

A STUDY ON UNDERSTANDING THE ROADBLOCKS IN ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE FASHION IN INDIA

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Abstract

The term sustainability can be stated as the ability to meet the current needs for development without impacting on the future generations abilities to meet with their own needs. The need to encourage sustainable fashion is very essential as it can contribute enormously towards creating a better living scenario for the future generations to come. The study uses non-probabilistic method of sampling in which judgment and convenience sampling is used for collecting data. A structured questionnaire has been designed from the literature review conducted for the study in a 5 Point Likert Type scale. A total of 240 responses have been collected which would be sufficient for conducting statistical analysis such as multiple linear regression. The dominance of the demographic characteristics such as gender, age, income status and employment on the concerns for sustainability in fashion is statistically proven. The need to include demographic aspects when talking on the matter thus is quite crucial. The study have shown that there are four items extracted that can define overall need for sustainable fashion. These four factors are categorised based on their characteristics and are termed as performance expectancy measure, the perceived ease of use, social influence and the utilitarian value. All the factors are important considerations in fashion and now are being found to cause an impact on the sustainable fashion aspect as well. However, the intention to adopt sustainable fashion is found to be affected by only two factor including the social influence and perceived ease of use.

Keywords: Sustainable; Fashion; India; Social; Influence.

Introduction

The acknowledgement for sustainability and its various important aspects has been realised to a large extent in the present times. The term sustainability can be stated as the ability to meet the current needs for development without impacting on the future generations abilities to meet with their own needs (Wilkinson et al., 2001). The need for having a sustainable approach towards the way of functioning in the present situation is of utmost importance. While there are a number of ways in which sustainability has been propagated by the industries across the world, there is sufficient amount of efforts made by the fashion industry as well. The concept of sustainable fashion refers to encouraging the trend of slow fashion and can be associated with beliefs such as ethical fashion and green fashion (Henninger et al., 2016). The revolution for sustainable fashion became more prominent during the era when the consumers realised the importance and necessity of the same to be able to survive in the future. The scope of fast fashion is quite limited in terms of sustainability as it includes consumers not utilising their garments repeatedly in the future course of time. On the other hand when accepting the means of sustainable fashion, the consumers are utilising on the garments while protecting the needs of the environment. The studies focusing on sustainability has been seen to spread across various topics including that of business sustainability,

energy consumption sustainability, the use of technology in minimising the pollution etc. (Amirmokhtar Radi & Shokouhyar, 2021; Othman et al., 2020; Sivarajah et al., 2020; Soares et al., 2021). However, the focus on to a topic such as sustainable fashion has been quite limited in the field. The need to encourage sustainable fashion is very essential as it can contribute enormously towards creating a better living scenario for the future generations to come. Hence, the study here would attempt to address the following research questions in the course of the study-

RQ1: What is the present situation of sustainable fashion in an emerging economy like India?

RQ2: Are there any specific factors which can influence the adoption of sustainable fashion among the Indian consumers?

The study here would include a number of statistical methods to arrive at the answers to the research questions above and a detailed description about the methods adopted have been provided in the upcoming sections.

Review of literature

(Mukendi et al., 2020) conducted a study on sustainable fashion with the intention of learning about the present situation and providing the scope for future studies as well. The study involved conducting a detailed literature review process of around 400 papers in the field. The results showed that the arena of sustainable fashion is quite dynamic and is constantly evolving. There are two approaches identified namely the pragmatic approach and the radical approach through which the changes can be initiated among the consumers.(Hur & Cassidy, 2019) did a study to understand the perceptions of the consumers towards sustainable fashion. The study wanted to understand the challenges that might take place when attempting to implement sustainable fashion. With the help of interviews, 50 fashion designers have been approached and after analysing their responses there are a number of factors that have been identified. The lack of awareness about sustainable fashion, the lack of designs in sustainable fashion compared to others, not appropriate consumers demand and complexity in the process are some of the challenges noticed in the process.(Grazzini et al., 2021) initiated a study to understand the attitude of consumers towards the concept of sustainable fashion. The study stated that with the presence of sustainable elements in the fashion product such as use of recycled materials etc. the intention to purchase the products increases. The reason for the changed behaviour has been addressed as the activation of perceived warmth among the consumers.(Choi & Luo, 2019) conducted their study on sustainable fashion in relation to the challenges of supply chain operations in the emerging markets one such as India. The study upon analysing with the supply chain for sustainable fashion suggested that it would be helpful if blockchain is implemented in the process. The active involvement of government in terms of schemes and tax saving methods are suggested to get better results in the process.(Garcia-Torres et al., 2022) also investigated about the supply chain method of sustainable fashion and focused on the transparency and traceability of the same. Traceability along with transparency is found to be necessity for the situation, however the same cannot be considered as a sufficient condition.(Kim et al., 2020) conducted a study to determine the impact caused by social capital on that of adopting sustainable fashion. The study conducted in South Korea used a total of 234 YouTube users for the survey. The results upon being analysed showed that the component of social capital is one of the most influential factors in the regard. The need for the sustainable fashion market to manage social capital effectively is quite essential. (Khandual & Pradhan, 2019) analysed the approach of both consumers as well as the brands about sustainable fashion. The concept of sustainable fashion is gaining recognition quite fast is due to the fact that it leads towards a responsible cause and along with that refers to the need of the consumers in the upcoming time. The brands have recognised the changing perception of the consumers towards sustainable fashion and have formulated different strategies related to sustainable fashion , having transparency with the consumers etc. and are moving towards fulfilling the same.

