

A Study of Millennial Mothers' Purchasing and Disposal Habits for Children's Clothing and Intentions for Sustainable Choices

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Abstract

This study explores the shopping behaviors, disposal practices, and attitudes of millennial mothers in Thailand toward environmental impacts, as well as their purchase intentions regarding sustainable children's clothing. Employing qualitative methods, this study analyzes insights from 20 in-depth interviews with mothers aged 29 to 43 from diverse family structures and backgrounds, focusing on their awareness of environmental impacts and their intentions to purchase eco-friendly options. The findings show that mothers prioritize practicality, affordability, and versatility. Mothers with one child tend to prioritize style, while those with two children value durability and reuse hand-me-downs. Disposal practices are often influenced by emotional attachment, with sentimental items, such as birth outfits, being kept. Although mothers with two children show greater awareness of environmental impact, overall knowledge of sustainable options remains limited. Sustainability is considered only when affordable, with limited availability and high costs posing significant barriers across family types. The study further explains how price and design constraints hinder millennial mothers from purchasing eco-friendly children's clothing, highlighting the need for better education and more accessible, sustainable options. The discussion also examines the cultural, economic, and environmental factors that influence children's fashion choices.

Keywords

Children's clothing; millennial mothers; motherhood and sustainability; purchase intention on sustainable choices; theory of planned behavior

Introduction

Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996 (Pew Research Center, 2019), currently range in age from 29 to 44 years as of 2025 (Beresford Research, 2024). Some are transitioning into parenthood. In many Southeast Asian households, mothers often assume the role of household managers and serve as primary decision-makers for household and children's purchases, known as 'CHO' or Chief Household Officer. They make purchasing decisions across various product categories within their families, notably including 'children's clothing' (The Asian Parent Insight, 2020). According to the Thailand Digital Mum Survey by The Asian Parent Insight (2022), millennial mothers prioritize spending on children's clothing, with 62% citing it as their top online purchase. The survey also shows that 33% of these mothers buy children's clothing two to three times per month, while 14% make such purchases more than once a week. Reflecting this demand, Statista (2025) projected global revenue for children's clothing to reach over 59 billion USD by 2025, with Thailand contributing 142.22 million USD. By 2029, the international user base is expected to reach 276.9 million, including 1.6 million users from Thailand.

Children's clothing is considered a fast-moving consumer good due to the rapid turnover driven by children's constant growth and changing sizes. On average, a child may outgrow their clothing up to seven times within the first two years of life (Komara & Yulianti, 2023; Shaharuddin & Jalil, 2021). This frequent size change often leads to an excess of clothing. Parents typically manage these surplus items in several ways: donating to charity, which offers moral value and frees up space; giving them to friends or family, fostering relational value; selling, which provides monetary value; storing for future use, which holds psychological value; or simply discarding them, which serves the practical purpose of creating space (Cruz-Cárdenas et al., 2022).

Children's clothing, like other fast fashion segments, is driven by marketing and technology that shorten garment lifespans in response to rapidly changing trends (Cruz-Cárdenas et al., 2022). While making trendy apparel more accessible, fast fashion has significant human and environmental costs. The industry relies heavily on materials like cotton, polyester, and nylon. Cotton alone accounts for 75% of clothing production, but it requires 20,000 liters of water per kilogram, thereby straining global water resources. Meanwhile, synthetic fibers shed microplastics, harming marine ecosystems and human health (Fang, 2023; Tsui, 2022).

Eco-friendly children's clothing made from recycled or organic materials is gaining popularity for its durability and sustainability. Brands like Petit Pil, Enfant Green, and H&M offer adjustable sizes, chemical-free fabrics, and compostable options, reflecting the growing trend of eco-consciousness (Bangkok Post, 2023). This shift is driven by environmentally aware millennials willing to invest in sustainable products (Bangkok Bank SME, 2022; Spring News, 2022). It raises the question: Do these values persist in motherhood, especially in the frequent purchases of children's clothing? Examining disposal habits and sustainable preferences can reveal the environmental commitment of millennial mothers.

Studies on millennials' environmental awareness and apparel choices reveal key factors influencing their decision-making. Chi et al. (2021) found that U.S. female millennials prioritize price, performance, fashion, and comfort in sustainable athleisure, with social influence and brand transparency also playing significant roles. In Malaysia, Shaharuddin and Jalil (2021) found that millennial parents prefer donating, reusing, or sharing used

children's clothing, favoring practicality over fast fashion. When purchasing eco-friendly children's wear, they value cost, quality, design, and health, driven by concern for their children's well-being and the environment. Interestingly, many studies employ the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to investigate eco-conscious purchasing. Abrar et al. (2021) found that environmental knowledge and green self-concept positively influence attitudes, norms, and perceived control, with attitudes being the most strongly predictive factor of eco-friendly purchase intentions. They recommend emphasizing environmental benefits in marketing. Similarly, Komara and Yuliati (2023) applied TPB to Indonesian millennial mothers, underscoring the role of environmental concern in shaping sustainable buying behavior.

While consumer behavior has been extensively studied, few qualitative investigations specifically examine millennial mothers in Thailand. This study aims to address that gap by exploring their shopping and disposal habits, attitudes toward the environmental impact of children's clothing, and intentions to purchase sustainable options, using the Theory of Planned Behavior as a guiding framework. Due to the limited in-depth understanding of their awareness and attitudes, an exploratory qualitative approach was adopted to gain deeper insights. The findings are intended to support charity campaigns and inform marketing strategies targeting eco-conscious Thai mothers. Accordingly, this study was designed to address the following research objectives (RO):

Research objectives

1. To explore millennial mothers' shopping behaviors and the disposal habits of children's clothing
2. To explore millennial mothers' attitudes towards the environmental impact of children's clothing
3. To explore millennial mothers' purchasing intentions for sustainable (eco-friendly) children's clothing

Literature review

Millennial mothers' shopping behaviors for children's clothing

Previous studies have highlighted the firm reliance of Thai millennial mothers on digital platforms for parenting-related consumption. One notable trend, the *Internet of 'Mother' Things*, reflects their preference for online shopping due to its convenience (Forbes Thailand, 2016). The Thailand Digital Mum Survey (The Asian Parent Insight, 2022), based on responses from 481 mothers, primarily aged 25–40, with 43% residing in Bangkok, found that most had at least one child and relied heavily on Shopee and Lazada for product research and purchasing. Children's clothing was the top category, with 33% of buyers purchasing items 2–3 times per month. Similarly, Richards et al. (2020) found that millennial mothers value features from online shopping platforms, such as home delivery services and peer reviews.

