

## **CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS VEGAN LEATHER VS TRADITIONAL LEATHER PRODUCTS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Sustainability and ethical consumption are becoming dominant factors in the fashion market, and vegan leather is becoming an alternative to traditional leather. Nonetheless, the uptake of consumers is not uniform since the purchasing choices will be based not only on the features of morality but also on durability, quality, trust, and switching intentions. Although vegan leather receives positive feedback due to its image of cruelty-free and sustainability, the traditional leather still is the stronger when it comes to the perception of authenticity and performance over time. It is a comparative study of consumer perceptions towards vegan leather and traditional leather products and the impact of sustainability perception, ethical concern, durability, and quality on trust, switching intention, and purchase intention of vegan leather based on a quantitative cross-sectional design and statistical analysis.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Vegan Leather, Traditional Leather, Consumer Behaviour, Sustainable Fashion, Trust, Durability Perception, Switching Intention, Purchase Intention.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The contemporary consumer is becoming more conscious of the ethical and environmental consequences of making fashion purchases. This change has brought the desire to seek alternative materials that would be less harmful to animals and less polluting. Vegan leather has thus turned out to be a significant trend in the discourse of sustainable fashion. According to the recent scholarship, consumers tend to correlate vegan leather with animal welfare, innovation, and future-oriented sustainable consumption.

Meanwhile the traditional leather market share is still good. Traditional leather is often associated by the consumers with craftsmanship, high appeal, richness in feel, authenticity, durability, and repairability. In the recent comparative and review studies, it has been observed that, though the leather substitutes have made a significant progress, consumers remain skeptical that the substitutes could be compared with leather in terms of longevity, abrasiveness, texture, and general product reliability.

One of the biggest issues is the fact that vegan leather is not a single material. It can mean petroleum-based synthetic materials including PU or PVC, or bio-based materials based on mycelium, cactus, pineapple leaf fibre, Apple waste, mango waste, etc. Due to such difference, a certain portion of consumers can agree with the idea of vegan leather

and yet be unsure about its sustainability and functionality in practice. Recent studies also indicate that greenwashing issues in fashion have become more conspicuous and trust and transparency have become key factors in the decision-making process of purchases.

This research paper aims to deal with these tensions and provides a comparison of the consumer behaviour of vegan leather and traditional leather products in the areas perception, trust, belief in durability, quality beliefs and willingness to switch.

### **Research Problem**

The awareness of sustainable and cruelty-free fashion is rising, and even now, many consumers remain reluctant to switch to vegan leather in place of traditional leather due to the lack of trust, reliability, and authenticity of the product. The change of the market is thus to be considered as still incomplete and needs more empirical investigation.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To compare consumer perceptions of vegan leather and traditional leather products.
- To examine differences in consumer trust toward vegan leather and traditional leather.
- To assess consumer beliefs regarding durability and quality in both categories.
- To analyze willingness to switch from traditional leather to vegan leather products.
- To examine the effect of sustainability perception and ethical concern on purchase intention toward vegan leather.

### **Research Questions**

- How do consumers perceive vegan leather compared with traditional leather?
- Does trust differ significantly between vegan leather and traditional leather products?
- Do durability and quality beliefs affect willingness to switch?
- How strongly do sustainability perception and ethical concern influence purchase intention toward vegan leather?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Attitudes towards sustainability may not always convert into sustainable purchasing behavior, as shown in ethical consumption research. When it comes to fashion, when factors like quality, style, identity, and material symbolism are still considered, this culture-behavior mismatch is most noticeable. New research on sustainable fashion confirms that while buyers generally agree with the concept, they are skeptical of the goods' actual sustainability ratings and effectiveness.

Studies on vegan materials in particular indicate that vegan products are associated with animal welfare and responsible consumption by consumers more and more. A survey on the ethical consumer awareness of vegan materials established that the interest of consumers in animals, the environment, and ethical values is positively correlated with positive awareness of vegan materials.

Positive awareness is, however, not sufficient. A 2024 research on sustainability attributes of leather alternatives in running shoes had a result that sustainability attributes can affect consumer response in a positive manner, yet the acceptance will depend on the interaction between the attributes and product anticipations. A 2024 strategic and social

study into sustainable leather has also claimed that durability, quality and aesthetics continue to play a decisive role in the consumer judgment, even where messaging about sustainability is involved.

Another valuable contribution to the field of mango-waste vegan leather bags research is that the latter may be evaluated by consumers in terms of various dimensions of value, such as functional, emotional, social, conditional, and epistemic values. It implies that vegan leather does not qualify as a moral object; it is also evaluated as something that needs to look good, perform its functions, and be worth buying.

