

THE INFLUENCE OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT ON SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR OF GENERATION Z: A STUDY ON THRIFT AND UPCYCLED FASHION

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Abstract: *This study examines the influence of three dimensions of celebrity endorsement—attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise—on the sustainable consumption behavior of Generation Z in the context of thrift and upcycled fashion products in Batam City. Grounded in Source Credibility Theory and Source Attractiveness Theory, this research adopts a quantitative explanatory design with a purposively selected sample of 250 Gen Z respondents aged 17–26 years. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal that all three dimensions of celebrity endorsement exert a significant positive effect on sustainable consumption behavior. Trustworthiness emerges as the most influential predictor ($\beta = 0.275$; $p < 0.001$), followed by attractiveness ($\beta = 0.248$; $p < 0.001$) and expertise ($\beta = 0.151$; $p < 0.05$). These results underscore the central role of perceived credibility in shaping pro-environmental consumption among younger consumers. Theoretically, this study extends the application of endorsement effectiveness frameworks into the domain of sustainable fashion consumption, particularly within emerging market contexts. Practically, the findings suggest that marketers should emphasize credibility and value congruence when leveraging celebrity endorsers to promote sustainable consumption among Gen Z.*

Keyword: Celebrity Endorsement, Sustainable Consumption, Thrift Fashion, Upcycled Fashion, Z Generation

INTRODUCTION

The global fashion industry faces serious sustainability challenges. The sector has substantial environmental impacts across water use, greenhouse-gas emissions, chemical pollution, and textile waste. More than 92 million tonnes of textile waste are generated annually, while fast-fashion business models accelerate material throughput and shorten garment use cycles (Niinimäki et al., 2020). This situation has fueled the emergence of more sustainable consumption practices, including secondhand purchasing and upcycling (Niinimäki et al. 2020;

[Park and Lin 2020](#); [Ramadhan, 2024](#); [Busalim et al. 2022](#); [Dhir et al. 2021](#); [Prisco et al. 2025](#)). Generation Z has emerged as an important consumer cohort in sustainable fashion research, although favorable environmental attitudes do not always translate into sustainable purchasing behavior (McNeill and Moore 2015; Wiederhold and Martinez 2018). In Indonesia, the thrift fashion trend is growing rapidly. The secondhand clothing market is predicted to be worth trillions of rupiah by 2025, with double-digit annual growth. Thrifting has now become an urban lifestyle synonymous with creativity and

sustainability among young people. Batam City, with its proximity to Singapore and Malaysia, offers unique access to quality imported thrift products ([Angelica et al. 2025](#)). Local media even call Batam a "paradise for secondhand branded goods" with many popular thrifting locations such as Pasar Aviari and Jodoh Premium Outlet ([Angelica et al. 2025](#)). This makes Batam an interesting laboratory for researching Gen Z's sustainable consumption behavior in the context of thrift and upcycled fashion ([Djafarova and Bowes 2021](#); [Prisco et al. 2025](#)).

Celebrity endorsements have long been used to influence consumer behavior. However, their effectiveness depends heavily on the endorser's source credibility ([Bergkvist and Zhou 2016](#); [Spry et al. 2011](#)). According to the Source Credibility model developed by [Ohanian \(1991\)](#) there are three main components of endorser credibility: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. These three dimensions are believed to influence how consumers receive messages from celebrities ([Ohanian 1991](#)). Celebrity and influencer endorsements can shape consumer responses through identification, credibility, and product–endorser fit ([Schouten et al. 2020](#)). Related evidence from digital marketplace settings also indicates that celebrity endorsement contributes to brand-related responses and purchase intention ([Angela and Kesumahati 2023](#); [Kusumaningrum and Danibrata 2023](#); [Belanche et al. 2021](#); [Casaló et al 2020](#); [Sokolova and Kefi 2020](#)).

Preliminary research shows that celebrity endorsements can significantly encourage pro-environmental behavior. For example, in a field experiment, a plastic reduction campaign with celebrity endorsement reduced single-use plastic use by ~29% compared to a control group without a celebrity. This means that environmental messages are far more effective when delivered by recognized role models, rather than simply informative appeals ([Ho et al. 2022](#)).

