for *Eng* ($\beta=-.187$, $p < .05$). Finally, the control variable *Cou* did not show a significant effect on the dependent variable *Eng* ($\beta=.064$, $p > .05$). Based on these results we accepted H1a, H1b, H1c, H2a, H2b and H2c, H3 and H4 and rejected H5 as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4. Path analysis

H.		(β)	SD	T	P values	Notes
H1a	NtB -> Eng	0.403	0.041	9.798	0.000	Supported
H1b	NtB -> Scon	-0.267	0.052	5.108	0.000	Supported
H1c	NtB -> Env	-0.137	0.054	2.529	0.011	Supported
H2a	Fomo -> Eng	0.098	0.040	2.444	0.015	Supported
H2b	Fomo -> Scon	-0.138	0.050	2.738	0.006	Supported
H2c	Fomo -> Env	-0.130	0.059	2.219	0.027	Supported
H3	Env -> Eng	-0.334	0.043	7.836	0.000	Supported
H4	Scon -> Eng	-0.187	0.045	4.139	0.000	Supported
H5	Cou -> Eng	0.064	0.067	0.947	0.344	Non Supported

Source: SmartPLS, 4

3.5 Mediation Analysis

For the mediation test, we analyzed the effects of *NtB*, *Fomo*, and *Eng*, mediated by *Scon* and *Env*. We reported the total, direct, and indirect effects and the bias confidence intervals (Bias CI) to mitigate any bias in the indirect effect estimates derived from 5.000 bootstrap samples (Hair et al., 2021). Results indicated that *Scon* is a significant but positive and complementary mediator for the relationship *Ntb-Eng* (Total effect: $\beta = .453^{***}$; Bias CI: .024, .087) and the relationship *Fomo-Eng* (Total effect: $\beta = .124^{**}$; Bias CI: .007, .055). Similarly, *Env* also resulted as a significant, positive, and complementary partial mediator for the relationship *NtB-Eng* (Total effect: $\beta = .449^{***}$; Bias CI: .010, .084) and *Fomo-Eng* (Total effect: $\beta = .141^{**}$; Bias CI: .006, .087). Thus, we rejected H6a, H6b, H6C, and H6d (Table 5).

Table 5. Mediation analysis

H. No.		Direct Effects (β)	Indirect Effects (β)	Total Effects (β)	Bias CI (L)	Bias CI (H)	Notes
H6a	NtB>Scon>Eng	.403***	.050*	.453***	.024	.087	Complementary Partial Mediation
H6b	NtB>Env>Eng	.403***	.046*	.449***	.010	.084	Complementary Partial Mediation
H7a	Fomo>Scon>Eng	.098**	.026*	.124**	.007	.055	Complementary Partial Mediation
H7b	Fomo>Env>Eng	.098**	.043*	.141**	.006	.087	Complementary Partial Mediation

p-value: * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

*Source: Own Elaboration SmartPLS, 4

3.6 Discussion

This study aimed to understand the effects of consumer psychological variables such as the Need to Belong (NtB) and Fear of Missing Out (Fomo) on Consumer Engagement (Eng) with Ultra-fast fashion content in social media. In this study context, the pivotal role of the two mediators, Consumer Environmentalism (Env) and Social Consciousness (Scon), was assessed to understand their overall contribution to the model. Grounded in Social Identity Theory (SIT), the results underscore a nuanced interaction between the consumer's intrinsic psychological need for social approval and sustainability concerns regarding a specific industry, such as Ultra-Fast Fashion (UFF).

First, path analysis revealed a direct effect of both the NtB and Fomo on consumer engagement with UFF content. These results support the SIT premise that people value social validation and group acceptability even in digital contexts where participation rewards and potential risks are mostly symbolic and reputational (Turner & Oakes, 1986; Brown, 2000; Dhir et al., 2018). Ultra-fast fashion international marketing strategies that create a sense of movement for social participation and immediacy tend to appeal to consumers driven by these demands, encouraging behaviors associated with transient social recognition and self-expression (Mrad et al., 2020; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006).

Conversely, the mediators, such as social consciousness and consumer environmentalism, displayed a negative direct impact on engagement, indicating a consumer's active involvement with information that goes against individual sustainable values and is hindered by an increased understanding of the ethical and environmental concerns within an unsustainable industry. This result is consistent with the cognitive dissonance idea, which states that people tend to reject information that contradicts their values as a self-regulation tactic (Festinger, 1957; Stone & Cooper, 2001). Even with the lack of tangible behavioural options, consumers with higher levels of sustainability awareness may avoid unsustainable brands to reduce dissonance, aligning with Celik and Ekici's (2024) ethical behavioural findings.

Surprisingly, when assuming the role of mediators, this exhibited consumer consciousness leads to a generally favourable and complementary mediation effect in the interplay with the psychological factors. This suggests that, with less intense involvement, the pull of psychological needs for belonging and the fear of exclusion can overcome the stifling impact of sustainability-oriented principles. This type of selective engagement pattern illustrates how NtB and FOMO maintain consumer-brand relationships, even in ethically or environmentally challenging contexts, by highlighting the active paradox between a consumer's ethical lifestyle and the social need to be part of a community (Sheth, 1991; Longo et al., 2019).