Mothers aged 31–40 also tend to favor purchasing children's clothing via Facebook, particularly between 6:00 p.m. and midnight. They typically purchase fashionable clothes for children aged 3–5, spending approximately 500–1,000 THB (15–31 USD) per item. Product

appeal, promotions, and platform features influence their decisions. Credibility increases when sellers are also mothers, as this fosters trust through a relatable image and prompt, polite communication (Joithong, 2016). Notably, first-time mothers are more influenced by information search, buying attitudes, and reference groups. In contrast, mothers with multiple children rely more on information search and attitudes, with less impact from reference groups (Asavachongruk & Anantachart, 2022).

Consumer decision-making process and disposal of children's clothing

Solomon (2011) outlined a five-stage Consumer Decision-Making process: Problem recognition, Information search, Evaluation of alternatives, Purchase decision, and Post-purchase evaluation. Consumers first identify a gap between expectations and reality, then seek information, compare options, make a choice, and assess satisfaction post-purchase. Ayuningtyas et al. (2018) studied Indonesian millennial families, finding that millennial mothers prioritize information gathering, value quality over price, engage in impulse buying, and share product information socially. The disposal phase follows the post-purchase stage.

Cruz-Cárdenas et al. (2022) identified several disposal options for used children's clothing, including donating, giving away, selling, storing, and discarding. Vieira et al. (2023) found that donation, especially to acquaintances, was the preferred disposal method, driven by trust and convenience, while recycling and discarding were used as a last resort. Space constraints were the primary reason for disposal. In Thailand, foundations like the Mirror Foundation and campaigns during special events, such as Children's Day, encourage donations of unwanted children's clothing (PPTV, 2024; Spring News, 2020). Building on previous research, this study will use the Consumer Decision-making Process and disposal models to analyze the shopping and disposal behaviors of Thai millennial mothers regarding children's clothing.

Children's clothing and attitudes toward the environmental impact

Children's clothing, a key segment of the fast fashion industry (Cruz-Cárdenas et al., 2022), contributes significantly to post-consumer waste due to children's rapid growth, shifting needs, and changing fashion trends (Jalil & Shaari, 2023). This fast-fashion approach has notable environmental and human impacts (Fang, 2023; Tsui, 2022). To be specific, environmental impact can occur if there is excessive consumption of children's clothing. Previous studies have shown that millennial parents are increasingly adopting eco-friendly practices in their daily lives and show a strong preference for environmentally responsible brands. Tu et al. (2021) found that 55.3% of mothers aged 31 to 40 held positive attitudes toward eco-conscious consumption, favoring children's items with sustainable designs. While knowledge of eco-friendly clothing and environmental concern positively influences attitudes, concern alone does not directly affect purchase intentions (Komara & Yuliati, 2023).

A Deloitte survey (2023) highlighted millennials' growing environmental awareness, although many remain concerned about the affordability of sustainable products amid economic uncertainty. To understand knowledge, attitudes, and behavior, scholars use two approaches: the Tripartite Attitudinal Dimensions (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007) and the Unidimensionality View of Attitude (Lutz, 1991). The Tripartite model encompasses cognitive, affective, and conative aspects, whereas the Unidimensionality View focuses primarily on the affective component. Assael (1998) suggested that attitudes are shaped by

family, peers, personality, and experiences, with these factors influencing purchasing decisions and brand perceptions. Solomon (2011) defined attitude as an overall evaluation of a person or object. This study will apply the Tripartite Attitudinal Dimensions to explore the attitudes of millennial mothers toward the environmental impact of children's clothing.

Purchase intentions for sustainable (eco-friendly) children's clothing

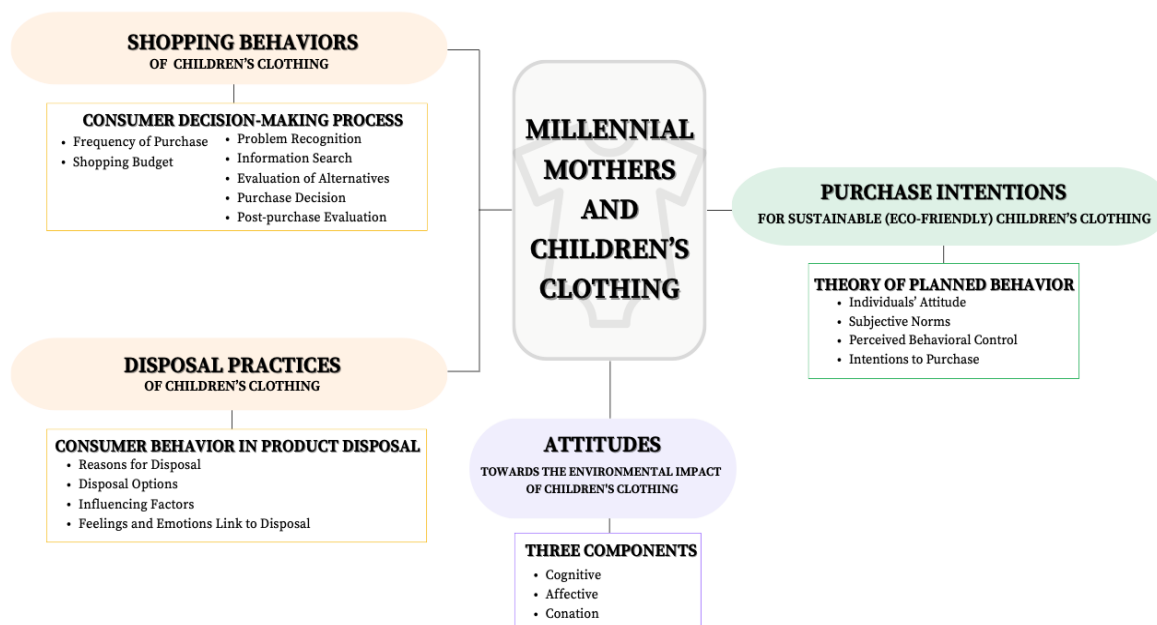
Studies have examined whether environmentally conscious millennials prioritize sustainability in children's clothing. Shahrudin and Jalil (2021) found that Malaysian parents prioritize cost, quality, design, and health when selecting sustainable apparel. Similarly, Berry et al. (2020) showed that Saudi millennial mothers, knowledgeable about sustainable fabrics, actively bought eco-friendly children's clothing.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is commonly employed to study environmentally friendly consumption. Abrar et al. (2021) found that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived control all positively influenced the intention to buy eco-friendly apparel, with attitude being the strongest factor. Thienthaworn (2024) applied TPB to Thai millennial mothers' eco-friendly toy purchases, identifying cost as a significant barrier and minimal peer influence. Similarly, Komara and Yulianti (2023) found that attitudes, norms, and control influenced intentions to buy eco-friendly baby clothes in Indonesia, with environmental knowledge enhancing attitudes. However, perceived economic risk weakened the link between norms and purchase intention.

