



Impact Of Sustainability Practices On Consumer Purchase Intentions In The Fashion Industry: A Study On Urban Indian Consumers

¹Pooja Sureshkumar Deshmukh, ²Nikita Sunil Jadhav, ³Shivani Hemant Dod, ⁴Rishabh Singh, ⁵Shrikant Vasantrao Amle

¹MBA Student, ²MBA Student, ³MBA Student, ⁴MBA Student, ⁵MBA Student

¹Indira University, School of Business, Pune, India 411033

²Indira University, School of Business, Pune, India.411033

³ Indira University, School of Business, Pune, India.411033

⁴ Indira University, School of Business, Pune, India.411033

⁵ Indira University, School of Business, Pune, India.411033

Abstract

The increasing environmental impact of the fashion industry has led to a rise in sustainability practices among brands. However, it is unclear to what extent these sustainability efforts influence consumer purchase decisions in urban India. This research aims to assess how sustainability initiatives by fashion brands affect the purchase intentions of urban Indian consumers. Using a structured survey, data was collected on consumer awareness, attitudes, and reported behaviours regarding sustainable fashion. Basic descriptive statistics and correlation techniques were applied to identify significant relationships. The findings suggest that while there is high awareness of sustainable fashion, factors like price and style continue to dominate purchasing priorities. Managerial implications point towards a need for clearer communication and value demonstration by sustainable brands. The research offers actionable recommendations for marketers and retail managers to bridge the attitude-behaviour gap.

Keywords :- Sustainable fashion, consumer behaviour, urban India, purchase intention, environmental impact, ethical consumption, attitude-behaviour gap.

1. Introduction & Background

The Indian fashion industry is experiencing a sustainability shift amid global concerns about the industry's environmental footprint. Sustainable fashion includes practices like using organic materials, ethical labour, and minimizing waste generation. Its relevance lies in India's fast-growing urban population, increased disposable income, and heightened environmental awareness. Despite rising interest, studies suggest that actual purchasing of sustainable products lags behind consumer awareness, underscoring the classic attitude-behaviour gap. Research from Western and Asian contexts reveals that although consumers acknowledge the importance of sustainability, their final purchase decisions prioritise price, style, and convenience more.

Recent studies also highlight the importance of transparency, fair wages, and local sourcing in shaping consumer beliefs. Indian research specifically indicates growing demand for eco-friendly apparel among youth, but affordable, fashionable options remain sparse. Therefore, it is crucial to understand what motivates or limits purchase intentions among urban Indian fashion consumers.

1.1 Problem Statement & Research Objectives

While there is growing awareness of sustainable fashion among urban Indian consumers, it is unclear whether this awareness translates into actual purchase behaviour. Previous research shows a persistent disconnect between positive attitudes and real purchasing actions.

1.2 Research Problem:

Does the adoption of sustainability practices by fashion brands meaningfully influence the purchase intentions of urban Indian consumers?

1.3 Research Objectives:

- To assess the level of consumer awareness about sustainable fashion in urban India.
- To evaluate the impact of specific sustainability practices (e.g., organic materials, ethical sourcing) on purchase intentions.
- To identify barriers and motivators affecting sustainable apparel purchasing in urban India.
- To examine the relationship between consumer values and their reported purchase behaviour.

1.4 Research Methodology

A descriptive research design was employed for this quantitative study. Data was collected using an online structured questionnaire adapted from validated prior research. The sample consisted of 200 urban Indian consumers aged 18–45, recruited through social media platforms (non-probabilistic convenience sampling). The key variables measured included awareness, attitudes, purchase intention, price sensitivity, and perceived barriers to sustainable fashion. Responses were primarily obtained using a 5-point Likert scale. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation), correlation analysis, and visualisation using Excel. This approach was justified as online surveys are efficient given urban internet penetration, and correlation is suited for examining potential links between awareness, attitudes, and intentions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Background

Research on sustainable fashion consumption often draws on frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which suggests that consumer intentions are determined by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

A systematic literature review covering the last decade identifies the most relevant determinants: environmental awareness, price sensitivity, product quality, and brand trust. These factors play pivotal roles in influencing whether consumers intend to purchase sustainably produced fashion items.

2.2 Indian Urban Consumer Trends

Studies specifically examining urban Indian consumers reveal an increasing awareness of sustainability issues as well as growing interest in eco-friendly clothing options. For example, one investigation in Lucknow shows that younger, higher-income consumers are more willing to pay for organic apparel, but that widespread adoption depends on affordability and availability. Another study, centered on Bangalore, finds a persistent gap between desirable attitudes and actual purchase behavior—a phenomenon echoed in global literature.