Finally, the lack of significant findings from the control variable, in contrast to expectations, suggests the importance of psychological motivators and value-based consciousness assets in influencing customer behaviour. Results show that international marketing tactics on social media platforms help blur local distinctions and develop a single, more global consumer culture (Nam & Kannan, 2020).

4. Implications and conclusions

4.1 Implications

Findings indicate that social identity mechanisms influence participation in morally challenging consuming domains, extending the relevance of SIT to ultra-fast fashion scenarios. The study contributes to a more thorough understanding of both ethical and psychological factors in consumer behaviour especially under digital influence (Hollebeek, 2018; Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2018). The complementary mediation effect found in our study challenges the notion that sustainability knowledge inherently prevents engagement with unethical brands (Longo et al., 2019), and instead points to the enduring power of identity-related incentives.

For marketing scholars, this suggests that ethical consumption conceptualization should also account for emotional and social identity dynamics, particularly in digital-first contexts where symbolic

participation is more salient than transactional commitment (Sheth et al., 2011; Gummerus et al., 2017). Moreover, our results invite future research to explore the boundary conditions under which ethical orientations lose or regain behavioral salience in the presence of strong peer-based cues. Although individuals are lured to stories that validate them in society, they are also becoming more conscious of the moral implications of buying habits (Walker and Kent, 2013; Haws *et al.*, 2014). For managers, the findings underscore the importance of striking a balance between high-engagement content and storytelling that aligns with sustainability. Brands in UFF and other contested sectors should avoid reliance on urgency and social exclusion cues alone (e.g., countdown timers, drop culture) and instead explore community-building strategies that emphasize shared ethical values. For example, platforms like “Good On You” or “Pangaia” demonstrate how ethical fashion can also leverage digital communities based on conscious identity signals rather than Fomo triggers.

Additionally, to increase credibility and peer-driven engagement, managers could establish targeted partnerships with influencers who share ethical narratives in addition to promoting products. Identity-based consumption may also be enhanced by creating loyalty programs that offer incentives for sustainable practices or involvement in socially beneficial projects. Indeed, integrating sustainability messages into marketing campaigns that reflect customer values can minimise cognitive dissonance, build trust, and encourage deeper participation, in line with Kang and Hustvedt (2014) and Celik and Ekici (2024).

Managers should also consider integrating platforms that enable users to share their achievements, co-create content, or participate in green challenges, allowing brands to build emotional connections and promote responsible behaviors. Likewise, fast fashion companies can adopt a disclosed supply chain communication, displaying real-time environmental and social impact data to facilitate a more informed consumer decision-making.

Moreover, the study posits that global marketing strategies on social media platforms can blur regional differences. Results support the development of a single, global consumer culture, even with specific target objectives (Steenkamp & Ter Hofstede, 2002). Brands can create and disseminate content that goes beyond national borders and speaks to common psychological demands like the desire for acceptance in digital communities and the fear of missing out, thanks to platforms like Instagram and TikTok. In line with the motivating drives identified in this study, digital content globalization creates a common narrative emphasizing social recognition and acceptance. Globally, this homogeneity enhances unsustainable consumption habits since it blurs local uniqueness and reduces regional sensitivity toward social and environmental issues (aligning with Schor, 2005).

Policymakers and local authorities may also draw insight from this paradox. Given that young consumers remain highly susceptible to social pressure and peer approval, consumer education

programs should address not only sustainability knowledge but also emotional and social awareness in digital environments. They also need to help students understand how social media and digital platforms shape their values and behavior. Recent research shows that digital tools can support sustainability when they are used to build emotional connection and encourage reflection, not just spread information (Gossen & Böhm, 2020). Campaigns that promote digital sustainability literacy and introduce school-level programs (e.g., those implemented in the UK's Eco-Schools initiative) can help shift the meaning of belonging toward shared ethical values. This can reduce the influence of marketing strategies that rely on social pressure or digital urgency, which is especially important because young people's sustainable behavior often depends on feeling supported by their social group (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2008).

4.2 Conclusions

In today's digital world, the appeal of ultra-fast fashion is inherently paradoxical. On one side, social media encourage social engagement and connection; on the other, they support a consumerist culture that often ignores its socio-environmental effects. This paradox is evident when consumers engage with content that promotes unsustainable consumption, even when these behaviours go against their ethical values (White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019). Although psychological factors, such as the need to belong, can keep consumers and brands connected, especially in areas where sustainability concerns are increased, they also highlight a significant weakness: the tendency of marketing to match long-term sustainability with customer engagement despite the underlying ethical contradictions (Antonetti & Maklan, 2015). This study profoundly understands the complexity of international marketing practices in the UFF sector. According to the results, digital platforms tend to increase consumer involvement and participation, but also enhance the risk of encouraging unsustainable consumption practices. We shed light on the pressing need for more sustainable and ethical marketing approaches that consider a holistic view of organizations' interest in achieving profit, local contexts, consumer behaviour, and worldwide trends. These insights reflect a broader challenge in global digital marketing: how to create high-engagement, identity-reinforcing campaigns that align with ethical imperatives, rather than override them (Hollebeek, 2018; Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2016).