However, specific studies examining how each dimension of celebrity credibility influences sustainable fashion behavior are still very limited—especially in the context of a developing country like Indonesia ([Bergkvist and Zhou 2016](#); [McNeill and Moore 2015](#)). Previous endorsement research more often examines general advertising or purchase-intention outcomes, while sustainable fashion research has separately emphasized ethical consumption and the attitude–behavior gap ([Bergkvist and Zhou 2016](#); [Wiederhold and Martinez 2018](#)). Still, few have explored the context of secondhand and recycled fashion, despite this segment's growing importance in the circular economy ([Niinimäki et al. 2020](#); [Awdyfakhri 2024](#); [Wardhani et al. 2025](#)). Furthermore, it is important to understand which dimension of endorsement (attractiveness, honesty, or expertise) is most influential in encouraging Generation Z to consume sustainable fashion. To address this gap, this study seeks to be the first empirical study to simultaneously evaluate the influence of attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise of celebrity endorsers on Gen Z's sustainable consumption behavior in thrift and upcycled fashion ([Busalim et al. 2022](#); [Munaro et al. 2024](#)).

Existing reviews of celebrity endorsement emphasize persuasion, source characteristics, endorser–brand fit, and advertising outcomes, whereas sustainable fashion studies more often examine ethical attitudes and the attitude–behavior gap ([Bergkvist and Zhou 2016](#); [McNeill and Moore 2015](#)). This separation suggests that integrating sustainability-related constructs into celebrity endorsement frameworks remains comparatively underexplored. Theoretically, this study contributes in three ways. First, it extends Source Credibility Theory into the domain of sustainable fashion consumption in an emerging market context. Second, it refines the theory by demonstrating that trustworthiness is a more salient determinant than expertise in influencing Gen Z consumers. Third, it highlights the

importance of contextual factors, suggesting that the effectiveness of endorsement attributes varies depending on the value-driven nature of the consumption domain ([Munaro et al. 2024](#)).

Based on the description above, the purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of three dimensions of celebrity endorsers (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) on the sustainable consumption behavior of Generation Z in Batam City, and to identify the most dominant dimension.

Greater emphasis on how the study advances existing theoretical frameworks—particularly in the context of sustainable consumption and celebrity endorsement—would strengthen its scholarly contribution.

Celebrity Endorsement and the Source Credibility Model

The term celebrity endorsement refers to the use of public figures or celebrities in marketing to endorse a product or idea. The effectiveness of this approach is explained by the Source Credibility model ([Bergkvist and Zhou 2016](#)). [Ohanian \(1990, 1991\)](#) states that the credibility of a message source is determined by three main dimensions: (1) attractiveness - the endorser's physical and personal attractiveness, (2) trustworthiness - the endorser's perceived level of honesty and integrity, and (3) expertise - consumers' perceptions of the endorser's knowledge or expertise regarding the endorsed product. The higher these three aspects, the greater the

endorser's likelihood of influencing consumer attitudes and behavior. This model is widely adopted in marketing and advertising research, including in the context of green or sustainable products ([Schouten et al. 2020](#); [Spry et al. 2011](#)).

Attractiveness of the Endorser

Celebrity attractiveness encompasses both physical aspects (beauty/handsomeness, fashionable appearance) and a charismatic aura that attracts audiences. In the highly visual fashion industry, attractiveness is thought to play a crucial role in shaping the image of sustainable products, making them appear trendy and desirable ([Ho et al. 2022](#); [Yuvita et al. 2024](#)). Endorsers who showcase a fashionable and creative lifestyle can normalize the use of used/recycled clothing as a cool fashion choice, rather than something outdated or cheap. Previous research in the cosmetics and fashion sectors has shown a significant positive effect on purchase intention ([Djafarova and Rushworth 2017](#)). Therefore, it is assumed that Gen Z will be more motivated to behave in an environmentally friendly manner if their favorite celebrities appear attractive while endorsing sustainable fashion products ([Djafarova and Bowes 2021](#); [Ki and Kim 2019](#)).

H₁: Celebrity physical attractiveness or charisma (attractiveness) has a significant positive effect on Gen Z's sustainable consumption behavior.

