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# "Contextualizing Speed: An Empirical Investigation Of Its Role In Consumer Preferences Across The Modern Trend Of Fast Fashion"



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In an age defined by rapid digitalization and evolving consumer expectations, the essence of speed has become central to consumption patterns, particularly among younger population. This study explores the role of speed in shaping consumer behaviour, with a sectoral focus on fast fashion, within the broader framework of India's accelerating lifestyle dynamics. Employing a mixed-methods research design, the study integrates structured surveys and thematic analysis to understand generational attitudes toward speed-driven consumption. Key findings indicate that while speed is a visible characteristic of the fast fashion model, it is not a statistically dominant factor influencing purchasing decisions; factors like price, quality, and trendiness hold greater weight. However, significant associations were found between speed preference and variables like age and frequency of impulsive purchases, suggesting that lifestyle rhythm and emotional triggers may shape these preferences more than income, gender, or employment status. The study contributes to the understanding of contemporary consumer behaviour, offering insights into how businesses might navigate the tension between accelerated consumption and the emerging shift toward ethical and sustainable choices.

Keywords: Speed, Fast Fashion, Sustainability, Apparel, Impulsive Purchasing.

# Introduction

The age-old maxim "Good things take time" traditionally embodies values of patience, quality, and depth—values historically central to consumer decision-making. However, contemporary consumer culture, characterized by rapid technological advancements and enhanced digital connectivity, prompts a critical

question: Does this ethos of patience remain relevant, or has the imperative for speed eclipsed concerns for substantive quality?

Over recent decades, global consumer markets have undergone profound transformations driven by innovations prioritizing immediacy and convenience. Technological developments increased digital connectivity, and streamlined logistics have enabled businesses to significantly reduce the production, marketing, and delivery timelines of products and services. Historically, consumer acceptance of prolonged waiting periods, spanning days or weeks, was commonplace; today, even minimal delays are frequently perceived as inconvenient. While this shift has notably improved accessibility and efficiency, it has simultaneously altered consumer behaviours, reshaped values, and influenced decision-making criteria.

In contemporary India, the accelerating pace of daily life has markedly reshaped consumer behavior, particularly among the Indian youth. Indian youths, comprising a significant and influential segment of the population, increasingly prioritize convenience, immediacy, and rapid gratification in their consumption patterns. This preference is prominently reflected in their affinity towards fast fashion and related consumptions. These products and services exemplify a broader cultural shift toward an accelerated consumption ethos, driven by technological advancements, rapid urbanization, and evolving lifestyle expectations.

This study tries to unravel as to how speed has become a significant determinant of consumer choices across distinct sectors o fast fashion especially apparels. The study provides an in-depth, sector-specific analysis of how speed influences consumer preferences and behaviours, exploring the broader implications for both individual lifestyles and business strategies. It further considers the societal impacts resulting from persistent preferences for speed-oriented consumption.

# **Speed and Fast Fashion**

The word "Fashion" originated from the Latin word "facere", meaning "to make" or "to do". In Middle English, it referred to the act of shaping or crafting something. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it evolved to describe prevailing styles in clothing and appearance and today, it broadly encompasses trends in design, culture and personal expression.

In the earliest stages of human evolution clothing was primarily a necessity for protection rather than a form of expression. Early humans used animal skins, leaves, and woven fibers for their warmth and survival. Then as societies developed, clothing began reflecting the individual's status and identity, for example, ancient Egyptians around 3100 B.C. wore linen robes, often with intricate gold accents. By the end of this age, clothing had transitioned from pure functionality to a representative of social class and identity.