Conceptual framework

While the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been applied to millennials' purchasing intentions in various contexts, few studies focus on their intentions to buy eco-friendly children's clothing. This study aims to use TPB to explore millennial mothers' intentions to purchase sustainable children's apparel, focusing on attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control. It will also examine their views on the environmental impact of children's clothing through cognitive, affective, and conative aspects of attitude. Additionally, consumer decision-making and product disposal will be analyzed to understand shopping and disposal behaviors in Thailand. The conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Millennial Mothers and Children's Clothing Study



Methodology

This qualitative study employed in-depth interviews to explore three main objectives: millennial mothers' shopping behaviors and disposal practices regarding children's clothing, their attitudes toward its environmental impact, and their intentions to purchase sustainable children's clothing. To address the first research question, the study applied the Consumer Decision-making Process model (Solomon, 2011), which includes five stages: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation. In examining Product Disposal behavior, it adopted the frameworks of Shaharuddin and Jalil (2021) and Vieira et al. (2023), focusing on four key aspects: reasons for disposal, disposal options, influencing factors, and associated feelings and emotions. To answer the second research question, exploring millennial mothers' perspectives on the environmental impact of children's clothing, the study employed the Tripartite Attitudinal Dimensions (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007), which encompass cognitive, affective, and conative components. Finally, to investigate the third research question concerning millennial mothers' intentions to purchase sustainable (eco-friendly) children's clothing, the Theory of Planned Behavior (Chi et al., 2021; Shaharuddin & Jalil, 2021; Thienthaworn, 2024; Zhang & Luo, 2022) was utilized, highlighting individuals' attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and purchase intentions as key guiding constructs.

Research instrument

The one-on-one interview questionnaire consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions grounded in key concepts: the Consumer Decision-making Process, Product Disposal Behavior, the tripartite model of attitudes, and the Theory of Planned Behavior. Interviews began with demographic questions, including participants' names, ages, occupations,

household incomes, numbers of children, and details about each child. Subsequent sections addressed the study's core variables, aligning with its three primary research objectives. Probing and follow-up questions were used to encourage detailed, reflective responses.

Examples of questions related to purchasing and disposal habits of children's clothing included: "When do you decide to buy clothes for your children?" "How do you gather and compare information before making a purchase?" "Where do you usually shop for children's clothing?" and "Do you share or recommend products to other mothers? If so, how?" Questions on disposal included: "What prompts you to dispose of children's clothing?" "How do you typically dispose of unwanted items?" "What factors influence your decision to keep or discard them?" and "How do you feel after disposing of children's clothing?"

Attitudes toward the environmental impact of children's clothing were examined across three dimensions: perceptions of manufacturing, waste management, and resource conservation; emotional responses to environmental impact; and alternative consumer choices to reduce harm. The final section explored purchase intentions for sustainable children's clothing using the Theory of Planned Behavior. Questions addressed perceptions of sustainable versus non-sustainable options, social influences, perceived ease of purchase, and willingness to spend on eco-friendly clothing.

Validity of the instrument

The questionnaires were reviewed by two full-time PhD-holding professors from Thonburi Rajabhat University and Roi Et Rajabhat University. Both reviewers are millennial mothers with experience in purchasing and disposing of children's clothing and are familiar with sustainability concepts. Their feedback confirmed the clarity and relevance of the questions for this study. Additionally, each question was reviewed for content validity, clarity, and appropriateness by an Associate Professor with a PhD from the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University.

Population and sampling group

Given that the target population comprised millennial mothers in Thailand, the study employed a purposive sampling technique to recruit 20 participants aged 29 to 43 (as of 2025), representing diverse family structures and socio-demographic backgrounds. All had at least one child under the age of 10. This age range aligns with research suggesting that children begin to express their clothing preferences between the ages of 6 and 10, while mothers remain key decision-makers during the earlier years. Participants were selected based on their experience purchasing and disposing of children's clothing, both online and in-store, as well as their familiarity with sustainable (eco-friendly) children's clothing. Snowball sampling was also employed, with initial informants referring additional eligible participants, whose contact details were shared for scheduling interviews.