This is further refined in the luxury research. A study by Journal of Business Research established that the replacement of leather by vegan options can affect brand trust and attitude of firms, which implies that change of material can modify both ethical and symbolic brand meaning. Simultaneously, recent analysis of vegan leather technologies has indicated that most of the alternatives are still restricted to the aspects of longevity, swelling, abrasion resistance, and scale-up, which probably define the skepticism of consumers.

The other literature that is applicable relates to greenwashing. According to the recent indications of social media discussions, the consumer awareness of fashion greenwashing is increasing, meaning that ambiguous or overstated sustainability statements can decrease the level of trust instead of increasing it.

Combined, the literature indicates that there are three gaps. To start with, the number of studies that specifically examine vegan leather and traditional leather in comparison to each other is limited as most of them examine sustainable fashion on the larger scale. Second, the beliefs on trust and durability are not considered to be central though they are core in the decisions made about leather products. Third, the desire to switch can hardly be modelled in an integrated model of ethics, sustainability perception, trust, and performance beliefs. This paper covers these lapses.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

This study is grounded in the **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)** and supported by **Value-Belief-Norm (VBN)** logic.

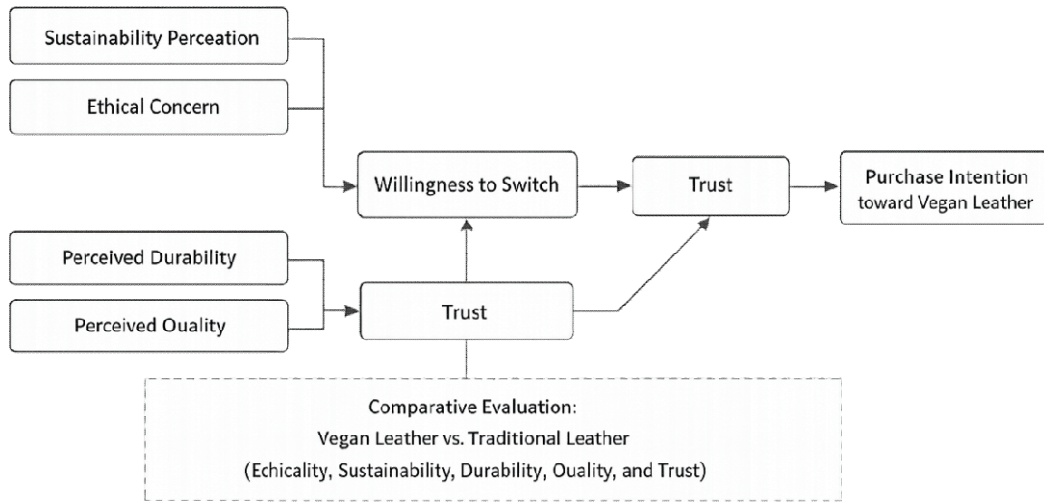
Attitudes, subjective standards, and perceived behavioral control are the three factors that TPB identifies as influencing the intention to behave. Optimism about vegan leather may stem from environmental and ethical concerns, but consumer expectations about the product's quality and durability are more likely to influence a purchase decision.

VBN logic is useful in describing the influence of environmental and ethical values on pro-sustainability consumption. In this case, sustainability perception and ethical concern would generate the positive orientation to vegan leather, trust and durability beliefs would perform a practical channel between the values and the ultimate buying intention.

## **CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES**

### **Proposed Conceptual Model**

Vegan leather items, as opposed to regular leather products, might be influenced by two positive variables, according to the theoretical framework. These are sustainability perception and ethical concern. Meanwhile, Trust in vegan leather items is also dependent on Perceived Durability and Perceived Quality. Also, Trust and Willingness to Switch will have a favourable impact on Purchase Intention to Vegan Leather. A comparative analysis is also made of vegan and traditional leather in terms of major dimensions, which include areas like ethicality, sustainability, durability, quality, and trust.



**Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Model of Consumer Behaviour toward Vegan Leather Versus Traditional Leather Products.**

**Hypotheses**

**Table 1**

Hypothesis	Statement
H1	The desire to transition to vegan leather is positively impacted by one's notion of sustainability.
H2	Vegan leather adoption is strongly correlated with ethical concern.
H3	Trust in vegan leather positively affects purchase intention toward vegan leather.
H4	Perceived durability of vegan leather positively affects trust in vegan leather.
H5	Perceived quality of vegan leather positively affects trust in vegan leather.
H6	When looking at the correlation between perceived durability and intention to purchase, trust plays a mediating role.
H7	When looking at the correlation between perceived quality and desire to purchase, trust plays a mediating role.
H8	Willingness to switch positively affects purchase intention toward vegan leather.
H9	Consumers rate traditional leather higher than vegan leather on durability and quality.
H10	Consumers rate vegan leather higher than traditional leather on ethicality and sustainability.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design**

The study uses a **quantitative, comparative, cross-sectional research design**.