During the Middle Ages, clothing transitioned into fashion, that we know today, it became more structured and involved multiple tailoring techniques and fabrics. Ornate and elaborate styles emerged, with elements like corsets, ruffled collars, and embroidered fabrics. Italian and French courts became the trendsetters, which influenced European fashion. This was the era of tailoring and craftsmanship. The industrial revolution which started during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century then transformed the fashion scenario by making clothing cheaper and more accessible (Vilaça, 2025). The invention of the sewing machine (1790) allowed for faster production and helped the rise of textile factories. Charles Frederick Worth, the first fashion designer, introduced custom, high-fashion designs, laying the foundation for luxury fashion houses and hence creating a new trend – 'Haute

Couture<sup>1</sup>. This stage saw clothing shift from being purely hand-made to being mass-produced which ultimately resulted in standardization. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fashion became trend-driven, mass-market oriented, and was shaped by cultural movements. Hip-hop, punk, and streetwear influenced mainstream styles and fashion became more relaxed. In the 21st century, fashion is defined by speed, sustainability debates, and digital transformation. With trends like Digital fashion, NFTs, AI-driven design, and 3D printing, it is poised for some exiting and interesting growth trajectory.

Regardless, fashion is a powerful form of self-expression that transcends borders, cultures and generations, influencing the way people present their identity to the world. With its dynamic and ever-evolving nature, the global fashion market is projected to generate approximately US\$880.90 billion in 2025, reflecting its immense economic impact and cultural significance. From haute couture to street wear, the industry continues to shape trends, drive innovation and inspire creativity on a global scale.

Fashion can be categorised based on production into four types:

- **Fast Fashion:** is a production model that mass-produces, current or recent trends, inexpensively and i. quickly.
- **Slow Fashion:** is a model that focuses on sustainability and ethicality, focusing on quality. ii.
- iii. Haute Couture: a model that involves exclusive, custom-made, high-end fashion created by luxury designers.
- iv. Ready-to-Wear (Prêt-à-Porter): Designer fashion made in standard sizes, in larger quantities and for cheaper prices in comparison to haute couture.

#### **Fast Fashion Industry**

"You think your industry is tough? Imagine customer preferences that can shift literally overnight, product lifecycles measured in weeks, and the value of your product plummeting if you miss the latest trend. Welcome to the world of fast fashion. "(Sull, 2008)

As previously mentioned, fast fashion is a production model that mass-produces, current or recent trends, inexpensively and quickly. To elaborate on its traits, it's firstly, mass-produced, meaning this type of clothes are produced in large quantities, often larger than the consumer demand, resulting in a lot of wastage. Secondly, it follows trends, meaning as soon as the trends change, so do the production of clothes, and knowing how dynamic trends are, they change quite frequently. Thirdly, inexpensiveness, the clothes are often produced by cutting corners, i.e. using inexpensive synthetic and cheap fibres, that often wear off in a double wash cycle. All these traits combined with the speed in which they are produced, results in the landfills being full of disposed fast fashion articles.

Some examples of well-known fast fashion brands are Zara, H&M, Shein, Primark, Forever 21, Roadster, Urbanic and Mango. Coming to the current statistics of the industry, as of February 2025, the fast fashion

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Haute couture (French for 'high sewing' or 'high dressmaking' refers to the creation of exclusive fashions. It is a common term for custom-fitted clothing as produced primarily in Paris. Haute Couture is legally protected the Paris Chamber of Commerce defined it as "the regulating commission that determines which fashion houses are eligible to be true haute couture houses". Their rules state that only "those companies mentioned on the list drawn up each year by a commission domiciled at the Ministry for Industry are entitled to avail themselves" of the label haute couture. The whole process is usually handmade, from start to finish, increasing its value tenfold. These designs are often made keeping a specific person in mind, so they aren't available for the general populace. The materials used are mostly high-quality, rare and luxurious.

industry continues to experience significant growth, accompanied by adverse environmental and social impacts. In the economic aspect of the industry, the global fast fashion market is projected to grow from \$141.23 billion in 2024 to \$163.21 billion in 2025, with an expected market volume of \$214.24 billion by 2029 (Technavio, 2025).

The environmental impact of this industry seems to be quite concerning. It is responsible for approximately 10% of global carbon emissions, surpassing the emissions from all international flights and maritime shipping combined. Additionally, it is the second-largest consumer of water, with the production of a single cotton shirt requiring about 700 gallons of water.

Textile waste is another pressing concern, with consumers worldwide discarding 92 million tonnes of textiles annually. This figure is projected to reach 134 million tonnes by 2030, contributing significantly to landfill mass and environmental degradation.