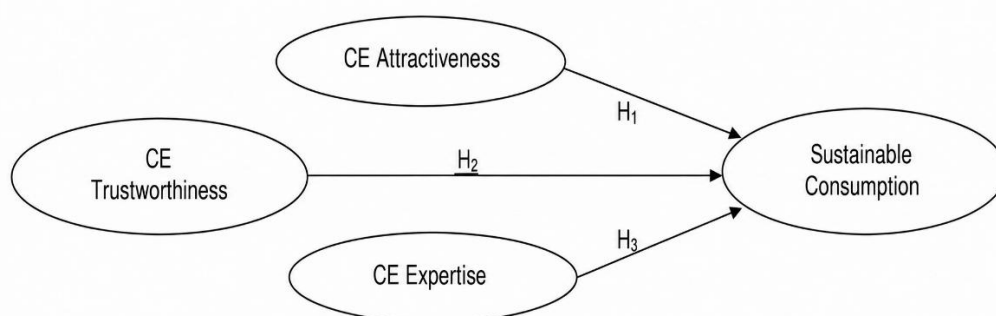


Figure 1. Research Model

Endorser Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness dimension refers to the extent to which an endorser is perceived as honest, sincere, and trustworthy by the audience. For sustainable issues steeped in moral and ethical values, trustworthiness is thought to be a key determinant ([McCracken 1989](#)).

Meaning Transfer Model (MTM) emphasizes that endorsement effectiveness depends on the transfer of meaning from the celebrity figure to the product. This transfer will only occur if consumers trust the endorser. If the endorser is perceived as insincere (simply "paid for advertising"), the sustainability message is likely to be rejected by the audience. Gen Z is known to be more sceptical of traditional marketing and sensitive to greenwashing practices; misleading environmental claims can undermine perceived credibility and trust ([De et al. 2020](#)). Therefore, celebrities who have an image of environmental awareness and consistently practice a sustainable lifestyle will be more likely to convince Gen Z. Research in various countries supports the importance of trustworthiness. For example, a study of green marketing in Pakistan found that celebrity credibility, particularly the honesty dimension, significantly increased purchase intention for eco-friendly cosmetic products. Similar findings were reported in the context of sustainable fashion promotion in Vietnam, where endorser trustworthiness emerged as the most influential factor, surpassing attractiveness and expertise ([Nguyen et al. \(2024\)](#)).

H₂: Celebrity trustworthiness/honesty (trustworthiness) has a significant positive effect on Gen Z's sustainable consumption behavior.

Endorser Expertise

Expertise refers to the endorser's knowledge, experience, or skills related to the product being promoted. In theory, for complex or technical products, highly skilled endorsers

are more likely to be trusted ([Ohanian 1990](#)). In the context of sustainable fashion, expertise can include an endorser's in-depth understanding of sustainability principles, their ability to combine thrift/upcycled clothing, or their reputation as a fashion expert. Endorsers with a reputation as fashion experts may be able to educate Gen Z consumers on how to dress stylishly and sustainably ([Spry et al. 2011](#); [Schouten et al. 2020](#)). However, it should be noted that fashion is a lifestyle, and emotional and identity factors may outweigh technical aspects. Several studies have shown that on environmental issues, moral appeals and role models are often more effective than factual communication or expertise alone ([Amos et al. 2008](#)).

Pro-environmental campaigns without the support of role models tend to be less effective in driving behavior. Gen Z in Batam, who are already familiar with thrifting culture, may be less likely to need "expert guidance," but rather seek social validation that thrift/upcycled fashion is cool and valuable. However, it is assumed that endorser expertise still has a positive influence, for example, that designers or sustainable fashion influencers can increase Gen Z's confidence in a product ([Das et al. 2026](#)).

H₃: Celebrity expertise in fashion (expertise) has a significant positive effect on Gen Z's sustainable consumption behavior.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey design. Data were collected cross-sectionally through an online survey to test the causal relationship between variables according to the hypothesis ([Tharenou et al. 2007](#)). The study population was all Gen Z consumers in Batam City who were relevant to the context of thrift/upcycled fashion. Based on population data, the population of Batam aged 17–26 years is estimated to be around 187 thousand people in 2025 ([Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Batam 2025](#)). The study sample of 250 Gen

Z respondents (aged 17–26) was determined using a purposive sampling technique, with the following inclusion criteria: (1) residing in Batam for ≥ 6 months, (2) having purchased or being interested in purchasing thrift/upcycled products at least once in the last 12 months, (3) being active on social media for ≥ 2 hours/day, and (4) having been exposed to celebrity endorsements of fashion products on social media. The sample size of 250 met the recommended sample size in PLS-SEM, which is at least 10 times the number of indicators in the most complex construct.

In this study, control variables include respondent characteristics that could potentially influence the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. These characteristics include demographic aspects such as Gen Z, gender, education level, and income, as well as digital behavior aspects such as intensity of social media use and level of exposure to celebrity endorsements. Furthermore, respondents' consumption experiences, such as frequency of purchasing thrift or upcycled products and level of interest in sustainable fashion, are also controlled to minimize bias in estimating causal relationships between the variables studied.