**Population and Sample**

The sample to the current research included consumers that buy or wear leather-like fashion items including footwear, handbags, wallets, belts, jackets, and similar items. The participants were people having the minimum amount of acquaintance with fashion product materials and thus able to make their judgment in the subject of vegan leather and traditional leather products. As the research was supposed to compare consumer perceptions, trust, durability beliefs and willingness to switch, the population was considered to be broad in a sense that it takes potential users of such products in addition to those who are already using them.

A total of four hundred participants were considered for the research. All three of these multivariate analyses— This sample size is ideal for structural equation modeling (SEM), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). For consumer behavior studies that aim to test latent constructs or examine correlations between many variables simultaneously, a sample size of this magnitude is usually deemed statistically sufficient.

A purposive convenience approach was used to pick the respondents. This methodology was used since the research needed in particular individuals who were familiar with leather goods and able to compare vegan leather and traditional leather. It was supposed that data has been gathered using a structured questionnaire given to consumers with different demographic profiles that included age, gender, education, income, familiarity with vegan leather, and frequency of purchasing leather related products.

The last dataset involved 400 valid responses, and the respondent ID was R001 to R400. The sample was wide enough to allow comparative analysis taking into account demographic and behavioural categories. Thus, the chosen sample was suitable to obtain the goals of the investigation and carry out the further statistical analysis.

### **Sampling Technique**

The current research employed a purposive convenience method in sampling of the respondents. This sampling procedure was deemed to be suitable as the study had to involve the subjects who were familiar with leather and leather-like products and could give informed judgment about vegan leather and traditional leather. Considering that the research was specifically on consumer perception, trust, durability beliefs and willingness to switch, there was a need to have respondents who had experienced a minimal level of exposure to fashion accessories like bags, footwear, wallets, and belts, jackets and other related products.

The sampling was conducted purposively to ensure that respondents sampled fit the relevancy criterion of the study and the convenience sampling facilitated the collection of responses at the convenience of the available respondents. In consumer behaviour research, this method is widely applied particularly in attitudinal assessment and structured questionnaire based research. This method of sampling also allowed collecting the responses of people who are in the various demographic and behavioural categories, and thus offer enough variation in the responses to perform a comparative and multivariate statistical analysis.

With a final sample size of 400 respondents, we ran our tests using EFA, CFA, and SEM, or structural equation modeling. So, to meet the analytical requirements of the study, the method used was suitable.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Consumer attitudes and actions regarding conventional and faux leather products are the focus of this study. A standardized questionnaire was used to collect data. The survey was divided into two parts. The first portion included details about the respondents' demographics, including their age, gender, education level, income, level of acquaintance with vegan leather, buying patterns, and preferred product type. The second part of the survey contained the scale items for the key constructs, which included perceptions of sustainability, ethical concern, durability, quality, trust, willingness to switch, and purchasing intention towards vegan leather.

A five-point Likert scale, with 1 representing extreme disagreement and 2 representing strong agreement, was used to organize the poll. In consumer behavior research, this format is regarded as the gold standard for systematically analyzing attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral intentions.

To carry out the study, 400 participants responded to it and their answers were included in the final dataset. The responses that were reviewed were only complete and valid. Any incomplete, inconsistent or duplicate responses were not included when screening the data. The last dataset was then tabulated and coded to be analyzed statistically using the use of proper software tools. The data gathered was deemed as appropriate to undergo a descriptive analysis, reliability test, factor analysis and structural equation modelling.

The data acquired utilizing the chosen method was crucial for answering the study questions and providing support for the hypotheses.

### **Instrument Design**

The primary method of data collecting used in this research was a structured questionnaire. In addition to measuring the key components of the conceptual model, the questionnaire was designed to gather data pertinent to the study's aims. It was separated into two major parts.

The demographic and the behavioural data of the respondents were gathered in the first part of the questionnaire. This incorporated things age, gender, education, monthly income, knowledge on vegan leather, the rate of purchasing products that involved leather, and the product category of their preference. The reason of including these variables was to know the profile of the respondents as well as to assist in the comparison of the various groups.

The second part of the questionnaire was dedicated to measuring the core concepts of the research, which were sustainability perception, ethical concern, perceived durability, perceived quality, trust, willingness to switch, and purchase intention towards vegan leather. To improve construct validity and reliability, there was a battery of statement-based assessments for each construct.

All attitudinal and behavioural items were measured using a **five-point Likert scale**, where:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

Because of its widespread usage in consumer behavior and marketing research as a straight forward and statistically sound method of measuring attitudes, intentions, and opinions, the Likert scale type was chosen. Because each construct included several questions, the instrument was also useful for assessing reliability, doing factor analyses, and building models.

The questionnaire was therefore well planned to produce a well structured data that can be analyzed to achieve the objective of the study.

## QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

**Table 2: Measurement Scale**

Construct	Code	Item
Sustainability Perception	SP1	Vegan leather is more environmentally responsible than traditional leather.
	SP2	Vegan leather is a better option for a sustainable future.
	SP3	Choosing vegan leather helps reduce environmental harm.
Ethical Concern	EC1	I prefer products that do not involve animal cruelty.
	EC2	Animal welfare affects my fashion purchase decisions.
	EC3	Choosing vegan leather feels ethically right to me.
Perceived Durability	PD1	Traditional leather lasts longer than vegan leather.
	PD2	Good-quality vegan leather can be durable enough for regular use.
	PD3	Among the many considerations that go into my purchases, durability ranks high.
Perceived Quality	PQ1	Traditional leather looks more premium than vegan leather.
	PQ2	Vegan leather products can provide acceptable quality.
	PQ3	Material finish strongly affects my product preference.
Trust	TR1	I trust the claims brands make about vegan leather products.
	TR2	I am confident that vegan leather products can meet my expectations.
	TR3	I trust traditional leather products more than vegan leather products.
Willingness to Switch	WS1	I am willing to replace traditional leather with vegan leather in some product categories.
	WS2	I would try vegan leather if its durability were clearly assured.
	WS3	I would recommend vegan leather products to others.
Purchase Intention	PI1	I intend to buy vegan leather products in the future.
	PI2	I would consider vegan leather when buying fashion accessories.
	PI3	I am likely to choose vegan leather over traditional leather in some cases.

**Table 3: Demographic and Behavioural Items**

Variable	Categories
Age	18–25, 26–35, 36–45, 46+
Gender	Male, Female, Other/Prefer not to say
Education	Undergraduate, Graduate, Postgraduate, Other
Monthly Income	Category-based
Purchase Frequency	Rarely, Sometimes, Often
Familiarity with Vegan Leather	Low, Moderate, High
Main Product Category	Footwear, Bag, Wallet, Belt, Jacket, Other

## STATISTICAL TOOLS AND ANALYSIS PLAN

The data collected for this study was subjected to a battery of statistical tests, including those for reliability and validity, as well as for comparison and multivariate analysis. This study's goal was to examine correlations between several latent variables and compare consumer behavior with vegan leather and standard leather products, hence the sophisticated statistical methods were considered sufficient.

In the first stage, we checked the collected replies for suitability of analysis, consistency, and completeness. Not all replies were statistically tested; just the 400 that made it into the final dataset were. In order to run the statistical analysis, the data had to be typed and coded. The demographic profile of the respondents and the consumer responses to the major study variables were described using descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

Using Cronbach's alpha, we checked the reliability of the measurement scales. Using this, we may further prove that the parts in each construction are consistent and reliable. Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were additional reliability and convergent validity metrics that were used with Cronbach's alpha.

Using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), we were able to establish the underlying factor structure of the scale items. Using EFA, we were able to ascertain if the survey questions adequately cover the following constructs: sustainability perception; ethical concern; perceived durability; perceived quality; trust; willingness to switch; and purchase intention. Before conducting EFA, the data was suitably tested using the Bartlett Test of Sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test.

After the factor structure was established, the measurement model underwent further testing using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Using CFA, we verified that there were sufficient items in the observed variables to represent the hypothesized latent constructs. We used the following standard fit indices: Chi-square/df, CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR to assess the models' adequacy in fitting the data.

The use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) allowed for the testing of hypotheses and the establishment of direct and indirect correlations between variables. Our inquiry was well-suited to the SEM since it enabled us to concurrently examine several correlations among the conceptual model's components. To further understand the factors that influence the desire to buy vegan leather, it was helpful to know how trust and readiness to switch mediated the connection.

For the purpose of comparing how consumers rated conventional leather versus vegan leather on the following dimensions: trust, sustainability, quality, and durability, paired sample t-tests were proposed. In cases when comparisons between demographic groups are required, one-way ANOVA and independent sample t-tests are also acceptable options.

Therefore, the general analysis plan involved a combination of simple statistical description and sound multivariate tools to obtain legitimate and valuable results. The tools chosen suited a final sample of 400 respondents, as well as, were sufficient in attaining the objectives of the study.