Another significant concern regarding this industry is its social impact. Labour exploitation remains a critical issue within the fast fashion supply chain. Investigations have revealed that workers in factories, such as those producing for brands like Shein, often endure gruelling 75-hour workweeks, earning less than 1 cent per garment.

#### **Literature Review**

The literature review presented in this section aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role speed plays in shaping contemporary consumer behaviour. Given the increasing emphasis on immediacy and convenience in modern lifestyles, it is essential to explore how speed influences consumer preferences and decision-making processes across different sectors. To achieve clarity and depth, the review is structured into distinct segments: firstly, addressing general consumer preference for speed; followed by detailed examinations of speed-related behaviours specifically in apparel. Each segment critically evaluates relevant academic literature to highlight key trends, consumer motivations, sector-specific behaviours, and the broader societal implications associated with accelerated consumption.

#### **Preference for Speed**

Relevant literature underscores speed as a critical factor influencing consumer behaviour across various sectors. Donnea (1972) establishes that consumers often prioritize timesaving even at higher costs, particularly evident in transportation choices. Gibbs (1998) further supports this notion by illustrating how temporal orientation, including urgency and future-oriented thinking, significantly affects consumer decision-making in financial services. Similarly, Caldwell & Hibbert (1999) demonstrate the impact of speed through ambient influences, such as music tempo affecting consumer behaviour in dining environments.

Technological advancements and digitalization have reinforced this preference for immediacy. Gretzel et al. (2006) note that digital platforms and online engagement have transformed consumer interactions from passive consumption to active, immediate experiences. Bell et al. (2007) highlight instant emotional reactions as key drivers of consumer behaviour, while Kamarulzaman (2011) and Nguyen et al. (2018) emphasize convenience, speed, and efficiency as crucial determinants in the context of online shopping behaviours. Recent studies by Gallino et al. (2022) and Tripathi et al. (2024) further confirm the pivotal role of logistical efficiency and digital speed in online retail and e-commerce contexts.

#### **Speed in Apparel Consumption**

Fast fashion epitomizes the consumer demand for rapid product turnover and immediate availability. Bhardwaj & Fairhurst (2010) analyse the dual perspectives of suppliers and consumers, highlighting the shortened supply chains and the consumer-driven nature of the fast fashion industry. Gabrielli et al. (2013) underscore the attributes defining fast fashion—low price, acceptable quality, frequent collection renewal—

while Kim et al. (2013) provide a counter-perspective, identifying factors like quality dissatisfaction and ethical concerns that drive youth away from fast fashion.

Watson & Yan (2013) compare fast and slow fashion consumers, illustrating differences in buyer remorse and decision-making processes. Linden (2016) and Cook & Yurchisin (2017) argue that consumer demand for immediacy results in reduced product durability, impulsive purchasing behaviours, and subsequent buyer's remorse. Conversely, Štefko et al. (2018) and Castro-López et al. (2021) discuss the emerging slow fashion movement, highlighting consumer shifts towards sustainable and ethical fashion practices. Oliveira et al. (2022) further investigate consumer awareness and perceptions of sustainability practices within both fast and slow fashion retail contexts.

This structured literature review critically assesses how speed influences consumer behaviour across apparel, digital entertainment, and food sectors, outlining key trends, drivers, and implications in contemporary consumption dynamics.

# Objectives of the study

The following were the objectives of this study:

- I. To investigate the role of speed as a determining factor in consumer preferences of fast fashion.
- II. To examine generational differences in speed-driven consumption, particularly focusing on youth consumer behaviour and the potential evolution of these preferences over time.

# **Research Methodology**

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to comprehensively analyze the role of speed in consumer preferences. The quantitative component employs structured surveys designed to quantify consumer behaviors and attitudes across different sectors. The qualitative aspect includes thematic analysis of open-ended survey responses and secondary data review from existing literature to provide deeper contextual insights.

