

Influence Of Virtual Social Capital on Sustainable Clothing Consumption Pattern: A Study on Young People in Ho Chi Minh City

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ABSTRACT

It is undeniable that fast fashion is a deleterious phenomenon changing the fashion industry for the worse. This study has been carried out to achieve the sustainable development of the clothing industry, thereby providing a visible and meaningful contribution to the achievement of SDGs 12 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The study clarified the definition and manifestation of a sustainable clothing consumption model that integrates four types of clothing consumption behavior: swapping, the sale of upgraded second-hand clothing, renting, consulting, and matching old clothing. According to an analysis of the data (N=398), virtual social capital and peer influence have a considerably positive effect on BISCCP. Virtual social capital also has a positive impact on peer influence. However, the relationship between virtual social capital as well as BISCCP was negatively affected by both face consciousness and consumer innovativeness. The findings had consequences for comprehending and enhancing consumers' behavioral intentions regarding purchasing sustainable clothes. Thus, it is essential for ecological sustainability and other associated government agencies to establish a parsimonious society, incentivizing the reuse of second-hand clothing to increase people's passion for environmental protection consumption. Not only does the study enhance consumer acceptance of SCCP, but it can also be especially useful to circular economy policymakers in the emerging market.

Keywords: Sustainable development goal; Peer influence; Face consciousness; Consumer innovativeness; Fast fashion.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, fast fashion has gained popularity and aroused people's attention. It is undeniable that fast fashion is a deleterious phenomenon changing the environment for the worse. For instance, the fashion business emits 8–10% of all carbon emissions generated by human beings, which is more than all global tourism and maritime shipping put together [1]. By 2050, that proportion of the carbon budget could jump to 26% if the fashion industry maintains its current direction [2]. With reference to [3], the fashion business uses over 93 billion cubic meters of water yearly, which is sufficient to supply five million people with all their requirements, greatly contributing to water scarcity in some areas. These recent data in Vietnam are also reinforcing the negative influence of the fast fashion industry on the environment. Fast fashion is gaining a significant presence in the memories of consumers, especially when young people spend a lot of time shopping for cheap clothes on e-commerce platforms. Therefore, this study has been carried out to achieve the sustainable development of the clothing industry, thereby providing a visible and meaningful contribution to the achievement of SDGs 12 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The study clarified the definition and manifestation of a sustainable clothing consumption model that integrates four types of clothing consumption behavior: swapping, the sale of upgraded second-hand clothing, renting, consulting, and matching old clothing.

There has been widespread public literature that is currently available on the clothing business focusing primarily on consumers' intentions to buy eco-fashion [4, 5]. On the contrary, environmentally friendly clothes can only partially address the issue of product contamination but cannot extend the lifespan of the garments to cut down on waste. Apart from that, several researchers have examined consumers' behavioral intentions to purchase used clothing by extending the actual use period of clothing, reselling recycled and improving items, exchanging clothes, and other reuse activities of used clothing can significantly lower the frequency of purchases and resource waste from the perspective of collaborative consumption [6]. Thereby, we have inherited and studied a product-service system (PSS) model and sustainable clothing consumption pattern (SCCP). To accomplish sustainable aims, a PSS model can take the role of the conventional product-based consumption model.

In addition, a significantly increasing number of people have broadened their social networks as a result of the popularity of social media. Customers will actively search for reviews of things on social media before purchasing, especially for items like apparel and cosmetics. They pay special attention to items that certain reputable, well-known influencers, celebrities, or friends have suggested, and they steer clear of items with negative ratings [7]. Through social media contacts, virtual social capital is created that subtly permeates consumption

patterns and daily life. There are a number of works of literature on conceptual frameworks and the structure of social capital that has been conducted to explore the relationship between consumers' purchase behavior and virtual social capital [8, 9] but very few investigations on the connection between SCCP and virtual social capital.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sustainable clothing consumption pattern

