



DRIVERS OF SUSTAINABLE APPAREL PURCHASE INTENTIONS AMONG INDIAN CONSUMERS: INSIGHTS INTO CONSCIOUS CONSUMERISM

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ABSTRACT

Concerns about the ecological and social effects of the global fashion business have been growing in recent years, and there is a growing focus on sustainable apparel consumption. Environmental awareness, evolving consumer lifestyles and the impact of conscious consumerism are gradually reshaping purchasing behaviour in the Indian apparel sector. The present paper examines sustainable apparel purchase intentions of Indian consumers with reference to their awareness, attitudes and influencing factors towards sustainable clothing products. The study is based on a review of existing literature related to sustainable fashion, green consumer behaviour, ethical consumption & conscious consumerism. Identify major determinants affecting on sustainable apparel purchasing intentions such as environmental concern, social responsibility, product quality, price sensitivity, brand image, consumer knowledge and cultural values. The review also identifies barriers such as low awareness, high product cost, limited access and scepticism to sustainability claims. This study is conceptual and exploratory in nature and is based on secondary data sources like journal articles, reports and scholarly publications. In the past few years, there has been an upsurge in voices expressing concerned concerning the social and environmental consequences of the international fashion industry. The paper concludes that there is a need for organisations, policymakers and marketers to improve sustainability communication, affordability, transparency and consumer education to promote conscious apparel consumption in India. This research gives useful information to the environmentally friendly fashion sector and adds to the growing body of published work on sustainable customer behaviour in developing nations.

Keywords: Sustainable Apparel, Conscious Consumerism, Green Consumer Behaviour, Ethical Fashion, Indian Consumers.

INTRODUCTION

The excessive consumption of supplies by the jewellery and garment industry is a major factor towards environmental deterioration, pollution, textile waste and unethical labour practices. The fast fashion

models promote mass production and overconsumption, which have major ecological and social consequences. In the face of these challenges, sustainable apparel has emerged as an important concept, advocating for environmentally responsible and ethically produced clothing products. Sustainable apparel is defined as clothing produced with eco-friendly materials, ethical labour standards, low environmental impact and socially responsible production methods (Niinimäki, 2010).

Consumers are more and more aware of environmental sustainability and ethical consumption patterns all over the world. Conscious consumerism is a consumer behaviour where social, ethical and environmental factors, in addition to functional and economic factors, influence the consumer's purchasing decisions. Consumers are increasingly seeking products that are consistent with their personal values and environmental beliefs (Carrington, Neville, & Whitwell, 2014). This transformation has had a major impact on industries such as food, cosmetics, tourism and fashion.

Rising consciousness about global warming, degradation of the environment, and moral consumerism is illuminating India's fashion that is environmentally friendly industry. Indian consumers especially urban millennials and Generation Z are increasingly interested in sustainable apparel products such as organic cotton apparel, recycled fabrics, handloom products and apparel produced ethically. However, although awareness is rising, the adoption of sustainable apparel is still relatively limited compared to developed economies. Sobuj, et al., (2021)

Several factors influence the purchasing intentions of Indian consumers towards sustainable apparel. These factors include environmental awareness, social responsibility, product quality, fashion trends, affordability, cultural values, peer influence, and brand reputation. However, market development is still obstructed by factors like high prices, unavailability of products, lack of awareness and scepticism about sustainability claims (Joshi & Rahman, 2015).

The Indian apparel market provides a unique context to study sustainable consumer behaviour owing to its cultural diversity, economic disparities and fast changing consumer preferences. If fashion companies, marketing firms, and lawmakers are serious about promoting the field of sustainable consumption behaviours, they need to know what people intend when they buy sustainable clothing.

The objective of the present paper is to explore sustainable apparel purchase intentions of Indian consumers through an extensive review of literature on conscious consumerism and sustainable fashion behaviour.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable Apparel and Conscious Consumerism

The term "sustainable apparel" refers to garments that are made, sold, and worn in a manner that reduces the adverse impact on the community and the surroundings at every stage of their production and use. Sustainable fashion deals with ecological integrity, ethical conditions of labour, recycling and waste reduction (Fletcher, 2014).

An increasing movement of conscious consumerism is taking place, where consumers choose to buy products based on their ethical, social and environmental impact. According to Shaw and Shiu (2002), ethical consumers are increasingly concerned with issues of sustainability, fair trade practices and environmental responsibility. The result is a surge in the demand for clothing that is both environmentally conscious and made in an ethical manner in fashion industry. Indian consumers are slowly becoming conscious of their consumption behaviour as they are exposed to sustainability campaigns, social media awareness, and global environmental movements. The change from being aware of a problem to actually buying anything, nonetheless, is not constant.

Consumer Awareness of Sustainable Apparel"

Healthy purchasing intentions are greatly influenced by consumer knowledge. Awareness means knowledge of environmental problems, ethical manufacturing, eco-friendly materials and sustainability certifications. According to Connell (2010), consumers with high sustainability awareness are more likely to support eco-friendly fashion brands.

The studies show that Indian consumers are having medium level of awareness about sustainable fashion concepts . Urban educated consumers are more aware about organic clothing, ethical fashion and eco-friendly textiles than rural consumers. However, many consumers do not yet have a complete awareness of the environmental impact of fast fashion and textile waste (Mukendi et al., 2020). Social media platforms, documentaries, educational campaigns and celebrity endorsements are major factors driving awareness levels among young consumers. Fashion brands increasingly employ sustainability communication strategies to inform consumers about responsible consumption.