The research instrument was an online questionnaire (Google Form) distributed via Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and thrift communities in Batam during January 2026. The questionnaire consisted of three main sections: (1) screener and demographic questions, (2) a 15-item celebrity endorsement measurement scale (dimensions of attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise), and (3) a 21-item sustainable consumption behavior measurement scale. All items used a 1–5 Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

The Celebrity Endorsement variable (X) was measured as a multidimensional construct with three subconstructs: (1) Attractiveness (X_1): measured with 5 items regarding the celebrity's physical attractiveness, style, and charisma. An example item: "The celebrity who endorses

sustainable fashion products is very attractive." This scale is adapted from [Ohanian \(1990, 1991\)](#). (2) Trustworthiness (X_2): measured with 5 items about the perception of celebrity honesty, trustworthiness, and integrity. Example: "I believe the celebrity is honest in supporting sustainable fashion, not just for advertising." Item adapted from [Ohanian \(1990\)](#). (3) Expertise (X_3): measured with 5 items related to celebrity knowledge and competence in the field of fashion/sustainability. Example: "The celebrity understands sustainable fashion trends and practices." Item adapted from [Ohanian \(1990\)](#). The Sustainable Consumption (Y) variable is measured as a multidimensional construct that includes three aspects according to the CAB (cognitive-affective-conative) framework, namely (1) Cognitive (Y_1): aspects of respondents' knowledge and awareness of sustainable fashion (6 items, for example: "I know that the fast fashion industry has a bad impact on the environment."). (2) Affective (Y_2): aspects of respondents' attitudes, feelings, and concerns regarding sustainable fashion issues (7 items, for example: "I feel proud to wear secondhand/upcycled clothes because it helps the environment."). (3) Conative/Behavioral (Y_3): aspects of intentions and actual behavior of sustainable consumption (8 items, for example: "I intend to buy thrift/upcycled clothes instead of new clothes this year."). The sustainable consumption scale is adapted and adjusted from [Saari et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Quoquab and Mohammad \(2020\)](#), who conceptualize sustainable consumption behavior as a multidimensional construct of attitudes (cognitive-affective-conative).

At the descriptive analysis stage, it was carried out to describe the characteristics of respondents and the Respondent Achievement Level (TCR) for each variable, in order to interpret the empirical position (categories very good, good, sufficient, etc.). Data analysis was carried out using the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique using SmartPLS 4.0 software. PLS-

SEM was chosen because it is able to test models with latent constructs and multiple indicators, and is suitable for variance prediction (Ketchen 2013). Despite the appropriateness of the PLS-SEM approach, this study is not without limitations. The use of purposive sampling may restrict the generalizability of the findings, as the sample may not fully represent the broader Gen Z population. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data raises the potential for common method bias (CMB), which may inflate observed relationships among constructs. To mitigate these concerns, several procedural remedies were applied, including ensuring respondent anonymity, using clear and neutral measurement items, and adopting validated scales from prior studies. In addition, statistical assessments such as discriminant validity (HTMT) and Harman's single-factor test were conducted to reduce and evaluate the potential

impact of CMB. Nevertheless, future studies are encouraged to employ probability sampling techniques and incorporate multi-source or longitudinal data to enhance robustness and generalizability. The coefficient is considered significant if the t-statistic is > 1.96 ($p < 0.05$) (Hair et al. 2022).

RESULTS

Respondent characteristics indicate that the valid sample consisted of 250 Gen Z individuals in Batam City, with an average age of 20.8 years ($SD = 2.05$). The gender composition consists of 59.6% females and 40.4% males. The majority (64.4%) were Early Gen Z (17–21 years old), and the remainder were Late Gen Z (22–26 years old). In terms of experience, 100% of respondents had purchased or intended to purchase a thrift/upcycled product in the past year, meeting the inclusion criteria.

Table 1. Result Test Outer Loading, Cronbach's Alpha, CR, and AVE

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
CE Attractiveness (X_1)	CE_AT1	0,780	0,844	0,889	0,616
	CE_AT2	0,737			
	CE_AT3	0,803			
	CE_AT4	0,807			
	CE_AT5	0,789			
CE Trustworthiness (X_2)	CE_TR1	0,816	0,854	0,895	0,630
	CE_TR2	0,798			
	CE_TR3	0,752			
	CE_TR4	0,806			
	CE_TR5	0,809			
CE Expertise (X_3)	CE_EX1	0,779	0,859	0,898	0,638
	CE_EX2	0,783			
	CE_EX3	0,776			
	CE_EX4	0,852			
	CE_EX5	0,819			
Sustainable Consumption (Y)	SC_COG	0,959	0,962	0,975	0,929
	SC_AFF	0,966			
	SC_CON	0,967			