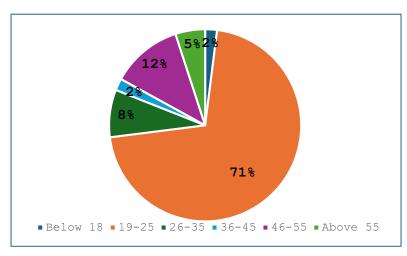
Data will be collected through a structured questionnaire distributed online to ensure a broad demographic representation, focusing on capturing responses from different generational cohorts. The survey included demographic questions, sector-specific consumption behaviors, attitudes towards speed and fast fashion. A total of 124 respondents completed the questionnaire, out of which 120 were found to be in order.

# Analysis and findings of the study

Quantitative data gathered from the survey will be analyzed using statistical methods, including chi-square tests to examine associations between consumer preferences and demographic variables, and correlation analysis to identify relationships between speed preferences across different sectors. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses will be integrated to offer a comprehensive understanding of consumer speed preferences.

#### **Age Distribution**

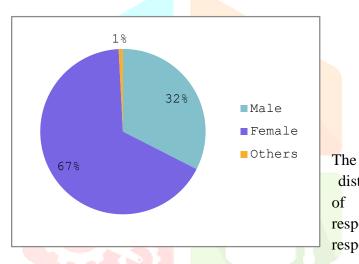
The age distribution of the respondents reveals that:



As shown in the table above the majority (71%) of the respondents belonged the 19 - 25age group, the

	Coun	
Age	t	Percentage
Below 18	2	2%
19-25	85	71%
26-35	10	8%
36-45	3	2%
46-55	14	12%
Above 55	6	5%

perspectives gathered in the study may largely represent the preferences, behaviors, and attitudes of younger individuals belonging to the Generation Z.

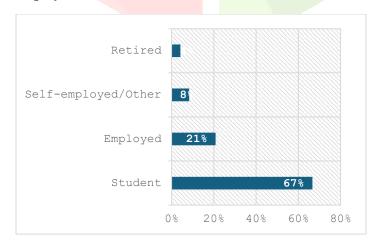


Sex	Count	Percentage
Male	39	33%
Female	80	67%
Others	1	1%
Total	120	100%

gender distribution of the

respondents shows that the majority around 67% of the respondents were females.

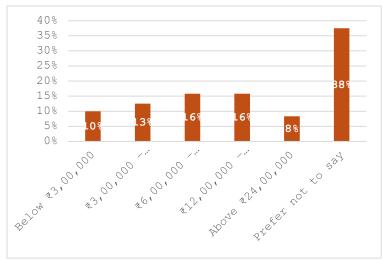
#### **Employment Status**



Employment	Count	Percenta
Status	Count	e
Student	80	6
Employed	25	2
Self-		
employed/Other	10	1
Retired	5	4
Total	120	100

The employment status analysis indicates that around 67% (80 respondents) of the respondents are students and were not employed, 21% (25 respondents) of the participants were employed, 8% (10 respondents) were self-employed or fall under other categories and 4% comprised of retired individuals. The distribution shows that most respondents are students, which matches the large number of people in the 19-25 age group.

#### **Family Income**

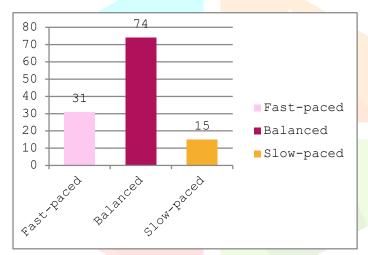


A	L	
substa	ntial	
portion	of	
respon	dents,	
38%,	chose	
not	to	
disclose		

their family income.

Annual Income   Count   e     Below ₹3,00,000   12     ₹3,00,000 - ₹6,00,000   15     ₹6,00,000 -   -     ₹12,00,000 -   19     ₹24,00,000 -   19     Above ₹24,00,000 -   10			Perce
₹3,00,000 - ₹6,00,000 15 ₹6,00,000 - ₹12,00,000 19 ₹12,00,000 - ₹24,00,000 19	Annual Income	Count	e
₹6,00,000 - ₹12,00,000 19 ₹12,00,000 - ₹24,00,000 19	Below ₹3,00,000	12	
₹12,00,000 19   ₹12,00,000 -   ₹24,00,000 19	₹3,00,000 – ₹6,00,000	15	
₹12,00,000 – ₹24,00,000 19	₹6,00,000 –		
₹24,00,000 19	₹12,00,000	19	
	₹12,00,000 -		
Above ₹24 00 000 10	₹24,00,000	19	
7100VC \\2.1,00,000	Above ₹24,00,000	10	
Prefer not to say 45	Prefer not to say	45	
Total 120	Total	120	