Overall from the above discussion, it can be summarised that the concept of sustainable fashion has reached into certain consumers consciousness and they do look for elements of sustainability in fashion. However, there still is scope for making the awareness better and this study would be able to understand the same by identifying the essential factors in the process. The following objectives are hereby laid down for the purpose of the study.

1. To understand the situation of adoption of sustainable fashion.
2. To identify the factors impacting the adoption of sustainable fashion.
3. To determine the influence of the factors on the eventual adoption of sustainable fashion in India

Research methodology

The need for designing a systematic research methodology is of utmost importance. The study here follows a strict method of conducting the analysis for the results. There is a quantitative approach followed and the research is descriptive in nature. The study uses both primary and secondary sources of data for the process. While secondary data have been used in regards to the books, journal articles, reports etc., the primary sources of data has been collected from the consumers of fashion in the state of Rajasthan. The state is one of the largest ones in India and resembles the situation of the country in terms of development. The propagation of textile industry is quite large in the state and hence the number of quality respondents in the state would be high. The study uses non-probabilistic method of sampling in which judgment and convenience sampling is used for collecting data. The criteria for judgment sampling implies consumers who are active in following fashion trends and have an idea about sustainable fashion. A structured questionnaire has been designed from the literature review conducted for the study in a 5 Point Likert Type scale. A total of 240 responses have been collected which would be sufficient for conducting statistical analysis such as multiple linear regression.

The data analysis process done for fulfilling the objectives are shown in the next section.

Data analysis

The study uses the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) to statistically analyse the results of the study. As mentioned above a total of 240 responses are collected. Before moving on into the analysis of the study, the demographic representation of the samples are being shown in the first section.

Gender	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Female	144	60.0 %	60.0 %
Male	96	40.0 %	100.0 %

The first demographic factor being considered here is that of gender. In case of fashion, gender can play an important role as it is highly diversified based on the needs of gender. Here, the responses are comprised of 60% female respondents and 40% male. As the market for fashion is dominated by the female mostly, the respondents includes a larger section of the same.

Age (in years)	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
18-24	36	15.0 %	15.0 %
24-35	60	25.0 %	40.0 %
25-34	36	15.0 %	55.0 %
35-44	36	15.0 %	70.0 %
45-54	48	20.0 %	90.0 %
Above 55	24	10.0 %	100.0 %

The second factor in demographics is that of age. It is quite evident that fashion choices for individuals changes with respect to their age group. This occurs mostly due to the alteration in preferences. In order to identify the

situation with respect to sustainable fashion, it is important to include age as factor of analysis. The above table shows how the number of respondents across the age groups are divided almost proportionately to identify with the situation better.

Income Status			
Income Status	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Earning	144	60.0 %	60.0 %
Non-earning	96	40.0 %	100.0 %

Fashion can often be a luxury for the individuals as it requires one to be constantly updated with the market. In such a situation, the need for one to have sufficient sources of income becomes essential. To understand this aspect of fashion in terms of sustainability as well, the demographic of the income status of the respondents is also included. There are 60% of responses who have an income of their own while the remaining 40% do not have their own source of income.