Table 2. Result Test Fornell-Larcker and HTMT

Construct	Fornell-Larcker				HTMT			
	CE_AT	CE_EX	CE_TR	SC	CE_AT	CE_EX	CE_TR	SC
CE Attractiveness	0,785	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CE Expertise	0,621	0,799	-	-	0,724	-	-	-
CE Trustworthiness	0,598	0,647	0,794	-	0,697	0,751	-	-
Sustainable Consumption	0,436	0,398	0,458	0,964	0,468	0,420	0,484	-

Descriptive Variables and TCR: In general, respondents rated the celebrity endorsement practices they experienced as "poor." The average score for the Celebrity Endorsement construct was 2.9 out of 5 (TCR 59.92%). Each dimension also scored around 60%: attractiveness averaged 3.00 (TCR 60.0%), trustworthiness averaged 2.98 (TCR 59.6%), and expertise averaged 3.00 (TCR 60.1%). This indicates that Gen Z's exposure to celebrity endorsers of sustainable fashion is not yet optimal. Meanwhile, the Sustainable Consumption construct received an average score of 3.15 (TCR 63.0%), which falls into the "fairly good" category. The affective dimension was slightly higher (TCR 63.3%), followed by conative (62.9%) and cognitive (62.8%). This indicates that Gen Z Batam's awareness and pro-sustainability attitudes are quite positive, although they still need to be improved to reach the "good" category (>76%).

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model): All indicators in the model meet the requirements for convergent validity. The outer loading value for each item is above 0.7. For the Celebrity Endorsement construct: Attractiveness items range from 0.737–0.807, Trustworthiness 0.752–0.816, and Expertise 0.779–0.852. The Sustainable Consumption indicator (Cognitive, Affective, Conative) is even very high (0.959–0.967) because it is a formative construct measured through three dimensions. The average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct is >0.6 (specifically: AVE

Attractiveness 0.616; Trustworthiness 0.630; Expertise 0.638; Sustainable Consumption 0.929) – well above the threshold of 0.5, thus confirming convergent validity. The constructs also meet discriminant validity. From the Fornell-Larcker table, the correlation of a construct with its root AVE is greater than its correlation with other constructs. In addition, the HTMT ratio of all pairs of constructs is <0.90. For example, the HTMT between Attractiveness and Trustworthiness = 0.697; Attractiveness–Expertise = 0.724; Trustworthiness–Expertise = 0.751 – all below 0.85. This means that the three endorser dimensions are completely separate from each other conceptually, although moderately related. Reliability was also met. The Cronbach's Alpha value for each construct was >0.84 (Attractiveness 0.844; Trustworthiness 0.854; Expertise 0.859; Sustainable Consumption 0.962). Composite Reliability was also high, ranging from 0.889 to 0.975. Thus, the measurement instrument was deemed reliable and consistent. Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model): The R-square (R^2) value for the Sustainable Consumption variable was 0.298, meaning that ~29.8% of the variance in sustainable consumption behavior can be explained by the three dimensions of celebrity endorsement. This R^2 value is considered moderate in the context of consumer behavior. The remaining ~70% of the variance is influenced by factors outside the model (e.g., social norms, price, ecological knowledge, etc.).