According to The United Nations [10] Sustainable Development Goals 12 – Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Patterns, SCP is enhancing net welfare advantages through business activity by lowering resource consumption, pollution, and degradation across the whole lifespan while improving quality of life. Applied to the apparel industry, sustainable clothing consumption pattern (SCCP) is lessening the regularity of purchases and lengthening the lifetime of the product through repair, reuse, and sharing. However, the apparel industry faces challenges in achieving sustainability because an increasing amount of clothing is discarded, creating waste and stressing the environment [11, 12, 13]. The trend of environmental clothing has risen to reduce pollution Jacobs et al. [14]. Although it makes some progress, the problem is not completely resolved. Clothing is now purchased for aesthetic and personal reasons rather than just for warmth and shelter. Therein, the sales of clothing climbed and their actual service life is much shorter than their technical service life.

2.2 Virtual social capital

Virtual social capital is a form of social capital. According to Schmalöer [15], social capital in online social media networks refers to the power of online social connections developed by online communication and the additional value individuals obtain from those online social networks, as a whole or subnetworks, and between networks. Social capital studies have shown that social capital encourages its members to accomplish collective goals. Putnam argued that social capital rises civic engagement. However, whether online platforms improve or lower social capital is controversial. Putnam [16] considered that the Internet lessened the strength of the influence of social capital to some extent. However, Bohn et al. [17] countered that social capital exists in the exchange of knowledge, trends, ideas, news, and opinion. Information is disseminated via communication. Communication is the fundamental aspect of the internet world, and it influences social networks. The ability to communicate via social media has made it simpler to create and maintain large networks. According to Wellman et al. [18], using the Internet extends the communication channels.

The study found the link between the dimensions of social capital (social interaction, trust in peers, reciprocity, shared language) and the consumers' purchasing intention in the s-commerce. The study showed three components of social capital (trust, participation, reciprocity) had a positive effect on ethical consumption behavior. A study by Kim [7]

showed the significant impact of bridging capital on sustainable fashion products. Thus, the study proposed following hypothesis:

H1. Virtual social capital has a positive influence on Behavioral Intention of Sustainable Clothing Consumption Patterns (BISCCP)

2.3 Peer influence

Peer influence describes someone acting as a result of peer pressure [19]. People will attempt to act in conformity with people around them when they feel the pressure of expectations from others [20]. According to van de Bongardt et al. [21], peers provide significant social and emotional support and hence become important reference groups for how to think and act. People are also motivated to follow their peers out of a strong desire to gain acceptance from them or to make reference to peer norms to set standards for self-appraisal, personal norms, values, and attitudes [22, 23].

Considering that fashion has a great symbolic meaning, it is especially affected by peer pressure [24]. Research documents that peers play prominent roles in the development of sustainable consumer identity, affecting their friends' recycling activities [25], intentions to purchase green product, sustainable attitudes [26, 27], and behaviors [26]. If people around individuals believe adopting the BISCCP to be the right thing to do, they may have the potential to act upon those beliefs in order to comply with their group norms. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. Peer influence has a positive influence on BISCCP.

The Internet has gradually grown from a purely technical level to a commercial and social level in recent years. Therefore, a large number of online social media have sprung up Zhu et al. [28]. Based on such platforms, the interaction including information diffusion, emotional exchange, and commercial transaction between users has been constantly strengthened Lazer et al. [29]. Social media makes people more connected and therefore increases interdependence among users [30]. Peer influence works best on dominant and large social networks, such as Facebook, by allowing access and spreading e-WOM to a large number of potential customers. It empowers consumers by providing communication platforms to share experiences, stories, and attitudes toward firms [31]. In other words, social media users may voluntarily or involuntarily act as persuasive ambassadors for certain consumption patterns on social media to invite like-minded peers, thus affecting each other during the exchanges. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. Virtual social capital has a positive influence on peer influence.

2.4 Face consciousness

According to [32], face is “the respectability and/or deference which a person can claim for himself from others, by virtue of the relative position he occupies in his social network and the degree to which he is judged to have functioned adequately in that position as well as acceptably in his general conduct”. Face consciousness relates to one’s desire to gain, retain,

and avoid losing face in relation to meaningful others in social contexts [33]. Although face may not be a concept unique to Asian cultures [34, 32, 35], scholars have consistently pointed out that concern for face is of utmost importance in most Asian cultures [36, 32, 37, 38].