4.3 Limitations and Future Research

While this study offers novel insights into the psychological and ethical drivers of consumer engagement with UFF, it also presents several limitations that, in turn, indicate areas for future research. First, the study does not include direct behavioral measures, such as purchase frequency,

browsing patterns, or transaction history; these factors would enable a more granular analysis of the attitude–behavior gap in sustainable consumption. Future studies could address this by integrating digital trace data or partnering with retail platforms to access actual behavioral metrics. In addition, although several procedural treatments were used to reduce common method bias, the study did not use additional techniques (e.g., Correlational Marker), which could have further offered statistical control. Future research could integrate this method to further confirm the robustness. Finally, while our study compares two markets (the UK and the US), a cross-cultural validation is warranted to explore how these dynamics vary across consumer contexts with differing environmental norms and social conformity expectations.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Survey Items

Variables	Variables description
<i>Independent</i>	<i>Need to Belong</i> (Leary et al., 2013) 10 items (NtB)
	If other people don't seem to accept me, I don't let it bother me. I try hard not to do things that will make other people avoid or reject me. I seldom worry about whether other people care about me. I need to feel that there are people I can turn to in times of need. I want other people to accept me. I do not like being alone. Being apart from my friends for long periods of time does not bother me. I have a strong "need to belong." It bothers me a great deal when I am not included in other people's plans. My feelings are easily hurt when I feel that others do not accept me.
	<i>Fear of Missing Out</i> (Przybylski et al. (2005) 10 items (Fomo)
	I fear others have more rewarding experiences than me. I fear my friends have more rewarding experiences than me. I get worried when I find out my friends are having fun without me. I get anxious when I don't know what my friends are up to. It is important that I understand my friends "in jokes". Sometimes, I wonder if I spend too much time keeping up with what is going on. It bothers me when I miss an opportunity to meet up with friends. When I have a good time, it is important for me to share the details online (e.g., updating status). When I miss out on a planned get-together her it bothers me. When I go on vacation, I continue to keep tabs on what my friends are doing.
<i>Mediator</i>	<i>Social Consciousness</i> (Walker & Kent, 2013) 1 item (Scon)
	I consider myself to be a socially conscious person.
	<i>Environmentalism</i> (Haws et al., 2014); 6 items (Env)
	It is important to me that the products I use do not harm the environment. I consider the potential environmental impact of my actions when making many of my decisions. My purchase habits are affected by my concern for our environment. I am concerned about wasting the resources of our planet. I would describe myself as environmentally responsible. I am willing to be inconvenienced in order to take actions that are more environmentally friendly.
<i>Dependent</i>	<i>Consumer Engagement</i> (Kumar & Pansari, 2016); 12 items (Eng)
	Love talking about these brands experience. Discuss the benefits that I get from these brands with others. Be a part of these brands and mention them in my conversations. Actively discuss these brands on any media. Provide feedbacks about my experiences with these brands. Provide suggestions for improving the performance of these brands. Provide suggestions/feedback about new products from these brands. Provide feedback/suggestions for developing new goods and services for these brands. Continue buying the goods and services of these brands in the near future. My purchases with these brands make me content. I get my money's worth when I purchase from these brands. Owning the products of these brands makes me happy.
Control	<i>County</i> (Binary) (Cou)

Source: Own Elaboration

Appendix 2 – Descriptive statistics

Description	Sample N = 417		
	%	Mean	SD
Age		28.86	8.44
Gender		1.56	.49
1.Male	44%		
2.Female	56%		
Education		2.41	.52
1.Middle School	-		
2.High School	61%		
3.Graduate	37%		
4.PhD / Master	2%		
Occupation		1.99	.67
1.Student	20%		
2.Employee	64%		
3.Self-Employed	13%		
4.Unemployed	3%		
Country		1.43	.49
1.USA	57%		
2.UK	43%		

Source: Own Elaboration

Appendix 3 - Factor Loadings

	Cou	Eng	Env	Fomo	NtB	Scon
Cou	1.000					
En(Inf)2		0.811				
En(Inf)3		0.848				
En(Inf)4		0.753				
En(Kno)1		0.806				
En(Kno)2		0.838				
En(Kno)3		0.772				
En(Kno)4		0.844				
En(Pur)1		0.882				
En(Pur)2		0.846				
En(Pur)3		0.762				
En(Pur)4		0.860				
Env1			0.825			
Env2			0.899			
Env3			0.834			
Env4			0.827			
Env5			0.854			
Env6			0.798			
Fomo1				0.796		
Fomo10				0.781		
Fomo2				0.738		
Fomo3				0.781		
Fomo4				0.785		
Fomo6				0.761		
Fomo7				0.738		
Fomo8				0.809		
NtB1					0.717	
NtB10					0.759	
NtB2					0.741	
NtB3					0.701	
NtB6					0.731	
NtB7					0.737	
NtB8					0.754	
NtB9					0.708	
Scon						1.000
En(Inf)1		0.876				

Source: SmartPLS, 4