Data collection procedure

The in-depth interviews were conducted via Zoom, an innovative videoconferencing platform, and were systematically recorded for electronic transcription. Zoom was chosen for its added advantages, such as participant comfort, reduced travel, and the ability to recruit a broader and more diverse sample, which contributed to enhanced data richness and

inclusivity. Previous studies have also highlighted Zoom's value and feasibility for qualitative research (Archibald et al., 2019; Oliffe et al., 2021). Each interview session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Data collection was carried out between February and April 2025. Key informants were contacted in advance to schedule appointments. Before the interviews, participants received a consent form and a list of questions to complete. After reviewing the materials and providing written consent, the interviews commenced.

The research was approved by the AU Institutional Review Board at Assumption University before the commencement of fieldwork (Certificate No. 46/2024).

Data analysis

Initially, the author utilized Google Sheets to develop a structured template for coding and summarizing responses from key informants. The transcription and analysis were informed by established theoretical frameworks, including the Consumer Decision-making Process (Solomon, 2011), Consumer Product Disposal Behavior (Shaharuddin & Jalil, 2021; Vieira et al., 2023), the Tripartite Attitudinal Dimensions (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007), and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Chi et al., 2021; Thienthaworn, 2024; Zhang & Luo, 2022). These frameworks were designed to ensure that the resulting themes accurately reflected the respondents' perspectives. Selected statements were translated into English for clarity and used as direct quotations. Thematic analysis was conducted by comparing responses across participants with varying family structures and backgrounds. These responses were then synthesized into coherent, meaningful themes, which are presented in the findings section.

Results

The findings synthesized interview data to address three research questions related to millennial mothers' purchasing and disposal habits, attitudes toward the environmental impact of children's clothing, and their intentions to adopt sustainable alternatives. The results were organized into four sections: three corresponding to the research objectives and one covering demographic information. Participants were categorized into four groups: mothers of one son, mothers of one daughter, mothers of same-gender children, and mothers of different-gender children. The study aimed to explore how child gender, sustainability awareness, and consumer behavior influence parenting decisions. The discussion highlights key patterns and trends that emerged from the data analysis.

Part 1: Demographics of millennial mothers

The study includes 20 millennial mothers, aged 29–43, with half having one child and half having two. Occupations include freelancing, business, and homemaking, and family incomes range from 50,000 to 1 million THB (1,530–30,700 USD). Among those with one child, five have sons and five have daughters. Of those with two children, five have children of different genders, and five have children of the same gender. Children's ages range from 6 months to 10 years. Mothers typically buy pajamas, travel outfits, casual wear, and festival attire, favoring coordinated sets, dresses, T-shirts, and pants. They prioritize practicality, versatility, and their child's preferences.

Part 2: Purchasing and disposal habits for children's clothing

Frequency of purchase: Clothing purchases are primarily driven by the child's needs, special occasions, and promotional offers. Mothers with one son buy clothes one to two times a month, often for outgrown items or events. Mothers with one daughter also shop monthly, influenced by the child's preferences and special occasions. Mothers with two children of different genders typically buy new clothes every two to three weeks, often for outings or seasonal needs, and pass down their older child's clothes to the younger one. Families with two children of the same gender typically purchase new clothes every three months for everyday needs or special events, with the younger child often receiving hand-me-downs.

Shopping budget: Mothers with one son typically have a clothing budget of up to 2,000 THB per trip, which is used to purchase items such as pajamas (100–200 THB), travel clothes (300–500 THB), and festival attire (over 1,000 THB). Mothers with one daughter typically spend 2,000–3,000 THB, often purchasing travel items (approximately 1,000 THB) and five to seven pairs of pajamas, sometimes exceeding their budget for branded items. Mothers with two children of different genders spend 80–100 THB per item, with pajamas costing around 500 THB, and they tend to buy more for their daughter. Mothers with two children of the same gender focus on affordable everyday items (300–400 THB) and make gradual purchases, often for the older child, using hand-me-downs for the younger one.

Consumer-decision-making process (5 stages):

Problem recognition: Mothers with one son often replace clothes when their child outgrows them, wears them out, or for special occasions and trips. Travel clothes are chosen for durability. Mothers with one daughter tend to replace their clothes similarly, focusing on active wear and considering the weather and upcoming events. In contrast, pajamas and home clothes are replaced based on personal preferences or sales. Mothers with two children of different genders also pass down clothes from the older to the younger child, purchasing for special events and travel.

Information search: Mothers with one son quickly choose trusted brands like H&M and Uniqlo for quality, often during sales, based on personal preferences. Mothers with one daughter tend to favor brands like Enfant, Barbie, and Zara, checking reviews for comfort and making purchases during sales. Mothers with two children of different genders review fabric quality, buy from trusted brands like Uniqlo, and occasionally shop on Instagram for special items. They opt for larger sizes for expensive items while making fewer purchases.

Evaluation of alternatives: Mothers with one son prioritize convenience, buying reasonably priced items one or two sizes larger, and prefer H&M and ZARA, but are willing to pay more if necessary. Mothers with one daughter tend to focus on price, fabric quality, and design, especially when it comes to preferred patterns. Mothers with two children of different genders balance price, design, and fabric, trusting brands like Uniqlo and H&M but comparing options, including newer brands like SHEIN, for value.

Purchase decision: Mothers with one son prefer in-store shopping for brands and fabric, but also shop online for convenience and better prices. Mothers with one daughter buy casual wear in-store, pajamas online, and seasonal items at flea markets or Shopee, visiting malls twice a year. Mothers with two children shop online for convenience, purchasing festival

clothes from My Little Store and SHEIN, as well as t-shirts from Uniqlo and H&M in-store, with occasional in-store visits.

Post-purchase evaluation: Mothers with one son share clothing info when asked or during promotions, but do not actively recommend brands. Mothers with one daughter tend to engage more, sharing their favorites on social media and recommending brands. Mothers with two children vary in their approach: those with children of different genders tend to share details about fabric quality and festive outfits, while those with children of the same gender share updates on discounts and new collections.