#### **Current Pace of Life**

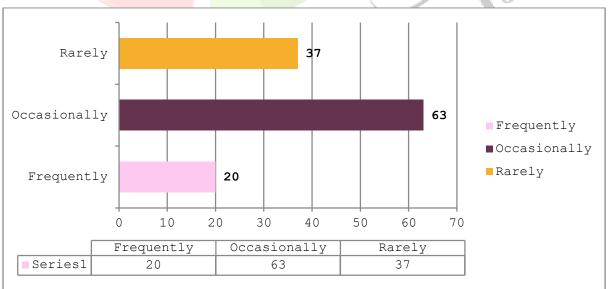


Current pace of		Percentag
Life	Count	e
Fast-paced	31	26%
Balanced	74	62%
Slow-paced	15	13%
Total	120	100%

majority L

of the participants have a balanced lifestyle, meaning they prioritize convenience, but also take time when needed.

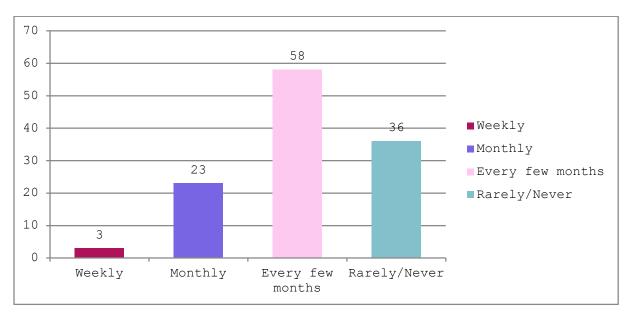
# Frequency of Impulsive Purchases



This shows that impulsive buying is quite common, but not very frequent for most people

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# **Frequency of Fast Fashion Consumption**



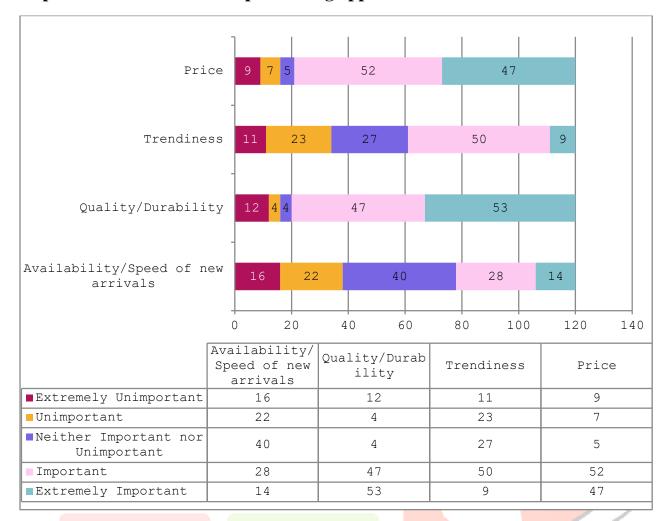
#### Interpretation

In this section, participants were asked how often they purchase clothing from fast fashion brands (e.g., Zudio, Pantaloons, Max Fashion, H&M, etc.)

Most respondents (48%) reported shopping for fast fashion every few months.

This suggests that fast fashion consumption is moderate to low among the participants. However, this could be influenced by their overall frequency of apparel purchases, suggesting that they may prefer shopping for fast fashion at this frequency due to their purchasing habits.