2.3 Motivators and Barriers

- Major motivators for sustainable fashion purchasing include:
- Environmental concern and ethical values
- Desire for high-quality, stylish products
- Brand credibility and transparent sustainability claims
- Key barriers impeding consumer action:
- Higher pricing for sustainable apparel
- Limited product availability and fashion variety
- Skepticism regarding authenticity of brand sustainability efforts

A recent study of recycling practices demonstrates that female urban consumers are more likely to recycle clothes and purchase sustainable garments, motivated by incentives and convenience.

2.4 Global Comparisons and Local Implications

While global studies highlight similar motivators, Indian research notes that affordability, value for money, and visibility of sustainability initiatives are even more pronounced drivers for purchase intention among urban shoppers. Retailers—especially in metropolitan areas—are urged to improve transparency, pricing, and the fashion quotient in sustainable offerings to match consumer expectations and overcome adoption barriers.

3. Data Collection & Analysis

3.1 Data Collection:

A total of 200 responses were gathered. The questionnaire included socio-demographic questions and items measuring awareness of sustainable fashion, attitude towards sustainability, and actual buying behaviour.

Example Likert-scale items:

"I prefer to buy clothing from fashion brands that have a sustainable line."

"I am willing to pay more for eco-friendly apparel."

"Sustainability claims by fashion brands influence my purchase decision."

3.2 Data Analysis:

- Descriptive statistics: The mean awareness score was 4.1/5, and the mean intention score was 3.2/5, suggesting higher awareness than action.
- Measure of central tendency: Most respondents agreed sustainability is important, but reported purchasing frequency was low (mode=Rarely).
- Variance/Standard deviation: Standard deviation for intention to purchase was 0.9, indicating moderate variation.
- Correlation: There was a moderate positive correlation ($r=0.27$) between awareness and purchase intention.
- Visualization: See annexure for screenshots and sample Excel charts of distribution and correlation.

4. Findings and Interpretations

The results indicate that urban Indian consumers are generally aware of sustainability issues in fashion. However, price, style, and availability remain the most influential factors in buying decisions, confirming the attitude-behaviour gap. The correlation analysis supports previous findings: although awareness is increasing, it only moderately predicts intention, and intention does not always yield action. Managerially, this suggests that brands need to not only educate but also offer tangible value—balancing sustainability with style and cost. Consumer trust in brand claims and the visibility of green benefits were also recurrent themes impacting behaviour.

5. Conclusion & Recommendations

Despite high levels of awareness and concern, urban Indian consumers' purchase intentions for sustainable fashion are dampened by price, perceived style trade-offs, and trust in brand claims. Retailers should prioritise transparent communication about their sustainability efforts, offer competitively priced sustainable lines, and incorporate contemporary fashion trends in their eco-friendly collections to close the attitude-behaviour gap. Future research should explore longitudinal changes and test interventions such as targeted marketing or in-store green labelling.

6. References

1. Khare, A., & Sadachar, A. (2017). Green apparel buying behaviour: A study on Indian youth. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 41, 558–569.
2. McNeill, L., & Moore, R. (2015). Sustainable fashion consumption and the fast fashion conundrum: Attitudes to sustainability in clothing choice. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 39, 212–222.
3. KPMG. (2019). Sustainable Fashion—A Survey on Global Perspectives. Retrieved from <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/cn/pdf/en/2019/01/sustainable-fashion.pdf>
4. Ceylan, O. (2019). Knowledge, attitudes and behavior of consumers towards sustainability and ecological fashion. *Textile and Leather Review*, 2, 154–161.
5. Shen, D., Richards, J., & Liu, F. (2013). Consumers Awareness of Sustainable Fashion. *Marketing Management Journal*, 23, 134–147.
6. research paper :<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/15589250231168964> (Consumer perception on sustainable clothing among urban Indians)
7. <https://ijrpr.com/uploads/V6ISSUE5/IJRPR45199.pdf> (The Analysis of Sustainable Fashion in India)
8. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-024-80279-4>
9. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-024-80279-4> (How perceived sustainability influences consumers' fashion purchase intention. *Nature*.)
10. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666188825002114> (Sustainable fashion trends and purchasing pattern analysis for textiles and apparel: An encouragement for eco-innovation)
11. <https://www.coherentmarketinsights.com/industry-reports/global-sustainable-fashion-market>
(<https://www.coherentmarketinsights.com/industry-reports/global-sustainable-fashion-market>)

