

What is an Eco-Score, and why is it needed?

A Review of the Literature

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ABSTRACT

This research looks into the Eco-Score, a label created to help teens make eco-friendly choices in clothing and move away from the harm of fast fashion. With its simple rating system, the Eco-Score reveals how a product impacts the planet—from the materials used to the manufacturing process—empowering young people to choose fashion that cares for the Earth. By making sustainability clearer and fighting greenwashing, the Eco-Score inspires a shift toward a more responsible, Earth-friendly future.

PURPOSE

The main purpose of this research is to explore how an Eco-Score system could encourage sustainable clothing choices among teenagers, reducing fast fashion consumption. Through questions on its formation, unique characteristics, and influence on youth behavior, this study aims to show the Eco-Score's potential as a tool for promoting environmental awareness in fashion.

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In today's fast fashion landscape, high demand for cheap, disposable clothing is leading to significant environmental harm. To tackle this issue, the Eco-Score for clothing has been introduced. This label is designed to help consumers, particularly teenagers aged 15-17, understand the sustainability of clothing by examining factors like materials and production practices. Unlike the Nutri-Score for food, the Eco-Score highlights the ethical and environmental effects of fashion choices, encouraging better decisions among young shoppers. The purpose, creation, and effectiveness of the Eco-Score in promoting sustainable fashion are explored in this research, which ultimately seeks to answer the question: What is an Eco-Score, and why is it needed?

To address this main question, a series of sub-questions are examined to highlight the Eco-Score's unique role in the fashion industry and its potential to influence teenage consumers:

- What is an Eco-Score, and how does it differ from other scoring systems like the Nutri-Score?
- How is the Eco-Score calculated, and what factors contribute to its final grade?
- What does each part of the Eco-Score represent in terms of sustainability and ethical standards?
- Why is the Eco-Score important for promoting sustainability within the fashion industry?

By answering these questions, the research aims to illuminate the importance of the Eco-Score in guiding young consumers towards more sustainable choices and fostering a more responsible approach to fashion.

METHODOLOGY

In this research, a literature study will be conducted to thoroughly explore Eco-Score's potential to promote sustainable clothing choices among teenagers. The researcher will review online books, articles, and academic papers related to sustainable fashion, consumer behavior in youth, and environmental impact assessments. This includes sources on sustainability metrics in consumer goods, studies on environmental awareness among teenagers, and reports on fashion industry practices.

FINDINGS

What is an Eco-Score, and how does it differ from other scoring systems like the Nutri-Score?

The Eco-Score is a sustainability label that quickly shows consumers the environmental impact of their purchases. Originally for food, it now covers clothing, encouraging eco-friendly choices and reducing greenwashing. This transparency is especially useful for guiding teenagers toward eco-friendly fashion by simplifying complex environmental data into an easy-to-understand rating. Gonçalves et al. (2024) explain that, like Nutri-Score, the Eco-Score uses simple labels to inform consumers, but while Nutri-Score focuses on health, Eco-Score assesses a product's full lifecycle, from resource extraction to disposal. In fashion, it uniquely addresses industry-specific impacts, such as textile production, water use, and chemical toxicity, making it tailored for sustainability in apparel.

How is the Eco-Score calculated, and what factors contribute to its final grade?

Kirchmayer (2023) explains that the Eco-Score uses a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) to evaluate a product's full environmental impact, from raw materials to disposal. Initially designed for food, this scoring system ranks products from "A" (lowest impact) to "E" (highest) to help consumers understand their environmental footprint. The Eco-Score looks at factors such as greenhouse gas emissions, water use, resource depletion, land use, toxicity, and biodiversity loss, evaluating each stage from agriculture to disposal. It starts with a baseline score on a 100-point scale and uses additional indicators for more precise ratings. Additional indicators adjust this score to account for specific environmental and ethical factors, making it more tailored and accurate for each product.

category. This blend of comprehensive life cycle data and targeted adjustments ensures the Eco-Score is a clear and reliable tool for guiding consumers and encouraging sustainable practices.

What does each part of the Eco-Score represent in terms of sustainability and ethical standards?

The Eco-Score ranks from "A" to "E," with "A" being the most sustainable and "E" the least. An "A" rating means the product has a minimal environmental footprint, often involving small repairs that don't require new or recycled parts and little to no paint, thus keeping its impact low. A "B" rating suggests a slightly higher impact; here, parts are generally repaired rather than replaced, and if replacements are needed, second-hand parts are used to avoid creating demand for new resources. Moving up, a "C" rating represents an average environmental impact, where products balance standard production practices with some sustainability considerations. A "D" rating signals a greater-than-average impact, typically due to the need for new parts that require resource-intensive manufacturing, transportation, and painting processes, raising the overall carbon footprint. Finally, an "E" rating reflects the highest environmental cost, usually for major repairs that require extensive new parts, multiple manufacturing steps, and significant recycling efforts.

By categorizing products this way, the Eco-Score gives a clear view of their environmental impact, empowering consumers to choose more sustainable options and understand which products align with eco-friendly practices.

Why is the Eco-Score important for promoting sustainability within the fashion industry?

Furthermore, Provenance (n.d.) shows that the Eco-Score is a tool that quickly shows how environmentally friendly a fashion item is, allowing consumers to make better choices at a glance. It's designed to simplify sustainability information, which can often be confusing with so many different labels in the industry. By using an easy-to-understand score, the Eco-Score helps guide people, especially young consumers, to select items that are less harmful to the planet, encouraging a shift toward sustainable shopping habits.

Eco-scores are essential because they streamline the shopping experience by making eco-friendly information easily visible. This way, people can quickly see which products have a lower environmental impact, promoting thoughtful purchases that support sustainable brands over fast fashion. Unlike other rating systems that have been around for some time, the Eco-Score benefits from more detailed, shared information from brands and new data from various sources. Additionally, industry groups have started working on standardized ways to measure the environmental impact, such as carbon emissions, across many products. This collaboration strengthens the Eco-Score's accuracy and helps push the fashion industry as a whole toward greater transparency and sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The Eco-Score provides a practical tool for encouraging sustainable fashion choices, especially among teenagers. By presenting environmental impacts through a simple A-to-E rating, the Eco-Score allows young consumers to quickly understand and prioritize eco-friendly options. Tailored to address industry-specific issues like water usage, textile production, and chemical toxicity, it stands as an effective counter to greenwashing, promoting both consumer awareness and corporate accountability. This research highlights the Eco-Score's potential to influence youth behavior, fostering a generation that values responsible fashion and supports a more sustainable, transparent fashion economy.

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