Consumer behavior in product disposal:

Reasons for disposal: Mothers with sons donate or reuse outgrown clothes based on their condition. Mothers with daughters do the same, storing clothes for future use or donation. Mothers with two children of different genders check if the younger child can use outgrown items, donating unsuitable ones. Those with the same gender tend to prioritize passing down clothes and sharing well-maintained items with acquaintances.

Disposal options: Mothers with one child donate or pass on outgrown clothes, keeping or selling higher-quality items. Mothers with two children of different genders pass clothes to the younger sibling or donate based on condition and gender. Mothers with two children of the same gender prioritize passing clothes down and donating unused items to family or friends.

Influencing factors: Mothers with one son often pass on or donate outgrown clothes, while keeping sentimental items, such as their birth outfits. Mothers with one daughter usually receive hand-me-downs and pass on clothes in good condition, saving special pieces for their daughter. Mothers with two children of different genders often pass on or recycle their children's clothes, keeping sentimental items. Mothers with two children of the same gender save sentimental items and donate non-sentimental ones.

Feelings and emotions linked to disposal: Mothers with one son use donations to teach sharing, as sons are usually willing to part with clothes. Mothers with one daughter address emotional attachments but encourage sharing through involvement. In families with two children, sons tend to accept donations more easily, while daughters often require more guidance. Both learn the value of giving over time, with the older sibling grasping it faster.

Part 3: Attitudes toward the environmental impact of children's clothing

Cognitive: Mothers with one son tend to prioritize style over materials and often lack knowledge of clothing production and recycling. Mothers with one daughter know basic materials like cotton, but view children's clothing as they would adult clothing. Mothers with two children of different genders are aware of recycled polyester but still buy fast fashion. Those with two children of the same gender are familiar with basic fabric types but often lack insight into production processes.

"I don't know much about these processes. If a shirt has a 'recycle' label, I feel good, but design is what matters most."

(Mother 2, age 37, Freelancer, has a 4-year-old son)

"Not at all; I think it's probably the same as adult clothing."

(Mother 10, age 37, Cabin Crew, has a 3-year-old daughter)

"I believe it might have some environmental impact, but I still purchase from SHEIN even though I know it's fast fashion."

(Mother 14, age 36, Business Owner, has an 8-year-old son
and a 7-year-old daughter)

"I have no idea and no information at all. I only know what the fabric is, but I don't know the process."

(Mother 20, age 38, Office Worker, has a 3-year-old daughter
and a 9-month-old daughter)

Affective: Mothers with one son recognize the environmental impact but prioritize style over it. Mothers with one daughter are aware of the issue but have not thoroughly researched it. Mothers with two children of different genders tend to limit their purchases, although unusable items still contribute to waste. Mothers with two children of the same gender are aware of the environmental effects.

"I think children's clothing has some environmental impact, so I try to have my child wear their clothes for as long as possible, and donating them helps extend their lifespan."

(Mother 3, age 36, Content Writer, has a 4-year-old son)

"It does have an impact, particularly on fast fashion; however, I am not particularly interested in pursuing in-depth research on the topic."

(Mother 10, age 37, Cabin Crew, has a 3-year-old daughter)

"I think the impact of fast fashion is evident. I try to buy only what is necessary, but additional clothing is often needed for work or seasonal events at school."

(Mother 14, age 36, Business Owner, has an 8-year-old son
and a 7-year-old daughter)

"Yes, there is – like the carbon footprint from clothing production."

(Mother 18, age 37, Insurance Agent, has a 10-year-old son
and a 7-year-old son)

Conation: Mothers with one son tend to buy clothes infrequently, avoid event-specific items, and support donations, but often struggle to find eco-friendly options. Mothers with one daughter limit purchases, prefer eco-friendly materials, and support passing clothes down. Mothers with two children of different genders repurpose clothes and donate when possible. Mothers with two children of the same gender tend to reduce their purchases, pass clothes down to their children, support charitable donations, and recycle.

"I don't shop all the time or very often – just occasionally. Each outfit I buy is used for a long time. That's why I feel that making the most out of each purchase or reducing the frequency of buying clothes can help."

(Mother 1, age 34, HR Manager, has a 5-year-old son)

"Repurpose it, like using it as an ironing cloth or turning a skirt into a hair accessory."

(Mother 14, age 36, Business Owner, has an 8-year-old son and a 7-year-old daughter)

"Passing them on or donating – these are good ways to at least extend their lifespan. They can also be repurposed, like turned into cleaning rags or reused in other ways."

(Mother 20, age 38, Office Worker, has a 3-year-old daughter and a 9-month-old daughter)

Part 4: Intentions to purchase sustainable (eco-friendly) children's clothing

Individuals' attitude: Mothers with one son prioritize affordable quality over eco-friendly options, while those with one daughter focus on price, material, and design. Mothers with two children prioritize design over eco-friendliness, but consider sustainability if the price is right, especially for basics.

"Eco-friendly clothes are appealing if they last and are well-priced, but the material and design need to be right."

(Mother 4, age 36, Housewife, has a 6-month-old son)

"It seems new, but I wouldn't buy it regularly. My daughter likes cute clothes, and if the designs aren't appealing, I wouldn't buy them."

(Mother 7, age 38, Finance Officer, has a 4-year-old daughter)

"If the price is much higher, I probably wouldn't buy it. I'm a mother of two, so if I buy something that can be used from ages 2 to 4, it's worth it. In the future, if there are more options available at prices not too different from regular ones, I might be interested."

(Mother 20, age 38, Office Worker, has a 3-year-old daughter and a 9-month-old daughter)

Subjective norm: Mothers with one son, one daughter, or two children, regardless of gender, prioritize their preferences, like style and comfort, over external opinions or sustainability, and are unaware of anyone in their social circles using eco-friendly clothing.

"Not at all, since no one around me uses them. I choose my child's clothes, and no one influences me. I prioritize my preferences when buying."

(Mother 9, age 40, Office Worker, has a 3-year-old daughter)

"It doesn't have an impact because people around me probably don't know about it or use it."