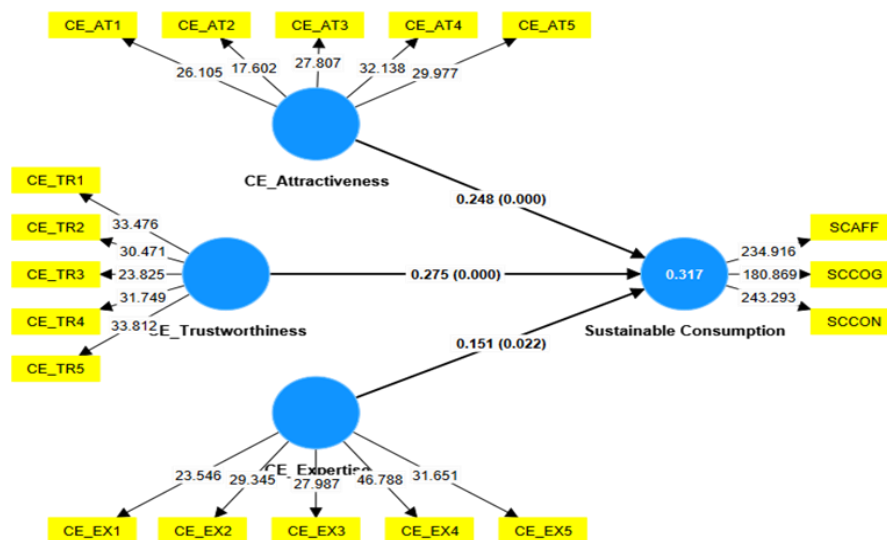


Figure 2. Result Test Inner Model

The relative magnitude of influence can be seen from the effect size (f^2) value. The trustworthiness dimension has an f^2 of 0.064, which, according to Cohen's interpretation, is a small-to-medium effect. Attractiveness has an f^2 of 0.052 (small, approaching medium), and expertise has an f^2 of 0.019 (small). The relative contributions to the total effect (sum of $f^2 = 0.135$) are: trustworthiness ~40.8%, attractiveness ~36.8%, and expertise ~22.4%. This reaffirms trustworthiness as the dominant contributor.

The bootstrapping results (5,000 resamples) confirm that all hypothesized paths are positive and statistically significant, indicating a consistent pattern of influence across endorsement dimensions. This suggests that sustainable consumption among Gen Z is shaped by a complementary set of endorsement attributes rather than a single dominant factor.

Table 3 shows the results of the hypothesis test H_1 (Attractiveness $\rightarrow$ Sustainable Consumption): path coefficient $\beta = 0.248$ with t -statistic = 3.780 ($p < 0.001$). Since $p < 0.05$ and β is positive, H_1 is accepted. Celebrity attractiveness has a significant positive effect on Gen Z's sustainable consumption. H_2 (Trustworthiness $\rightarrow$ Sustainable Consumption): $\beta = 0.275$; $t = 4.328$ ($p < 0.001$). H_2 is accepted. Trust in celebrities has the strongest positive effect. H_3 (Expertise $\rightarrow$ Sustainable Consumption): $\beta = 0.151$; $t = 2.289$ ($p = 0.022$). H_3 is also accepted. Celebrity expertise has a significant positive effect, although with the smallest effect among the three dimensions. Thus, it is statistically confirmed that the three dimensions of celebrity endorsement all have a positive and significant contribution in encouraging sustainable fashion consumption behavior among Gen Z Batam.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Ket
CE_Attractiveness $\rightarrow$ Sustainable Consumption	0.248	0.249	0.066	3.780	0.000	accepted
CE_Trustworthiness $\rightarrow$ Sustainable Consumption	0.275	0.276	0.064	4.328	0.000	accepted
CE_Expertise $\rightarrow$ Sustainable Consumption	0.151	0.154	0.066	2.289	0.022	accepted

The Influence of Attractiveness on Sustainable Consumption (H₁)

The results of this study support hypothesis H₁, which states that celebrity attractiveness has a significant positive effect on Gen Z's sustainable consumption behavior for thrift/upcycled fashion products. A coefficient of 0.248 ($p < 0.001$) indicates that Gen Z's perception of the endorser's attractive appearance, stylish style, and charisma contribute to their preference for sustainable fashion. Theoretically, this finding is consistent with the Source Credibility model and classic persuasion theory, which states that "beauty sells." Attractive endorsers create a halo effect—positive associations from the endorser's attractive figure are transferred to the products they endorse. In the context of fashion (visually and style-oriented products), this is particularly relevant. Gen Z tends to emulate the style of their idols; when celebrities showcase stylish thrift/upcycled outfits on social media, it stimulates younger audiences to do the same.

These results align with prior endorsement research showing that attractiveness contributes positively to advertising and purchase-related outcomes ([Amos et al. 2008](#); [Ohanian 1990](#)). [Tarigan et al. \(2023\)](#) found that endorser attractiveness significantly influenced consumer trust in e-marketplaces ($\beta = 0.35$). Although the coefficient in this study was slightly lower (0.248), the direction and significance were consistent. This difference in context could be a reason why, in commercial beauty or fashion products, the endorser's visual appeal is more "selling" than in ethical fashion, where consumers also consider value factors ([Casaló et al. 2020](#); [Ki and Kim 2019](#)).