Factors Influencing Sustainable Apparel Purchasing Intentions
Table 1: Description of Factors

Factor	Description
Environmental Concern	One of the strongest predictors of sustainable apparel purchasing behaviour. Consumers concerned about pollution, climate change, and waste management prefer products manufactured using organic materials, recycled fabrics, and sustainable production processes Chang, H. J., & Watchravesringkan, K. (2018).
Social and Ethical Responsibility	Ethical considerations such as fair wages, worker safety, child labour prevention, and social justice significantly influence consumer behaviour. Indian consumers increasingly value brands that support local artisans, handloom industries, and traditional sustainable practices, positively affecting brand trust and loyalty (Crane, D. (2016).
Product Quality and Fashion ability	Consumers associate sustainable apparel with superior quality, durability, and comfort. Product quality significantly influences purchase intentions as consumers expect sustainable products to provide long-term value (Niinimäki, 2010).
Price Sensitivity	Premium pricing due to ethical sourcing and responsible manufacturing remains a major barrier. Despite positive attitudes toward sustainability, many consumers remain unwilling to pay premium prices. In India, affordability is often prioritized over sustainability, limiting market penetration Crane, D. (2016).
Brand Image and Trust	Brand credibility and transparency strongly influence sustainable purchasing intentions. Consumers prefer authentic and trustworthy brands; while greenwashing or misleading sustainability negatively claims impact consumer confidence Gregory, R. P. (2023).



Figure 1: Factors Influencing Sustainable Apparel Purchasing Intentions

Barriers to Sustainable Apparel Consumption

Despite growing awareness, several barriers limit sustainable apparel adoption among Indian consumers.

Table 2: Barriers and Description

Barrier	Description
Limited Availability	Sustainable apparel products are often concentrated in urban markets and premium retail segments, restricting consumer participation in sustainable fashion consumption.
Lack of Consumer Knowledge	Many consumers remain unfamiliar with sustainability certifications, eco-labels, and ethical manufacturing processes, creating confusion regarding product authenticity.
High Cost	Premium pricing discourages price-sensitive consumers from purchasing sustainable clothing. Economic constraints continue to influence purchasing priorities in developing economies like India.
Skepticism toward Sustainability Claims	When fashion companies make green promises, consumers often question their veracity. Greenwashing practices reduce consumer confidence and hinder sustainable purchasing behavior.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This investigation uses a form of secondary data analysis to support its experimental and qualitative methodology, primarily relying on a systematic review of scholarly literature related to sustainable apparel consumption, conscious consumerism, and green purchasing behaviour. Data that was secondary came from a variety of places, including books, journals, industry publications, research papers, research databases (like Google Junior), as well as peer-reviewed publications. The study follows a conceptual review approach aimed at identifying major themes, influencing factors, barriers, and behavioural patterns associated with sustainable apparel purchasing intentions among Indian consumers. It focuses specifically on Indian consumers and sustainable apparel purchasing behaviour within the fashion industry, with emphasis on awareness, attitudes, influencing factors, and barriers associated with conscious consumerism.

It is important to note that the study is based entirely on secondary data and does not include primary empirical analysis. As such, consumer perceptions may vary across regions, income groups, and demographic categories within India.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

According to literature review, sustainable apparel consumption is growing in India, driven by increasing environmental awareness and changing lifestyles of consumers, especially millennials and Generation Z, who are inclined towards ethical fashion brands. The impact of environmental concerns on consumers' buying behaviour is substantial, as buyers are more conscious of the ways rapid fashion harms the environment, including pollution and waste. This is made clear through education campaigns targeting both employees and consumers, with social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube being pivotal in shaping urban consumption trends.

Consumers are positive about sustainability, but there is a big attitude-behaviour gap, with price, convenience, availability and personal fashion preferences preventing actual sustainable purchases. Cost remains a challenge, with sustainable apparel considered expensive and a premium segment of the market. Therefore, affordability and accessibility are key to increasing the uptake of sustainable fashion choices. Trust and transparency are important in brands. Consumers are sceptical of brands making vague claims about sustainability. To build trust, brands need to communicate about sustainability in a

credible way and have certifications. Cultural values matter as well, because traditional Indian textile practices are aligned with sustainability, and appeal to consumers who value those practices in modern fashion. In conclusion, environmental awareness, ethical responsibility, economic factor, fashion orientation, and social influences are things that make people want to buy eco-friendly clothes. Companies have the difficult task of creating comprehensive sustainability initiatives strategies that involve education, transparency, affordability and consumer engagement.

CONCLUSION

The study examined Indian consumers' sustainable apparel buying intentions in the context of conscious consumerism. The results suggest that India's awareness of sustainable fashion is gradually increasing particularly among the urban educated population and among the younger population. Environmental concerns, ethical responsibility, product quality and brand trust have a positive effect on sustainable apparel purchasing intentions.

Sustainability fashion spending is on the rise in India, but there are still many obstacles in the way. A number of factors prevent broad use, including high pricing, low product availability, ignorance, and distrust of environmental promises. The attitude-based behaviour gap, which the poll calls into question, is the difference between consumers' positive sustainability beliefs and their real purchasing activity.

Findings stress the need for creative industries, marketers, and lawmakers to promote sustainable consumption habits via open dialogue, cost-cutting initiatives, information for customers, and accountability in business operations. There is a need for a collective effort by businesses, government agencies, educational institutions and consumers to promote conscious consumerism. When it comes to the Indian fashion industry's commitment to ethical business procedures and ecological responsibility, sustainable clothing purchasing is a key avenue. An important part of India's shift will undoubtedly be fashion that is environmentally friendly to mindful consumption, thanks to increasing customer knowledge and demand for it.

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