In the collectivistic culture of Vietnam, the concern for face is predominately other-oriented [39]. Face consciousness encourages the use of consumer products as a means to communicate a preferred self-image to others and therefore, it influences consumer behavior. Consumers with high levels of face consciousness are likely to be adept at selecting consumer goods based on their symbolic worth, which helps to convey messages of their high status and prestige [40]. They place more emphasis on extrinsic (such as brand) than intrinsic (such as quality) values, as brand names contribute more to their social standing and self-image to others [41]. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that face consciousness motivates people who choose fashion products with face values at the forefront of their minds. The SCCP in the scope of this article primarily involves the reuse of old and second-hand clothing, which cannot directly demonstrate the social status and personal assets of consumers. Therefore, it is assumed that some people with high face consciousness may resist SCCP in order to preserve their face in front of their relatives, friends, and other acquaintances. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4. Face consciousness has a negative moderating effect between virtual social capital and BISCCP.

2.5 Consumer innovativeness

Consumer innovativeness, also known as "consumption of newness," is the propensity to purchase novel goods more frequently and swiftly than others [42]. The majority of authors seem to view consumer innovativeness as a trait, it encourages consumers to try new things rather than sticking to their old preferences and buying habits. This predisposition results from four factors: (1) stimulation need, (2) novelty seeking, (3) independence toward others' communicated experience and (4) need for uniqueness [42, 43, 44].

Social media provides a forum for communication between members, they share their knowledge, experience of products, services to each other and that creates the positive relationship between virtual social capital positively and BISCCP. However, a higher level of innovation among customers shows independence toward this information. Generally, when purchasing clothing, they concentrate on meeting their own needs and are less influenced by external information. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5. Consumer innovativeness has a negative moderating effect between virtual social capital and BISCCP.

It is presumable that consumers' behavioral intentions for sustainable apparel consumption patterns are favorably influenced by virtual social capital. Peer influence mediates, while consumer innovation and face consciousness have negative moderating effects. The first figure illustrates the research's research hypothesis.