Interestingly, in this study, attractiveness was not the strongest dimension (second only to trustworthiness). This differs somewhat from initial expectations and the pattern of some traditional marketing studies, where physical attractiveness often dominates. One explanation is the increasingly critical

nature of Generation Z. Today's Gen Z no longer blindly accepts glamorous appearance-based advertisements; they tend to examine the substance behind the appearance. The study respondents were predominantly young women (60%). This group is known to closely follow fashion trends on Instagram/TikTok, but they are also quick to detect insincerity. For Gen Z, endorsers must not only look good, but also do good. This is reflected in the TCR attractiveness score of only 60% (categorized as "fair"). This means that although respondents considered the endorser's appearance quite attractive, it was not entirely convincing. The implication is that sustainable fashion brands should choose endorsers who are not only visually fashionable but whose style is relevant to the concept of sustainability (e.g., frequently wearing vintage clothing, eco-friendly styling). This way, the appeal displayed is more authentic and resonates with Gen Z.

The Effect of Trustworthiness on Sustainable Consumption (H₂)

The trustworthiness dimension proved to be the most influential ($\beta = 0.275$, $p < 0.001$) on the sustainable consumption behavior of Gen Z Batam. This confirms the importance of perceived celebrity honesty and integrity in sustainable fashion campaigns, in line with research by [McCracken \(1989\)](#). These findings support the Meaning Transfer Model - celebrities transfer meaning and value to products. If consumers perceive the figure as genuinely concerned about the environment and walking the talk, then the sustainable brand message will be believed and internalized. Conversely, if the endorser is labeled fake or just looking for money, the endorsement can fail or even be counterproductive ([Belanche et al. 2021](#); [Sokolova and Kefi 2020](#)).

Gen Z is known to be more difficult to deceive by empty images. They grew up in the internet era with an abundance of information, so they tend to be skeptical of advertising. Their high sensitivity to the issue of greenwashing has

been discussed previously. Therefore, it is not surprising that trustworthiness is a key determinant. These results are highly consistent with research by [Nguyen et al. \(2024\)](#) in Vietnam, which also found that the celebrity trust dimension most influences purchase intentions for sustainable clothing among young consumers, as well as [Lady et al. \(2024\)](#). Related endorsement research likewise emphasizes source credibility and trustworthiness as important drivers of consumer responses ([Schouten et al. 2020](#); [Spry et al. 2011](#); [Surjono et al. 2025](#)). This consistency across contexts reinforces the generalization that for marketing sustainable products (whether fashion or otherwise), the endorser's moral credibility is key to success.

Considering the respondents' context, the dominance of Early Gen Z (aged 17–21), who are digital natives, means they are accustomed to seeing endorsements daily on social media. This high exposure makes them adept at identifying genuine endorsements versus mere paid advertising ([Djafarova and Rushworth 2017](#)). Many female respondents admitted to following celebrities or fashion influencers on Instagram, but were only influenced to purchase if they felt their idols genuinely liked the product. The lowest TCR trustworthiness score (59.6%) indicates respondents' doubts about the sincerity of current endorsers. They may have observed that some celebrities have been caught up in inconsistent issues (e.g., campaigning for environmental awareness but living hedonistic personal lives). The practical implication is that brands and marketers must be very selective in choosing spokespersons for sustainability issues. Choose a public figure with a proven track record of environmental stewardship—for example, frequent involvement in social/environmental activities, or at least not known as a "celebrity." Then, build a narrative of honesty: for example, show the endorser's daily life using recycled products, and share their personal journey toward a sustainable lifestyle.

This transparency effort is crucial because Gen Z wants tangible evidence, not promises. Research on greenwashing likewise shows that misleading environmental communication can damage stakeholder trust, underscoring the need for concrete actions and transparent claims ([De et al. 2020](#)). Therefore, building trust through concrete actions and honest communication is essential.

The Influence of Expertise on Sustainable Consumption (H₃)

The expertise dimension also had a significant effect ($\beta = 0.151$, $p < 0.05$), but with the smallest effect among the three. This is interesting because, in general, expertise is often considered a strong factor in source credibility, especially for products that require specialized knowledge. However, in the context of sustainable fashion, the role of expertise is relatively minor. These results indicate that having fashion knowledge/expertise alone is not enough to motivate Gen Z, compared to the fact that celebrities are trusted and admired for their style. This finding can be explained by the nature of second hand/recycled fashion products, which are more of an expression of lifestyle than a technical product. For products like electronics or health, consumers really need expert opinion before purchasing. However, for thrift fashion, Gen Z can judge the quality/style of items themselves without needing expert advice. They may be accustomed to watching hauls or thrift shopping tips on YouTube/TikTok, so they feel knowledgeable enough. What they seek from endorsers is style inspiration and social validation, rather than technical knowledge. This aligns with a study by [Ho et al. \(2022\)](#), which showed that environmental campaigns are successful when they involve role models (celebrities), rather than simply providing technical information. Information alone can change attitudes, but it takes a role model to change behavior. In other words, the role model effect is stronger than the expert effect in this context ([Busalim et al. 2022](#); [Prisco et al. 2025](#)).