# Importance of factors while purchasing apparel



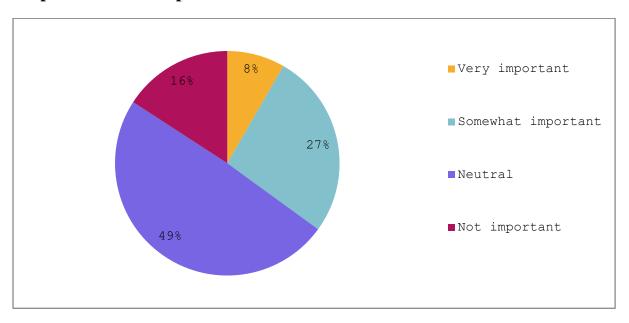
#### **Interpretation**

The data suggests that:

- Price is a highly significant factor for most participants when buying clothing.
- Quality/ durability are top priorities for the majority, even more than price.
- Trendiness matters to a considerable number of respondents, but it is less important to most, compared to price or quality.
- Speed of new arrivals is relatively less important compared to other factors.

While price being an important factor was expected, the sample giving quality/durability as much prioritization was unexpected. Trendiness is of considerable importance.

# **Importance of the Speed of New Releases**



#### **Interpretation**

The speed at which new clothing collections arrive is not a top priority for most respondents. With 59 "neutral" (49%) and 19 "not important" (16%) responses, a significant portion shows low engagement with this factor. Only a small group (10 respondents who find it "Very Important" and 32 respondents who find it "Somewhat Important") (8% + 27%) finds it important, indicating that other factors (like price, quality) hold more weight.

A reason for this could be the frequency of apparel shopping, where longer gaps between purchases could result in encountering different stocks each time, making the speed of arrivals less noticeable.

# **Hypothesis Testing**

#### Speed as a Dominant Factor in Fast Fashion

A correlation test is conducted to identify whether a linear relationship (a type of relationship between two variables where the change in one variable is directly proportional to the change in the other) exists between two continuous variables. In this case, it was conducted between the total scores (which are continuous variables) to examine the relationship between consumer preferences for speed in fast fashion and their overall attitude toward speed in consumption.

#### **Hypothesis:**

- $H_0$ : There is no significant correlation between preference for speed and fast fashion consumption.
- H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant correlation between preference for speed and fast fashion consumption.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Matrix (A)

Correlations			
		FF_SCORE	SPEED_SCORE
FF_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	1	.065
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.478
	N	120	120
SPEED_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	.065	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.478	
	N	120	120

<sup>\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The hypothesis was tested at a 5% significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

#### **Interpretation**:

The p-value exceeds the 0.05 significance threshold, indicating no statistically significant correlation between a consumer's general preference for speed and their likelihood of purchasing fast fashion. Thus, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that while speed characterizes the fast fashion model, it may not be the primary driver behind consumer purchases—other factors such as price and quality likely hold more influence.

# Impact of Speed on Clothing Consumption in Relation to Age **Hypothesis:**

- $H_0$ : Age does not significantly influence the impact of speed on clothing consumption.
- $H_1$ : Age significantly influences the impact of speed on clothing consumption.

Chi-Square Tests				
	Asymptotic			
		Value	df	Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	40.524 <sup>a</sup>	a	20	0.004
Likelihood Ratio	39.210 20 0.006			
N of Valid Cases	120			
a. 26 cells (86.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .10.				

#### **Interpretation**:

The statistically significant p-value (< 0.05) leads us to reject the null hypothesis. Age is significantly associated with how much consumers value speed in clothing purchases. Younger consumers, particularly those aged 19-25, appear more inclined to prioritize immediacy in fashion choices compared to older cohorts.

# Impact of Speed on Clothing Consumption in Relation to Gender

#### **Hypothesis:**

- $H_{\theta}$ : Gender has no significant influence on how speed affects clothing consumption.
- $H_1$ : Gender significantly influences how speed affects clothing consumption.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significanc e (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.422 <sup>a</sup>	8	0.098
Likelihood Ratio	13.331	8	0.101
N of Valid Cases	120		

a. 7 cells (46.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

# **Interpretation**:

Since the p-value exceeds 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Gender does not have a statistically significant effect on speed-based fashion consumption preferences, suggesting both male and female respondents exhibit similar tendencies in this respect.

# Impact of Speed on Clothing Consumption in Relation to Employment Status

#### **Hypothesis:**

- $H_0$ : Employment status does not significantly influence the impact of speed on clothing consumption.
- $H_i$ : Employment status significantly influences the impact of speed on clothing consumption.