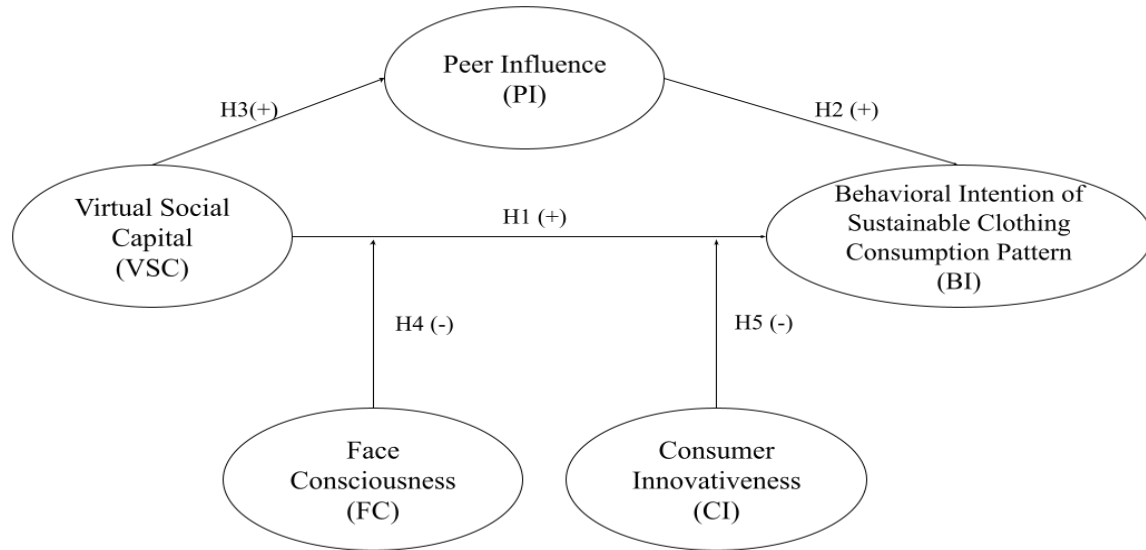


Figure 1. Research model

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The total sample size of the study is 398 samples should meet both the right sample size conditions. In order to achieve the most accurate and valid and objective data set, the survey has been conducted with people aged 18 to 30 years old living in Ho Chi Minh City through direct and indirect answers followed by the survey links, from January to March 2023. The team clearly presented the viewpoint as well as clearly mentioned the purpose of the survey, in order to bring more accurate data instead of making a coping survey. The construction of variables for surveys is also based on the actual situation so that the survey is as convincing as possible. The survey revolves around variables: VSC - Virtual Social Capital, PI - Peer Influence, FC - Face Consciousness, CI - Consumer Innovativeness, and BISCCP - Behavioral Intention of Sustainable Clothing Consumption Pattern.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Sample Descriptive Statistics

The survey received 425 responses living in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. This is one of the most dynamic cities in Vietnam. After completing the sample collection, invalid survey samples such as questionnaires with many unreasonable answers were eliminated. There are 398 samples left after they have been examined. There has 47.2% of the survey respondents are male and 52.8 percent are female. The number of males and women is almost identical. Of the 398 people surveyed, 125 respondents were between 18 and 22 (accounted for 31.4%). In addition, there are 120 people aged 23-25 (accounted for 30.6%), 153 people aged 26-30 (accounted for 38.4%). This dissemination ratio is quite reasonable according to the age of the sample. The majority of survey participants have been using social networks for 2-3 hours a day on average, focusing on all 3 age groups (18-22, 23-25, and 26-30), accounting for 42.5%.

After collecting, designing, coding, and entering the data from the SPSS tool, it was cleaned. The reason was that inaccurate data when the investigation was entered raw into the machine, combined with data collected directly via the Internet using the Google Form. There are often incorrect, incomplete, or inconsistent samples during the implementation process, so it is necessary to conduct data cleaning to ensure requirements, completeness, and consistency. Accordingly, the data analysis will help the author provide accurate and reliable information.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
VSC1	398	1.0	5.0	3.7085	1.07431
VSC2	398	1.0	5.0	3.5628	1.03579
VSC3	398	1.0	5.0	3.7211	1.15983
VSC4	398	1.0	5.0	3.6884	1.04238
VSC5	398	1.0	5.0	3.7864	1.01481
VSC6	398	1.0	5.0	3.7060	1.08645
VSC7	398	1.0	5.0	3.6608	1.10780
VSC8	398	1.0	5.0	3.7965	1.02674
VSC9	398	1.0	5.0	3.8392	0.94923
PI1	398	1.0	5.0	3.5603	0.90347
PI2	398	2.0	5.0	3.5704	0.98800
PI3	398	1.0	5.0	3.8492	1.05868
FC1	398	1.0	5.0	2.1608	1.22907
FC2	398	1.0	5.0	2.2789	1.10648
FC3	398	1.0	5.0	2.5101	1.04732
CI1	398	1.0	5.0	2.5503	1.18608
CI2	398	1.0	5.0	2.5503	1.17756
CI3	398	1.0	5.0	2.8191	1.19505
BISCCP1	398	1.0	5.0	3.3317	1.03858
BISCCP2	398	1.0	5.0	3.5653	1.19803
BISCCP3	398	1.0	5.0	3.6206	1.13532
BISCCP4	398	1.0	5.0	3.6809	1.07464
Valid N (listwise)	398				

Source: by authors, 2023

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics through indicators such as Mean (average of the answers), Min (the lowest answer is selected), Max (the highest answer is selected), and Standard Deviation of the metric. Mean values of observed variables (Virtual Social Capital, Peer Influence) in the study are greater than 3 and tend to have values close to 4 (where 3 is the level of basically agreement and 4 is the level of relative agreement). Nevertheless, for the observed variables of Face Consciousness and Consumer Innovativeness, the answers are opposite to the above five skills. The standard deviations of the responses mostly ranged from about 0.9 to 1.2, indicating that the responses ranged moderately from the mean. This also indicates that the majority of young people 18 to 30 in Ho Chi Minh City who participated in the survey believed that the thorough the impacts of social media and the greater the social capital, the more willing customers are to recycle old clothing.