Nevertheless, the significant positive influence of expertise indicates that this element remains relevant, albeit in a smaller portion. The slightly higher TCR score for expertise (60.1%) indicates that respondents relatively recognize the endorsers' fashion expertise, for example, their ability to coordinate outfits. However, this appreciation does not automatically translate into sustainable consumption behavior as strongly as their appreciation for trustworthiness. Batam's Gen Z may be fashion-savvy enough not to really need advice from expert figures; they need role models more. In Batam, access to quality thrift clothing from Singapore/Malaysia is abundant, and the local thrift community actively shares knowledge. As a result, celebrity expertise is merely a complementary factor. Implication: Brands may use fashion experts or designers as endorsers to enhance credibility, but don't rely on this factor alone. It's more important to ensure the expert also conveys sustainability values in a relatable manner. For example, a renowned designer can be effective if they also demonstrate empathy and their communication style is easily understood by young people, without coming across as patronizing.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that celebrity endorsements have a significant influence on encouraging sustainable fashion consumption behavior among Generation Z, particularly in the context of thrift and upcycled fashion. All three dimensions of celebrity credibility— attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise— proved to have a positive contribution. Of the three, trustworthiness had the most dominant influence ($\beta = 0.275$), followed by attractiveness ($\beta = 0.248$), and finally, expertise ($\beta = 0.151$). Although the influence of expertise was smaller, all were statistically significant. The research model was able to explain approximately 29.8% of the variation in sustainable consumption behavior among Gen Z Batam residents related to fashion ($R^2 = 0.298$). From a theoretical

perspective, these findings confirm the Source Credibility model in the specific context of sustainability. However, there is an important nuance: in the case of products involving ethical and environmental values, the moral dimension (trustworthiness) is more crucial than physical attractiveness or technical expertise. This contributes to the green marketing literature by highlighting the boundary condition of Ohanian's model—that the most effective credibility for selling ethical products is the moral credibility of the endorser. These results also support the notion that new-generation consumers increasingly seek authenticity and integrity from public figures, not just appearances or expert titles.

The practical implications for those in the sustainable fashion industry are clear: choose endorsers who are trusted and perceived as genuine by your target audience. The endorser's personal credibility (e.g., having never been involved in a scandal that contradicts sustainability values) should be a primary consideration. Endorsers should have a track record of demonstrating environmental concern – for example, regularly donating clothes, using eco-friendly products, or actively campaigning on social issues. Brands also need to help build a narrative of authenticity, for example, through behind-the-scenes content that shows the celebrity actually using thrifted/upcycled products in their daily lives, not just during advertising shoots. Transparency is crucial, given that the majority of Gen Z demands concrete proof of sustainability claims. The attractiveness factor shouldn't be completely ignored – after all, the fashion industry is visual and aspirational. The best strategy is to combine high-trust figures with a style appeal that aligns with Gen Z's tastes. For example, a young celebrity known for being modest and environmentally conscious would be ideal if they also possess a trendy sense of style. Natural, understated appeal, combined with a clean reputation, will generate high engagement. With a strong combination of trustworthiness and

adequate attractiveness, endorsements are believed to be optimally effective in moving Gen Z toward more sustainable consumption behaviors.

This study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design does not allow for observation of long-term behavioral changes; future longitudinal studies could examine whether exposure to endorsements has a lasting effect on sustainable purchasing habits over several years. Furthermore, the unique geographic context of Batam (an island city near Singapore) may limit generalizability to other regions. Further studies in other cities or on a national scale are needed to test the consistency of the findings. Other unexplored variables, such as environmental knowledge, peer influence, or

the characteristics of non-celebrity influencers (micro-influencers), are also interesting to examine as moderators or comparators of effectiveness.

Nevertheless, these findings provide a valuable perspective for marketers: Gen Z can be agents of change towards sustainable fashion if approached with authentic communication. Celebrities as change agents can be effective as long as they themselves are trusted to represent sustainable values. In other words, influencing by example is more effective than simply influencing by glamour. In an era of increasingly critical young consumers, honesty is truly the best policy, especially when it comes to the future of our planet.

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