Chi-Square Tests			10	
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significanc e (2-sided)	
Pearson Chi-Square	19.824 <sup>a</sup>	12	0.070	
Likelihood Ratio	18.427	12	0.103	
N of Valid Cases	120			
a 13 calls (65.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is				

a. 13 cells (65.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .25.

#### **Interpretation**:

Although the p-value (0.070) is slightly above the conventional 0.05 threshold, it approaches significance. We cautiously fail to reject the null hypothesis, noting a potential but inconclusive relationship between employment status and the value placed on speed. This suggests the need for further investigation with a larger or more diversified sample.

# Impact of Speed on Clothing Consumption in Relation to Annual Family Income **Hypothesis Statement:**

- *H*<sub>0</sub>: Family income does not significantly affect how speed influences clothing purchases.
- $H_1$ : Family income significantly affects how speed influences clothing purchases.

<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significanc e (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.939 <sup>a</sup>	20	0.657
Likelihood Ratio	21.095	20	0.392
N of Valid Cases	120		

a. 23 cells (76.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .50.

#### **Interpretation**:

With a high p-value (0.657), we confidently fail to reject the null hypothesis. Family income has no significant impact on the role of speed in apparel consumption, suggesting speed preference is consistent across income groups.

#### Impact of Speed on Clothing Consumption in Relation to Pace of lifestyle

#### **Hypothesis:**

- $H_0$ : Pace of lifestyle does not significantly affect the importance of speed in clothing consumption.
- $H_1$ : Pace of lifestyle significantly affects the importance of speed in clothing consumption.

<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significanc e (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.786 <sup>a</sup>	8	0.987
Likelihood Ratio	1.780	8	0.987
N of Valid Cases	120		

a. 6 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .75.

#### **Interpretation**:

The p-value is extremely high (0.987), indicating no statistical association. We fail to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that lifestyle pace—whether fast, slow, or balanced—does not significantly influence consumers' valuation of speed when purchasing clothing.

#### Impact of Speed on Clothing Consumption in Relation to Frequency of Impulsive Purchases

#### **Hypothesis:**

- $\circ$   $H_0$ : Frequency of impulsive purchases does not significantly influence how speed affects clothing consumption.
- $\circ$   $H_I$ : Frequency of impulsive purchases significantly influences how speed affects clothing consumption.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.010 <sup>a</sup>	8	0.005
Likelihood Ratio	19.444	8	0.013
N of Valid Cases	120		
a. 6 cells (40.0%) have	expected count less than	5. The minimum expected	d count is 1.00.

#### **Interpretation**:

The statistically significant result (p = 0.005) leads us to reject the null hypothesis. Impulsive buying frequency is closely associated with the importance placed on speed. Consumers who frequently make impulse purchases are more likely to prioritize rapid availability, aligning with the fast fashion model's reliance on urgency and trend-based decisions.

This aligns with the idea that fast fashion thrives on impulse buying, where quick availability plays a major role.

#### Conclusion

This research highlights the nuanced role of speed in contemporary consumer preferences, particularly in the domain of fast fashion. Contrary to the prevailing assumption that speed is a dominant driver of consumer decisions, the findings suggest a more complex behavioural matrix wherein quality, price, and trend alignment often supersede speed. Although the fast fashion model thrives on rapid turnover and immediacy, consumer choices—especially among the youth—are increasingly shaped by a mix of cost-efficiency, durability, and aesthetic appeal rather than sheer immediacy of availability.

Statistical analysis reinforces that age and impulsive buying habits do significantly influence the weight consumers place on speed, revealing how lifestyle stage and emotional spontaneity interact with consumption priorities. However, variables such as income, gender, and employment status were found to have no significant effect on speed-driven preferences, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of this behavioural trait in today's consumer landscape.

The research also underscores a growing awareness among consumers about the ethical and environmental costs associated with fast fashion, hinting at a gradual but emerging inclination toward more sustainable and responsible consumption. As businesses continue to respond to the demand for convenience and immediacy, they must also account for this counter-current of mindful consumerism, balancing speed with substance, and profit with purpose.

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