(Mother 11, age 40, Office Worker, has a 6-year-old son and a 4-year-old daughter)

Perceived behavioral control: Mothers with one son or daughter often find eco-friendly clothing to be rare and expensive. Mothers with two children of different genders face similar

challenges, prioritizing price and practicality, whereas those with two children of the same gender focus on functionality and design, despite the higher cost.

"It's hard to find eco-friendly clothes, and they seem expensive. I'm also unsure about their durability."

(Mother 3, age 36, Content Writer, has a 4-year-old son)

"I buy what I like first, and if it's recycled, that's a nice bonus."

(Mother 13, age 41, Housewife, has a 7-year-old daughter and a 4-year-old son)

"There probably aren't that many. Some brands have certain collections, but the prices are quite high, so they might be hard to sell."

(Mother 16, age 30, Business Owner, has a 4-year-old son and a 1-year-old son)

Intention to purchase: Mothers with one son or daughter avoid sustainable clothing due to limited options and high prices. Mothers with two children of different genders tend to prioritize style, while those with children of the same gender are more open to eco-friendly options but prioritize design.

"Chances are low due to limited options and a lack of information. I think an eco-friendly choice might be expensive too."

(Mother 2, age 37, Freelancer, has a 4-year-old son)

"If the quality and price are similar to regular clothes, I might try it, especially for home wear."

(Mother 10, age 37, Cabin Crew, has a 3-year-old daughter)

"The chances are low because I prefer buying clothes with beautiful patterns rather than eco-friendly concepts. If it's toys, there might be a better chance."

(Mother 16, age 30, Business Owner, has a 4-year-old son and a 1-year-old son)

Discussion

This study examines how millennial mothers in Thailand make decisions about their children's clothing, focusing on their attitudes, behaviors, and the cultural influences that shape their choices. Guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991) and consumer behavior theories (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007; Shaharuddin & Jalil, 2021; Solomon, 2011; Vieira et al., 2023), seven themes were identified from the qualitative findings. These themes highlight how environmental awareness, practicality, and social context shape sustainable consumption and disposal choices.

Table 1: Children's Clothing Consumption and Sustainability

RO	Section	Theme / Title
RO1	Purchasing and Disposal Habits	Practical and Economic Management in Parenting Cultural Values and Social Norms in Clothing Practices Emotional Attachment and Gendered Perceptions
RO2	Attitudes toward Environmental Impact	Sustainability Consciousness as an Evolving Parental Practice
RO3	Intentions to Purchase Sustainable Choices	Balancing Environmental Awareness with Style and Affordability Personal Preference Over Social Influence in Decision-Making Barriers and Control in Sustainable Clothing Choices

Theme 1: Practical and economic management in parenting

A dominant theme emerging from the data is the prioritization of practicality and economic reasoning in both clothing purchases and disposal decisions. Millennial mothers in Thailand demonstrate strategic consumption driven by children's rapid growth, seasonal needs, and limited household space. As children outgrow clothing quickly, changing sizes up to seven times within the first two years (Komara & Yuliati, 2023; Shaharuddin & Jalil, 2021), mothers must adapt by shopping regularly to keep up with their children's growth.

The Thailand Digital Mum Survey reports that most mothers purchase children's clothing two to three times a month, varying by the number and gender of their children (The Asian Parent Insight, 2022). Mothers with two kids, especially in the early years, tend to shop more, but later rely on hand-me-downs to maximize their use. Budget plays a central role, with typical spending ranging from 2,000 THB for sons to 2,000–3,000 THB for daughters, reflecting style differences. Families with same-gender siblings spend less on clothing by reusing, reflecting Thai values of sufficiency and frugality.

Disposal is equally pragmatic. Space limitations often motivate the discarding or reusing of clothes, especially in urban homes (Vieira et al., 2023). Clothes are passed on to younger siblings, especially those of the same gender, thereby extending their life. Unusable items are donated, sold, or given away, thereby reducing waste and supporting practical household management.

Theme 2: Cultural values and social norms in clothing practices

Cultural norms and social expectations deeply influence the behaviors of millennial mothers, shaping both the consumption and disposal of children's clothing. Purchases often align with ritual and ceremonial events such as national festivals (e.g., Songkran, Loy Krathong), Western holidays (e.g., Halloween, Christmas), and school functions. These occasions drive the need for event-specific clothing, making consumption a form of cultural participation and expression of identity (The Asian Parent Insight, 2022). Clothing thus holds social meaning beyond its practical use, connecting families to broader communal rhythms.

Disposal practices in Thailand are similarly grounded in cultural and religious traditions, with donation, especially during Children's Day and the New Year, being the primary method.

These acts carry moral and spiritual significance linked to Buddhist merit-making. Cruz-Cárdenas et al. (2022) emphasized that donating children's clothing generates moral value, social harmony, and compassion, while Vieira et al. (2023) highlighted trust and convenience as important motivators. Beyond religious duties, donations strengthen community ties as clothes are shared with relatives and neighbors, reflecting the cultural values of mutual support and kindness.

At the same time, millennial mothers actively engage with the digital economy, using online platforms for convenience and variety, influenced by price comparisons, reviews, and brand familiarity (Ayuningtyas et al., 2018). However, they continue to value physical stores for assessing fabric and fit, blending digital efficiency with traditional shopping practices.

Theme 3: Emotional attachment and gendered perceptions

Many mothers, especially first-time parents, report preserving clothing tied to key developmental milestones, such as a child's first steps or birthdays. These items become memory artifacts, serving as emotional anchors that capture the passage of time and the child's growth (Cruz-Cárdenas et al., 2022). This preservation reflects not only nostalgia but also a sense of maternal identity and continuity.

Gender expectations shape emotional and aesthetic choices. Daughters' clothing is often more elaborate, reflecting ideals of femininity and self-expression. Mothers prioritize design and trends, noting that girls have an emotional attachment to certain outfits. This makes disposing of such items more sensitive and sometimes a negotiated process. These patterns reflect Thai cultural norms that encourage expressiveness in girls and restraint in boys (Shaharuddin & Jalil, 2021; The Asian Parent Insight, 2022).