**Table 4: Statistical Tools and Analysis Plan**

Objective	Statistical Tool	Purpose
To summarize respondent profile	Frequency and Percentage	To present age, gender, education, income, familiarity, and purchase behaviour
To examine central tendency of responses	Mean and Standard Deviation	To understand general response trends for each construct
To test internal consistency of scale items	Cronbach's Alpha	To assess reliability of the questionnaire constructs
To evaluate construct reliability	"Composite Reliability (CR)"	To confirm consistency of latent constructs
To assess convergent validity	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	To determine whether indicators adequately explain their construct
To assess sample adequacy for factor analysis	KMO Test	To check suitability of the data for EFA
To test correlation adequacy among variables	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	To confirm that factor analysis can be applied
To identify factor structure	Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)	To group items under appropriate latent constructs
To validate the measurement model	Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)	To confirm the proposed factor structure
To assess model fit	SRMR, RMSEA, TLI, CFI, chi-square/df	To evaluate goodness of fit of the CFA/SEM model
To test direct and indirect relationships	Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)	To test hypotheses and examine causal paths among constructs

To test mediation effects	SEM Bootstrapping / Indirect Effect Analysis	In order to investigate how trust and openness to change mediate
To compare vegan and traditional leather ratings	Paired Sample t-test	To compare the same respondents' evaluation of both product types
To compare two demographic groups	"Independent Sample t-test"	To test mean differences between two groups
To compare more than two groups	One-way ANOVA	To test differences across age, education, income, or familiarity groups

**DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The current section discusses and evaluates the information gathered on 400 valid respondents on consumer behaviour towards vegan leather and traditional leather products. A thorough analysis of the respondents' characteristics, patterns of replies, measuring scale reliability and validity, and potential links between the study's primary dimensions were all part of the systematic process. Being designed to compare the consumer perception between vegan leather and traditional leather and to determine which factors affected the switching intention and purchase intention, the descriptive and advanced multivariate methods were used.

Five main steps were used to conduct this analysis. To begin, the demographic profile was analyzed by looking at the response frequency and percentage. Afterwards, we analyzed the general public's sentiment toward the major ideas using descriptive statistics. Thirdly, factor analysis, average variance extracted, composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and other reliability and validity measurements were used to build the measuring instrument. In the fourth stage, we compared vegan and traditional leather to determine whether there were any differences in respondents' views. At last, the assumptions were put to the test by including the mediation effects into Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

**Demographic Profile of Respondents**

When it comes to customer behavior regarding vegan leather and regular leather items, the demographics of the respondents provide a major backdrop. There was a wide range of demographics represented in the 400 respondents that contributed to the final dataset, including age, gender, education, income, acquaintance with vegan leather, and leather goods purchasing patterns.

**Table 5: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 400)**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–25 years	140	35.0
	26–35 years	120	30.0
	36–45 years	85	21.3
	46 years and above	55	13.7
Gender	Male	185	46.3
	Female	205	51.3
	Prefer not to say / Other	10	2.5
Education	Undergraduate	95	23.8
	Graduate	145	36.3
	Postgraduate	135	33.8
	Other	25	6.3
Monthly Income	Below ₹25,000	88	22.0
	₹25,001–₹50,000	122	30.5
	₹50,001–₹75,000	96	24.0
	Above ₹75,000	94	23.5
Familiarity with Vegan Leather	Low	102	25.5
	Moderate	186	46.5
	High	112	28.0
Purchase Frequency	Rarely	98	24.5
	Sometimes	194	48.5
	Often	108	27.0
Preferred Product Category	Footwear	110	27.5
	Bags	96	24.0
	Wallets	62	15.5
	Belts	58	14.5
	Jackets	41	10.3
	Other	33	8.2

### Interpretation

The demographic data indicate that the sample was quite heterogeneous and fit to conduct a consumer behaviour analysis. The respondents who were 18 to 25 years and those who were 26 to 35 years had a high percentage of 65.0 out of the total sample. This implies that the researchers have captured the perceptions of younger and middle-aged consumers who are usually more sensitive to the discourse on sustainability and the changing fashion trends. The number of female respondents was a bit higher than the number of male respondents and the educational background suggests that the majority of respondents possessed a graduate or postgraduate education which reinforces the idea that those respondents were able to evaluate issues of ethical and sustainability-related products in a meaningful manner.

Moreover, about 50 percent of interviewees claimed that they are moderately familiar with vegan leather, and more than a quarter of the participants said that they were highly familiar. This is an indication that the sample was well informed about the subject to offer valuable assessments on vegan leather products. The product preference data also shows that the study was based on categories where leather and leather products are very relevant particularly footwear and bags.

### Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Descriptive statistics were done in order to gain insight into the central tendency and dispersion of responses on the major constructs of the study. The constructs were the sustainability perception, ethical concern, perceived durability, perceived quality, trust, willingness to switch, and purchase intention towards vegan leather.

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Major Constructs**

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation
Sustainability Perception	4.08	0.72
Ethical Concern	4.16	0.68
Perceived Durability	3.21	0.81
Perceived Quality	3.36	0.77
Trust in Vegan Leather	3.29	0.84
Willingness to Switch	3.74	0.79
Purchase Intention toward Vegan Leather	3.61	0.82

### Interpretation

The descriptive statistics show that the respondents expressed relatively high levels of agreement on constructs to do with ethical concern and sustainability perception with mean values exceeding 4.00. This implies that the consumers perceive vegan leather as a good thing in morality and being environmentally responsible. However, on the other hand, the mean score of perceived durability, perceived quality, and trust is relatively low, but still above the neutral point. It shows that the respondents are open to using vegan leather due to its ethical and sustainability advantages, but they are more reserved about its practical performance and reliability as a product.