4.2 Reliability test

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. According to Hair et al. [45], the research structure is considered reliable when the value of Cronbach's Alpha is greater than 0.7. The Cronbach's alpha value of all the variables, as shown in table 3, are greater than 0.7. Hence, five variables' measurements indicate high reliability.

Table 2. Reliability test results

Variable	Initial Number of Items	Final Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha
Virtual Social Capital (VSC)	9	9	0.928
Peer Influence (PI)	3	3	0.818
Face Consciousness (FC)	3	3	0.868
Consumer Innovativeness (CI)	3	3	0.875
Behavioral Intention of Sustainable Clothing Consumption Patterns (BISCCP)	4	4	0.870

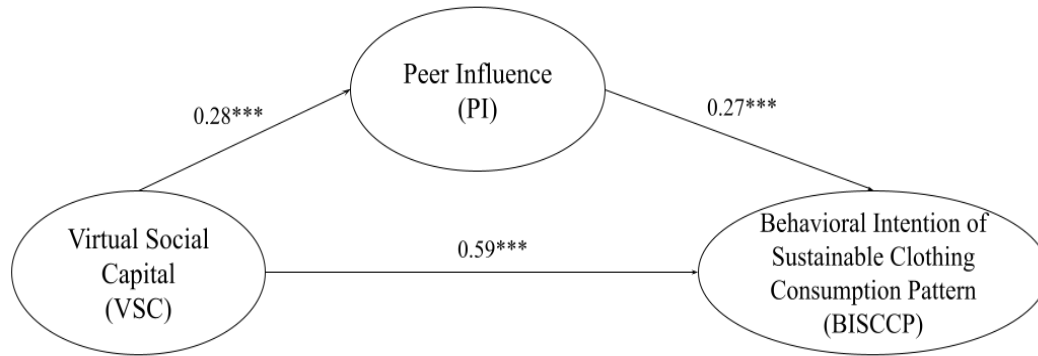
Source: by authors, 2023

4.3 Fitness of model

The CMIN/df is ≤ 3 indicates an acceptable fit [46]. A GFI value greater than 0.9 indicates a reasonable fit [47]. The CFI value of 0.949 is close to 1, which shows a good fit for the model [48]. TLI is greater than 0.9 and RMSEA value is less than 0.06, considered to be good for the model fit [47]. The results show that the measurement model has a good fitting effect. All observed variables have p-value less than 0.05 and standardized regression weight greater than 0.5. Thus, all variables are valid and reliable.

4.4 Main effect

SEM was applied to test the relationship among three variables VSC, PI and BISCCP. The results showed that VSC had a significant positive effect on BISCCP, VSC had a positive effect on PI, and PI had a positive effect on BISCCP. Thus, H1, H2 and H3 are supported.