Even in disposal, the emotional component is evident. Many mothers delay discarding certain items, especially those tied to their first child, or choosing symbolic times like the New Year, which in Thai culture signifies renewal and cleansing. These rituals demonstrate the social significance of emotional ties. Thus, mothers' clothing choices are not only practical and cultural but also deeply personal, linking consumer behavior to identity, memory, and relationships.

Theme 4: Sustainability consciousness as an evolving parental practice

Millennial mothers' awareness and behavior regarding sustainability in children's clothing consumption reflect a growing understanding shaped by limited knowledge, emotional concern, and adaptive practices. While all groups demonstrate a limited technical knowledge of clothing production, there is an increasing awareness of the environmental impact caused by fast fashion, the rapid growth of the fashion industry, and the short lifespan of garments. This supports theories by Solomon (2011), Schiffman and Kanuk (2007), Lutz (1991), and Assael (1998), who emphasized the roles of experience, family, and social context in shaping consumer behavior.

Cognitive Awareness and Knowledge Limitations: Mothers generally lack detailed knowledge of production processes, but they recognize the environmental implications. Mothers with two children exhibit slightly greater awareness, possibly due to accumulated

parenting experience and the need for more durable solutions, which supports Lutz's (1991) and Solomon's (2011) views on experience-based evaluation.

Affective Concern and Environmental Sensitivity: Despite limited knowledge, most mothers express concern about clothing waste and environmental harm. Donation and reuse practices carry emotional and moral value, especially among mothers with two children, who tend to exhibit greater awareness of pollution and textile waste. This aligns with Schiffman and Kanuk's (2007) view that emotional responses shape consumer attitudes. Thai cultural norms further support these choices, reinforcing sustainability through values of generosity and moral responsibility.

Conative Adaptation and Sustainable Actions: Across all groups, mothers take practical steps such as limiting purchases, reusing clothes, and using hand-me-downs. Donation remains a meaningful behavior, often tied to cultural or religious events. Mothers with one daughter tend to show interest in eco-friendly options, but they frequently face barriers related to cost and availability. These behaviors reflect Assael's (1998) notion of the trade-off between intent and feasibility, supporting findings by Cruz-Cárdenas et al. (2022) and Vieira et al. (2023) on sustainable household decision-making.

Link to Disposal Practices: These sustainability attitudes extend into post-consumption behavior. Donation is not only practical but culturally significant, often associated with merit-making. Emotional attachment to children's clothing, especially items linked to milestones, further motivates reuse or retention. Mothers with two children frequently reuse and repurpose clothing, embedding sustainability across both consumption and disposal stages, echoing Cruz-Cárdenas et al.'s (2022) view that everyday disposal is shaped by emotional and cultural meaning.

Theme 5: Balancing environmental awareness with style and affordability

Millennial mothers in Thailand across all groups acknowledge the environmental benefits of eco-friendly children's clothing, yet consistently perceive these products as costly and difficult to obtain (Abrar et al., 2021; Komara & Yuliati, 2023; Thienthaworn, 2024). Affordability and quality remain decisive factors, with eco-friendly options generally chosen only when their prices are comparable to those of conventional clothing (Shaharuddin & Jalil, 2021). Mothers with one son tend to prioritize affordability over style, reflecting pragmatic concerns. In contrast, mothers with one daughter tend to place a greater emphasis on fashion, often rejecting eco-friendly items that lack an appealing design or are priced too high. Mothers with two children tend to present more nuanced attitudes, balancing a preference for design with an openness to durable and reasonably priced, eco-friendly clothes, particularly when the children are of the same gender, which simplifies clothing selection. These findings reveal that while environmental awareness is present, purchasing decisions are heavily influenced by personal preferences related to style and cost.

Theme 6: Personal preference over social influence in decision-making

Across all groups, subjective norms and social pressures exert minimal influence on eco-friendly clothing decisions, with mothers primarily guided by personal preferences (Komara

& Yuliati, 2023; Thienthaworn, 2024). This observation aligns with Abrar et al. (2021), who found that individual attitudes are stronger predictors of behavior than external social norms. Although mothers with two children tend to emphasize design and comfort more, they also rely less on social circles when selecting children's clothing. This behavior supports consumer models emphasizing personal evaluation and family context over peer influence (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). The pattern highlights an urban millennial mother demographic in Thailand that prioritizes individual choice over conformity, aligning with the Theory of Planned Behavior.

Theme 7: Barriers and control in sustainable clothing choices

All mothers report significant barriers to purchasing eco-friendly children's clothing, including high prices, limited availability, and concerns about quality, which undermine their perceived behavioral control over sustainable consumption (Abrar et al., 2021; Komara & Yuliati, 2023). These obstacles constrain intentions to buy, with price and design being especially critical factors. Mothers with one child tend to focus more on affordability and style. In contrast, mothers with two children adopt a pragmatic approach, prioritizing practicality and durability, with sustainability as a secondary consideration unless explicitly stated. Notably, mothers with same-gender children exhibit a modestly higher openness to sustainable options, though design preferences remain paramount (Abrar et al., 2021). These practical concerns, alongside limited product information, emphasize the need for clearer promotion of eco-friendly benefits to support informed consumer choices, as advocated by Abrar et al. (2021). Overall, while environmental attitudes exist, perceived control factors such as cost, accessibility, and product appeal strongly influence behavior.