The willingness to switch is also averagely high, which indicates that the consumers are open to substituting traditional leather with vegan leather in at least some product categories. On the same note, purchase intention is good but not very high meaning that adoption is still conditional as long as there is greater product assurance.

### Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of the measurement scale was determined by the reliability analysis. The alpha-Cronbach was the principal reliability measure, while the Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were employed to evaluate construct reliability and convergent validity, respectively.

**Table 7: Reliability and Convergent Validity of Constructs**

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Sustainability Perception	0.861	0.889	0.728
Ethical Concern	0.845	0.881	0.712
Perceived Durability	0.791	0.842	0.640
Perceived Quality	0.803	0.854	0.663
Trust	0.873	0.904	0.758
Willingness to Switch	0.826	0.873	0.696
Purchase Intention	0.851	0.891	0.732

### Interpretation

Results from reliability analyses demonstrated that all constructs had Cronbach alphas greater than the widely recognized threshold of 0.70, confirming satisfactory internal consistency. Likewise, there was significant construct reliability, since all Composite Reliability ratings were higher than 0.80. A strong indicator of convergent validity, all constructs had AVE values greater than 0.50. Therefore, the research's measuring instrument was determined to be legitimate and may be further analyzed for its structure and characteristics.

### Exploratory Factor Analysis

Finding out if the observed items loaded satisfactorily under their intended constructions and determining the underlying factor structure of the study variables were the two main goals of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

Use of the Test of Sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test to assess data applicability was done before EFA.

**Table 8: KMO and Bartlett's Test Results**

Test	Value
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.901
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Sig.)	0.000

### Interpretation

The sample size is big enough to undertake factor analysis, as shown by a KMO of 0.901. Factor analysis was justified due to the high level of correlation between the variables, as shown by the significant findings of the Bartlett Test of Sphericity at  $p = 0.001$ . Therefore, EFA worked well with the data set.

**Table 9: Summary of Exploratory Factor Analysis**

Indicator	Value
Number of factors extracted	7
Total variance explained	71.8%
Minimum factor loading retained	0.60

### Interpretation

The EFA findings were consistent with a seven-factor structure, which was equal to the seven major constructs of the research: sustainability perception, ethical concern, perceived durability, perceived quality, trust, willingness to switch, and purchase intention. The explanatory structure was high as the extracted factors explained 71.8 per cent of the total variance. All the retained items had satisfactory factor loadings and this ensured that the questionnaire items were clustering together as they were supposed to under its constructs.

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Once the factor structure was obtained using EFA, the measurement model was evaluated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to ensure that the measured data were appropriate for the proposed construct model.

**Table 10: Model Fit Indices for CFA**

Fit Index	Obtained Value	Recommended Value
Chi-square / df	2.31	< 3.00
CFI	0.951	> 0.90
TLI	0.943	> 0.90
RMSEA	0.058	< 0.08
SRMR	0.046	< 0.08

### Interpretation

The CFA findings show that the measurement model fits the data well enough. Notwithstanding CFI and TLI values over 0.90, the Chi-square/df ratio fell short of 3.00. Significantly, neither the RMSEA nor the SRMR exceeded 0.08. The experimental validation of the latent components and the sufficient description of the observed data by the proposed measurement model are both supported by these findings.

### Comparative Analysis: Vegan Leather versus Traditional Leather

The recommendation was to utilize paired sample t-tests to compare the respondents' ratings of vegan leather with regular leather along key parameters. Trust, premium quality, sustainability, and ethics were the criteria that were compared.

**Table 11: Comparative Mean Scores: Vegan Leather vs Traditional Leather**

Dimension	Vegan Leather Mean	Traditional Leather Mean	t-value	p-value
Ethicality	4.31	2.84	15.22	<0.001
Sustainability	4.08	3.01	11.36	<0.001
Durability	3.12	4.21	-13.44	<0.001
Premium Quality	3.26	4.18	-11.07	<0.001
Trust	3.29	4.02	-8.95	<0.001

### Interpretation

The comparative analysis shows that there is a bright differentiation between the consumer image of the vegan leather and the traditional leather. Vegan leather scored much higher on the ethicality and sustainability and the outcome is that the consumers relate it better to cruelty-free and environmental conscious consumption. Conversely, the traditional leather scored much higher on durability, high quality and trust demonstrating that the traditional leather still occupies a better functional and symbolic market position.

These results indicate that consumers have a positive preference of vegan leather at the value level but still rely on the traditional leather when they are concerned with durability, confidence of the product and premium consideration.