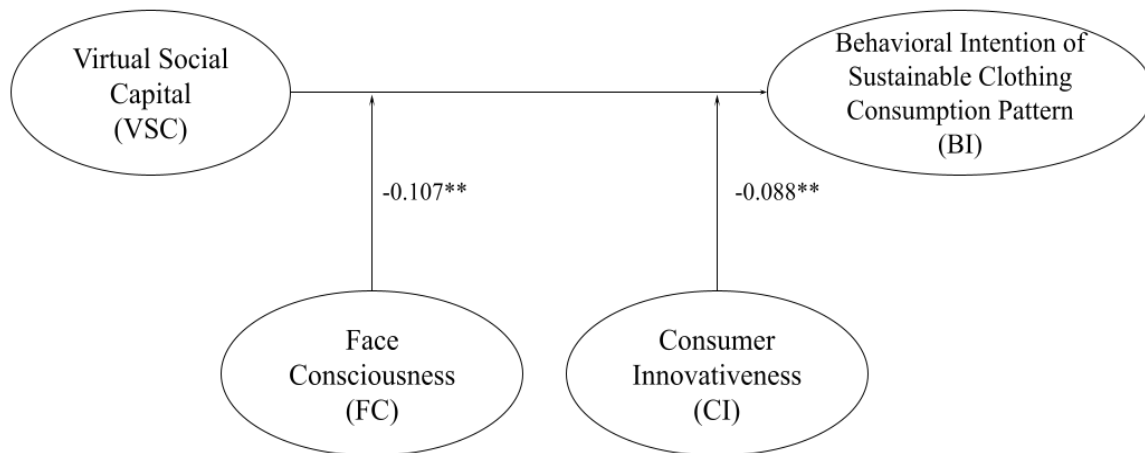
Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Source: Illustrated by authors

Figure 2. Main effect results

4.5 Moderating effect

The study measures the moderating effect of FC and CI on the relationship of VSC and BISCCP by using moderated multiple regression. FC had a negative moderating effect between VSC and BISCCP, with an effect of -0.107, with sig. < 0.05 . CI had a negative moderating effect between VSC and BISCCP, with an effect of -0.088, with sig. < 0.05 . Thus, H4 and H5 are supported.



Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Source: Illustrated by authors

Figure 3. Moderating effect results

5. DISCUSSION

Kim et al. [7] noted the impact of social capital on the purchase intention of sustainable clothing products. This study then further explores the concept of virtual social capital's effect on the behavioral intention of sustainable clothing consumption patterns (BISCCP). The results from this study confirm that virtual social capital could lead to adopting BISCCP with a partial mediating effect of peer influence. This result aligns with previous studies by [8] and [13], confirming virtual social capital's impact on consumer behavior. Fashion is an intuitive symbol to express one's individuality to the public. Representing the fashioned self has become a critical part of the social web, opening up new social media channels to amplify one's fashion preferences and engage with others [49]. The study discovered that customers are more likely to buy and reuse old clothing when social media influence is greater and social capital is stronger [13]. Furthermore, in the same study by [13], those with greater virtual social capital tend to stay in touch with other members of online communities as common interests are shared. According to Kim et al. [7]; Sujata et al. [50], and Weismueller et al. [51], trust in social media could significantly improve the intention to buy, swap and rent pre-owned clothing. The more trust people have in their communities, the more likely they are to be influenced by others, which is consistent with the results of [5]. Relationships based on respect and friendship will affect the behavior of social network members and encourage individuals to provide valuable information to social networks. The stronger the influence of other people's information on themselves, the simpler it is to adopt other people's viewpoints and engage in sustainable consumption practices, and the higher the level of trust among social network users [13].

The result confirms that there is an influence of peers' suggestions on purchase behavior due to the interaction among netizens. It is consistent with studies by [28], and [13] that virtual social capital encourages people to search for products that had formerly gained the trust and reciprocity from alike community members. Fashion has been increasingly characterized by peer influence, with trends being created less by established fashion magazines or designers and more by bloggers as opinion formers who have the power to influence how a fashion brand or trend is perceived in the market [48]. The pressure of what other people in one's circle think an individual should perform a particular behavior in a specific situation will lead to them complying accordingly Vahdat et al. [52]. Therefore, significant friends' beliefs are weighted and evaluated on friends who buy pre-owned clothing as a beneficial thought and how they should probably listen to others' beliefs. Marketers should fully utilize social media applications' information distribution function to increase their effect, given the relevance of peer influence and social media to promote products Nawaz et al. [53].