Education Level			
Education Level	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Doctoral	36	15.0 %	15.0 %
Graduate	72	30.0 %	45.0 %
Post-graduate	120	50.0 %	95.0 %
Undergraduate	12	5.0 %	100.0 %

The fourth demographic factor that is being included here is the education level. As the education level of an individual is related to their lifestyle, attitude, income and employment, it becomes an important part of the study about understanding the perception for sustainable fashion. There are 50% respondents who have a post graduate degree and remaining is divided among undergraduates, graduates and doctorate level respondents.

The first objective in the study is to understand the present situation with respect to sustainable fashion in India. It is quite evident that the speculation about sustainable fashion in India is not much investigated, hence before moving on the next objectives in the study, it is important to identify the preliminary perception of the consumers about the same. In order to fulfil the first objective, the study here includes analysing the preliminary screening questions asked to the respondents about their idea of sustainable fashion. The responses are as follows-

Firstly, the respondents are asked if they prefer to use sustainable items in their day to day lives, it is quite interesting to note that 100% of the respondents said yes to the same. In the second question, the respondents are enquired about their views on sustainability in terms of fashion and the responses collected are as follows-

Sustainability in terms of Fashion in an Important Concern?

Do you think sustainability in terms of fashion in an important concern?	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
No	72	30.0 %	30.0 %
Yes	168	70.0 %	100.0 %

The response here however is not 100% yes. It is seen that while 70% agree on the importance of sustainability in fashion as a concern, 30% do not agree about the same. Following the second question, the third one in the series asked if they keep sustainability in mind when shopping for fashion products, the results are shown below.

Sustainability in mind when buying a fashion item

Do you keep sustainability in mind when buying a fashion item?	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
No	132	55.0 %	55.0 %
Yes	108	45.0 %	100.0 %

There are quite close response rate for both the options. 55% said they do keep the sustainability aspect in mind when buying fashion products, 45% said that they do not.

As the above sections show interesting results, to understand further in the process as a part of the first objective, a chi-square test is conducted to observe the presence of any association.

Contingency Tables

Do you think sustainability in terms of fashion in an important concern?		Gender		
		Female	Male	Total
No	Observed	36	36	72
	% within row	50.0 %	50.0 %	100.0 %
Yes	Observed	108	60	168
	% within row	64.3 %	35.7 %	100.0 %
Total	Observed	144	96	240
	% within row	60.0 %	40.0 %	100.0 %

χ^2 Tests

	Value	df	p
χ^2	4.29	1	0.038
N	240		

In case of gender and the concern for sustainability in fashion, it is seen that there exists a statistically significant relationship between the two. The p-value having less than 0.05 limit shows that the concern for sustainability in fashion is dependent on gender. As evident from the table above for female the yes response percentage is more which in male the no response is higher.

Contingency Tables

		Age (in years)						Total
		18-24	24-35	25-34	35-44	45-54	Above 55	
Do you think sustainability in terms of fashion in an important concern?	Observed	12	24	24	0	12	0	72
	% within row	16.7 %	33.3 %	33.3 %	0.0 %	16.7 %	0.0 %	100.0 %
No	Observed	24	36	12	36	36	24	168
	% within row	14.3 %	21.4 %	7.1 %	21.4 %	21.4 %	14.3 %	100.0 %
Yes	Observed	36	60	36	36	48	24	240
	% within row	15.0 %	25.0 %	15.0 %	15.0 %	20.0 %	10.0 %	100.0 %

χ^2 Tests

	Value	df	p
χ^2	52.4	5	<.001
N	240		

In case of age group as well, the association between the concern for sustainability is found to exist. It shows that with a p-value of less than 0.001, the concern for sustainable fashion can be associated with the age of the respondents. Looking at the table above, it is seen that as the age group increases the responses showing presence of concern in sustainability for fashion also increases. Hence, the association formed can be established using the age group statistically as well.

Contingency Tables

Do you think sustainability in terms of fashion in an important concern?		Income Status		
		Earning	Non-earning	Total
No	Observed	60	12	72
	% within row	83.3 %	16.7 %	100.0 %
Yes	Observed	84	84	168
	% within row	50.0 %	50.0 %	100.0 %
Total	Observed	144	96	240
	% within row	60.0 %	40.0 %	100.0 %

χ^2 Tests

	Value	df	p
χ^2	23.3	1	<.001
N	240		

The income status as well shows statistically significant association between the two factors considered. The p-value at less than 0.001 shows that sustainability concerns are related to the income status of the respondents as well. It is quite interesting to see that the number of earning members have higher responses for negative concerns compared to the non-earning ones.