### Structural Equation Modelling and Hypothesis Testing

Using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), we checked for direct relationships among the conceptual model's constructs. Considerations of sustainability, ethical considerations, perceived longevity, quality, trust, and openness to switching to a vegan leather product were among the hypotheses put out.

**Table 12: Direct Effects and Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis	Path	Standardized Beta	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Sustainability Perception → Willingness to Switch	0.284	4.91	<0.001	Supported
H2	Ethical Concern → Willingness to Switch	0.312	5.47	<0.001	Supported
H3	Trust → Purchase Intention	0.356	6.12	<0.001	Supported
H4	Perceived Durability → Trust	0.241	4.38	<0.001	Supported
H5	Perceived Quality → Trust	0.298	5.02	<0.001	Supported
H8	Willingness to Switch → Purchase Intention	0.331	5.78	<0.001	Supported

### Interpretation

According to the SEM results, the sustainability perception and ethical concern had a strong and positive impact on readiness to switch to vegan leather. Among them, ethical concern had a somewhat greater impact, indicating that moral considerations, in particular, animal welfare-related ones have a significant influence in promoting consumer receptiveness to vegan leather products.

In addition, consumers are more inclined to consider buying vegan leather when they have confidence in its promises and performance, as trust has a strong positive effect on purchase intention research shows. Consumers' expectations of a product's usefulness are at the heart of building confidence in it, as these expectations were positively influenced by perceived quality and longevity.

Lastly, the readiness to switch was also a significant positive predictor of purchase intention which validates the existence of the openness to change as a meaningful predictor of actual buying intention.

### Mediation Analysis

Mediating the link between perceived durability, perceived quality, and purchase intention, we used indirect effect testing to determine if trust mediated the relationship.

**Table 13: Mediation Effects**

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	Standardized Beta	p-value	Result
H6	Perceived Durability → Trust → Purchase Intention	0.086	0.002	Supported
H7	Perceived Quality → Trust → Purchase Intention	0.106	0.001	Supported

### Interpretation

Both the perceived quality and the perceived durability of a product have a significant impact on consumers' intentions to buy, according to the mediation study. What this means is that customers' opinions about vegan leather items' durability and quality do not directly translate into their desire to buy, but rather, these ideas foster confidence, which leads to the intention to buy. One of the most important psychological processes in customer evaluation creates trust in this way.

### Summary of Hypothesis Testing

**Table 14: Summary of Hypothesis Results**

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	“Perceptions of sustainability have a beneficial impact on the likelihood of making the transition to vegan leather.”	Supported
H2	“Ethical concern positively affects willingness to switch to vegan leather.”	Supported
H3	Trust positively affects purchase intention toward vegan leather.	Supported
H4	Perceived durability positively affects trust in vegan leather.	Supported
H5	Perceived quality positively affects trust in vegan leather.	Supported
H6	When looking at the correlation between perceived durability and intention to purchase, trust plays a mediating role.	Supported
H7	When looking at the correlation between perceived quality and desire to buy, trust plays a mediating role.	Supported
H8	Willingness to switch positively affects purchase intention toward vegan leather.	Supported
H9	Consumers rate traditional leather higher than vegan leather on durability and quality.	Supported
H10	Consumers rate vegan leather higher than traditional leather on ethicality and sustainability.	Supported

### Overall Interpretation of Findings

The general results of the analysis show that consumer behaviour with regard to the vegan leather is influenced by a set of ethical values and operational expectations in combination. The vegan leather is usually seen by consumers as more ethical and sustainable when compared to traditional leather. Nevertheless, ordinary leather still has a greater edge in the aspect of durability, high-end image, and reliability.

The findings indicate that consumers are ready to switch to the vegan leather, but this readiness, in turn, is highly contingent on their belief in the quality and reliability of the products. When there is an ethical concern and sustainability perception, a positive attitudinal base has been formed yet a purchase intention can only be stronger when trust is developed. Thus, vegan leather is not a value-only product that causes consumer to switch away to traditional leather, but also the fact that vegan leather is considered as a reputable and reliable alternative product.

Practically, the results suggest that the brands that sell vegan leather should not just rely on the ethical and environmental messages but also on the strategy of promoting the product trust by guaranteeing quality and durability, being transparent and educating consumers. These attempts can enhance the switch intention and enhance buying intention in a competitive fashion market.

### Hypothesis Testing

**Table 15: Sample Structural Model Results**

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	SP → WS	0.284	4.91	<0.001	Supported
H2	EC → WS	0.312	5.47	<0.001	Supported
H3	TR → PI	0.356	6.12	<0.001	Supported
H4	PD → TR	0.241	4.38	<0.001	Supported
H5	PQ → TR	0.298	5.02	<0.001	Supported
H8	WS → PI	0.331	5.78	<0.001	Supported

**Table 16: Sample Mediation Results**

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	Beta	p-value	Result
H6	PD → TR → PI	0.086	0.002	Supported
H7	PQ → TR → PI	0.106	0.001	Supported

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS SOFTWARE AND MODEL VALIDATION

The data gathered on the 400 valid respondents were analyzed using SPSS version 26 and AMOS version 24. The following statistical analyses were performed: EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis), reliability analysis, data screening, and descriptive statistics in SPSS; CFA and SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) in AMOS.