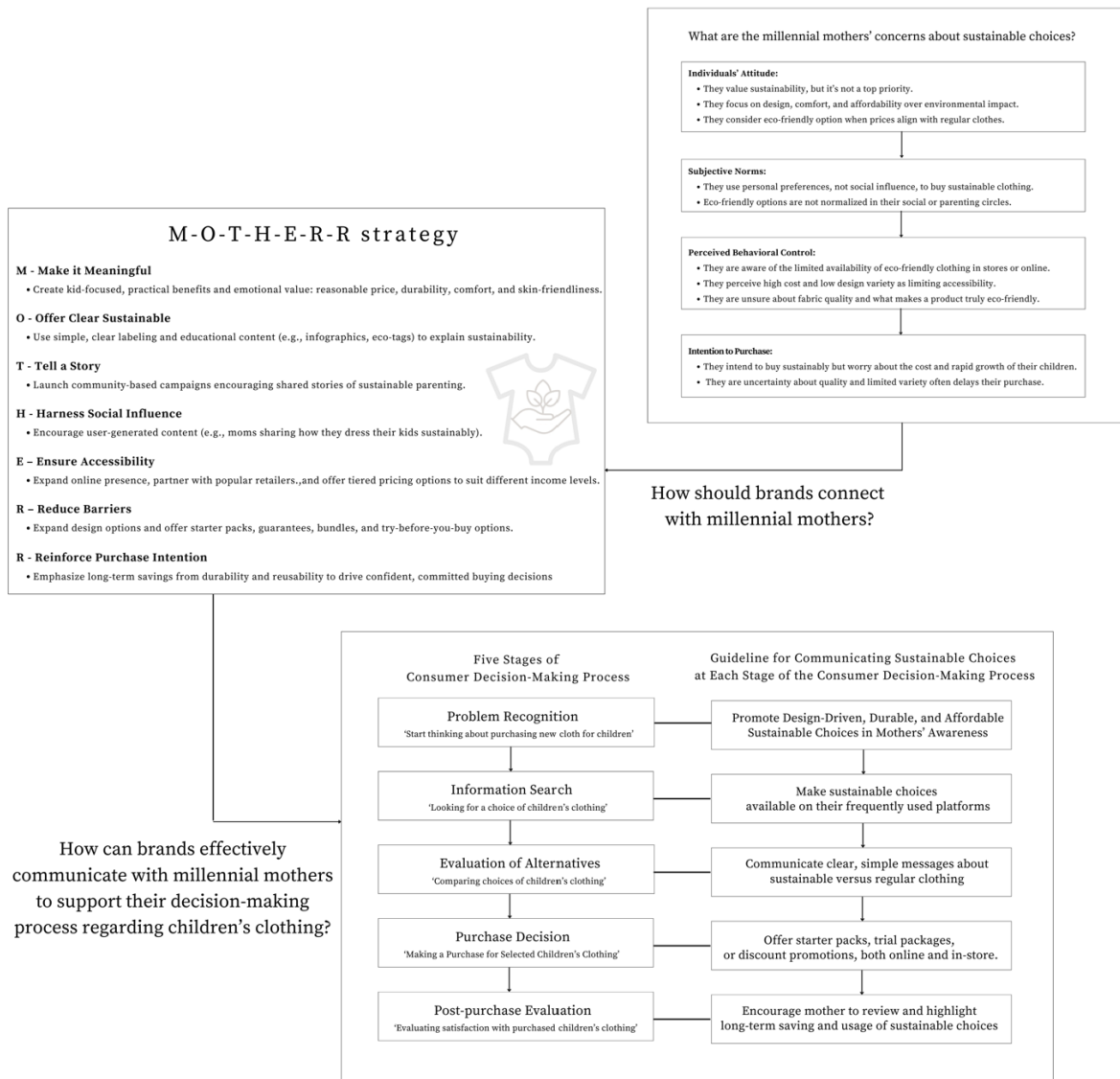
Conclusion and implications

The findings indicate that millennial mothers' purchases of children's clothing are primarily driven by necessity, special occasions, and promotions, with frequent replacements necessitated by growth. Purchasing differs by family structure: mothers of sons prioritize convenience, mothers of daughters focus on style and comfort, and those with two children often use hand-me-downs strategically. Across all groups, familiar brands and key factors such as price, quality, and size are essential. In-store shopping is preferred for fabric and fit, while online shopping offers convenience and ease of use. Recommendations mainly come from close circles, especially among mothers of daughters or same-gender siblings.

For disposal, mothers typically donate, reuse, or discard clothing based on condition and emotional value. While there is general awareness of fast fashion's environmental impact, knowledge of sustainable production is limited. Eco-friendly clothing is valued in principle, but purchasing decisions are often driven more by price, availability, and design. Key barriers include cost, limited options, and lack of information.

These insights suggest opportunities for targeted marketing, sustainable design, and retail strategies. Charity campaigns should highlight the emotional and social value of donations, promoting them as community acts and teaching moments. Simplified donation options, such as school drop-offs or home pickups, can boost participation, while storytelling can increase emotional engagement.

Figure 2: Mapping the Consumer Decision-Making Process and Strategic Integration Points for Eco-Friendly Children's Clothing Brands



Note: This figure illustrates the concerns of millennial mothers, using the Theory of Planned Behavior as a framework. Key findings were translated into strategic recommendations for eco-friendly brands to guide their marketing communications throughout the consumer decision-making process. These recommendations were summarized by the acronym M-O-T-H-E-R-R, chosen to enhance memorability and relevance.

As illustrated in Figure 2, for eco-friendly brands, affordability and accessibility are crucial. Products must be competitively priced, widely available, and meet mothers' practical needs. Clear, simple messaging about environmental benefits through packaging, websites, and social media can build awareness and trust. Brands should offer stylish, durable designs for everyday and special occasions. Personalized marketing, based on family structure and lifestyle and supported by parenting influencers, schools, and community networks, can further engage millennial mothers.

Limitations and suggestions for further study

This study employed qualitative methods to explore the awareness, attitudes, and purchase intentions of millennial mothers in Thailand toward sustainable children's clothing. Future research could build on these findings by using larger, more diverse samples and applying quantitative or experimental methods. A factorial design could assess how factors such as clothing type, design, and price affect purchase intentions, both directly and interactively.

Further studies may also examine the influence of socio-economic status, cultural values, and social norms, as well as the role of digital platforms, influencers, and online reviews in shaping attitudes and behaviors toward eco-friendly children's clothing.

Declaration of AI use

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