This study found a negative moderating effect of face consciousness on the relationship between virtual social capital and behavioral intention of sustainable clothing consumption patterns (BISCCP). The result is consistent with the research of [6], Ali et al. [54], and Amatulli et al. [55]. People are reluctant to adopt sustainable consumption patterns since they

are concerned about face value. In such a high-context society like Vietnam Muir et al. [56], the constant awareness of maintaining and gaining face is deeply rooted. Therefore, people are likely to commit to consumption patterns that consolidate their social status rather than those that support environmental benefits Dong et al. [57]. The research results had contributed to a deep understanding of consumers' behavioral intentions of SCCP. Additionally, the government can collaborate with nonprofit groups to run these communities, aiding them in attracting customers and subsequently promoting SCCP. To increase profits while also taking sustainability into account, businesses can expand into new sales patterns (sale of redesigned clothing, clothing repair/alteration services, clothing renting, clothing swapping, and style consultancy services). This also contributes to the implementation of SDGs 12. Specifically, businesses choosing these business forms will help consumers have more choices of sustainable clothing consumption and help reduce waste in the fashion industry.

The result illustrated that consumers negatively moderated the relationship between virtual social capital and behavioral intention of sustainable clothing consumption patterns (BISCCP). This result contrasts prior studies of [58] and [59]. Consumer innovativeness can be considered a motivational factor as it fulfills consumers' need for uniqueness and stimulation in some contexts [60]. The higher consumer innovativeness, the more they are willing to accept new products [61]. BISCCP primarily focuses on the exchange and reuse of pre-owned clothing, which violates the idea of novelty-seeking of consumer innovativeness. In addition, consumers with high innovativeness are less likely to be influenced by external forces. Therefore, as long as such consumers consider BISCCP as less innovative and lacking uniqueness, they will not engage in this consumption pattern. In order to further encourage highly innovative consumers to adopt sustainable behavior, there should be a reimagining concept of reusing second-hand apparel as an innovative behavior that could provide novel experiences for others.

6. CONCLUSION, LIMITATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

In this study, BISCCP is defined as a sustainable clothing consumption pattern according to PSS theory, which includes sales of upgraded second-hand clothing, swapping, renting, and consulting and matching old clothing [62]. First, the main effect results indicate the significant impact of virtual social capital on BISCCP, with peer influence partially mediating this relationship. The present study provides that people with high virtual social capital are more likely to implement this sustainable consumption pattern. Peer influence has also been confirmed to mediate the relationship between virtual social capital and BISCCP partially. These results highlight the importance of key trendsetters on social media and their power to disseminate information and encourage like-minded people to adopt sustainable consumption behaviors. Second, the findings show that face consciousness negatively moderates the relationship between virtual social capital and BISCCP. The awareness of maintaining a public image by consuming one's identity and face is the backbone of such a high-context

and collectivist culture as Vietnam. Finally, consumer innovativeness does not moderate the relationship between virtual social capital and BISCCP. This finding shows that this consumption pattern is relatively new and has not been considered a novel and unique activity. On the other hand, the pre-owned fashion domain is now growing to be a high-end niche market despite constraints [63]. This proves that BISCCP still has room for popularization as long as it is redefined as an opportunity to allow people to create a unique personal style to persuade consumers with high innovativeness to adopt this consumption pattern.

The majority of the studies and reference scales are held in China. Vietnam's and China's unique circumstances are different. This study has not yet reached knowledgeable professionals who have in-depth knowledge in this field. Therefore, future studies can conduct qualitative interviews with subject-matter specialists to improve the research's accuracy and provide a more apt scale and study model for Vietnam. Convenience sampling was used to gather the data from respondents in Ho Chi Minh City. Thus, by conducting research in various cultural contexts and using alternative sampling techniques, future research could test the generalizability aspect of the model. To better understand new consumer categories, research can be carried out in additional cities like Hanoi, Da Nang, etc., or it can take into account demographic factors (different age groups, educational backgrounds, etc.). In addition, further study can conduct offline research to evaluate and monitor the quality of respondents' answers during interviews or surveys, minimizing virtual and non-constructive data. From concentrating on a particular industry or product category, future studies may gain insights into the conditions or brand identities that are most likely to result in unfavorable outcomes. It might be interesting to take into account the demographic moderators that could have an impact on how virtual social capital and SCCP are related.

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