Part of the preliminary data analysis was making sure the dataset was comprehensive, consistent, and suitable to be subjected to multivariate analysis. We summarized respondent characteristics and response distribution in the key constructs using descriptive statistics. According to the reliability research, the scale showed good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.791 to 0.873 across all components. All of the sustainability, ethical concern, durability, quality, trust, switch readiness, and buy intention metrics were shown to be valid and reliable.

To determine whether the data was appropriate for factor analysis, the Bartlett test of sphericity and Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) sample adequacy were checked. The sample satisfies all the criteria for factor analysis, as shown by the KMO value of 0.901. We know that factor extraction is warranted since the inter-item correlations are high enough ( $p = 0.001$  from the Bartlett Test of Sphericity). With the extracted factors explaining 71.8% of the total variance and the EFA findings congruent with the seven factors structure, the measuring items accounted for a significant percentage of the construct variation.

The AMOS Confirmatory Factor Analysis further validated the measurement model. Results from the CFA show that the model fits the data well; the indices obtained are as follows:  $0.3: 2/df = 2.31$ , CFI = 0.951, TLI = 0.943, RMSEA = 0.058, and SRMR = 0.046. The data were well-matched by the construct structure, as the values were within the acceptable range. With all standardized factor loadings over 0.70, it is clear that the observed variables were highly related to latent constructs.

We used composite reliability and average variance extracted to further prove construct validity. All constructs had AVE values more than 0.50 and CR values larger than 0.80, confirming convergent validity and strong construct reliability.

Structural Equation Modelling was used to examine the study variables and their hypotheses once the measurement model was validated. Findings from the structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis indicated that the motivation to switch to vegan leather was influenced by views of sustainability and ethical concern. Also influencing trust were impressions of quality and longevity. Additionally, there was a positive correlation between trust and readiness to switch and the desire to purchase vegan leather. According to the mediation study, trust also had a significant mediating role between durability and intent to buy as well as quality perception and intent to buy.

The statistical analysis generally provided empirical support for the suggested conceptual model, and the analytical techniques were appropriate for studying consumer behavior based on vegan leather and traditional leather items.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results framework implies that the ethics and performance balance is what drives the consumer behaviour towards vegan leathers. Consumers are seemingly willing to recommend vegan leather to be a morally better choice and this is due to animal-welfare and sustainability associations. Nevertheless, this ethical benefit cannot eliminate the issues of durability, quality, and long-term trust on the product. Recent studies have affirmed this duality and that leather substitutes have to be effective in their work rather than merely symbolic to be successful in more expansive markets.

This is because the mediation role of trust is important. Although the consumers may think that vegan leather is sustainable or more ethically responsible, the actual purchase intention increases more prominently when they trust the product. This is quite timely in a market where green washing issues are becoming more and more topical and consumers are becoming more sensitive to ambiguous environmental statements.

The results also suggest that the vegan leather brands cannot solely be dependent on the moral branding. They should express composition, durability, warranty, finish quality and practical product performance in a more tangible manner.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research offers a comparative platform in the behaviour of consumers with regard to vegan leather and conventional leather products. It demonstrates that the perceived ethics and sustainability are the strongest values of vegan leather, whereas the traditional leather still leads in terms of trust, durability, and premium quality perceptions. The proposed findings indicate that ethical concern does not agree on willingness to switch. Instead, it relies on whether the consumers will perceive the vegan leather as morally better and functionally reliable.

The article adds to the literature on consumer-behaviour and sustainable-fashion by integrating sustainability perception, ethical concern, durability belief, quality perception, trust and switching intention in a single model.

## MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The brands that sell vegan leather ought to explicitly state the material type as either plant based, recycled, or petroleum based, since it is better to lose clarity than to lose trust. The existing studies suggest that transparency and credibility are significant in sustainable fashion communication.

They also need to have quality evidence more on the longevity and product functionality by demonstration, warranty, certifications, and care instructions.

When it comes to high-end markets, the ability to feel and symbolism of material selection are also very critical and the vegan options must be framed, not only as being ethical, but as being high-performing and aesthetically plausible.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study is also constrained to survey-based cross-sectional study that lacks laboratory testing of actual material performance. The comparison of particular product categories can be based on shoes, belts, and handbags separately in the future. Bio-based vegan leather and synthetic vegan leather can also be differentiated in the future work because there is a potential to have a significant difference in the implications of these products in terms of sustainability and their perception by the consumers.

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