Contingency Tables

		Education Level					
		Doctoral	Graduate	Post-graduate	Undergraduate	Total	
Do you think sustainability in terms of fashion in an important concern?	No	Observed	12	12	48	0	72
	% within row	16.7 %	16.7 %	66.7 %	0.0 %	100.0 %	
Yes	Observed	24	60	72	12	168	
	% within row	14.3 %	35.7 %	42.9 %	7.1 %	100.0 %	
Total	Observed	36	72	120	12	240	
	% within row	15.0 %	30.0 %	50.0 %	5.0 %	100.0 %	

 χ^2 Tests

	Value	df	p
χ^2	17.1	3	<.001
N	240		

The last factor considered is that of the education level of the respondents. It is seen that for that factor as well there is a statistically significant association related to the concerns for the sustainability in fashion. The highest composition are of respondents having post graduate level of study and it is found that majority of them respond negative concerns for sustainability. The graduates however show concerns for sustainability in fashion at larger rate.

This shows that the present situation, there is still a significant amount of gap in considering sustainability in fashion as a matter of concern among the respondents in India. The second and third objective in the study is dedicated towards understanding the factors influencing the increase of the concern and its impact on eventually adopting sustainable fashion options.

To understand and extract the factors, a principal component analysis is conducted. This would help in extracting the underlying factors in the study and highlight the ones having a significant variance.

Component Loadings

	Component					Uniqueness
	1	2	3	4	5	
I would buy from a store that I knew to be extremely sustainably ethical	0.842					0.0221
I would pay considerably more money from a firm that I knew to be extremely sustainably ethical	0.661					0.0725
I would always choose to buy from the sustainably ethical firm	0.802					0.0855
I would go several miles out of my way not to buy from a store that I knew to be extremely unethical	0.704					0.0804
I would pay considerably more money for a product from a firm that I knew to be extremely sustainably ethical	0.783					0.0322
It really bothers me to find out that a firm that I buy from has acted sustainably unethically	0.872					0.0451
People who are important to me think that I should use sustainable fashion items		0.636				0.0418
I use sustainable fashion items because a section of my friends/ colleagues also uses them		0.884				0.0393
People who influence my behavior think that I should use sustainable fashion items		0.524				0.0885
I feel very confident about sustainable fashion designs			0.656			0.0696
I think that the use sustainable fashion designs would deliver me good value			0.674			0.0272
Compared to the prices I need to pay; I think the use of sustainable fashion items would offer value for money			0.526			0.0861

Component Loadings

	Component					Uniqueness
	1	2	3	4	5	
Using sustainable fashion items would fit well with the way I like to perform transactions			0.556			0.0793
It would be convenient to opt for sustainable fashion items				0.818		0.0522
Sustainable fashion items are easy to use				0.658		0.0502
Using sustainable fashion items would fit my lifestyle and habits					0.716	0.0393
I plan to use sustainable fashion items in the future					0.827	0.0413
I would recommend others to use Sustainable fashion items in the future					0.827	0.0413

Note. 'varimax' rotation was used

The above table showed that using varimax rotation has maximised the factor loadings across each of the items and all of them have a loading of more than 0.4 which is considered acceptable for sample size above 200 (Hair et al., 2006). There are a total of five factors extracted which denotes several aspects of adopting sustainable fashion. Based on the characteristics of the elements, they are termed as follows-

1. Performance Expectancy (PE) – The first factor has six factors and it is related to the performance of sustainable items compared to the non-sustainable products
2. Social Influence (SI)- With three items, the second one denotes the influence of the social circle of the respondents and their perception about the respondents using sustainable fashion items in their day to day lives.
3. Utilitarian Value (UV) – The third one includes three factors and shows the utility purpose being fulfilled by using sustainable fashion items .
4. Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) – With a total of two factors, it denotes the level of ease at which the sustainable fashion items can be of use in the day to day lives.
5. Intention – The last factor is the one with three factors and denotes the intention of the consumer to purchase sustainable items in the future. This variable is to be treated as the dependent variable and the above four to be used as independent ones.

As the factors pertaining to the use of sustainable fashion is being extracted in the next section, there is a multiple linear regression conducted to determine the impact of these factors on the intention of adopt sustainable fashion.

Model Fit Measures

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Overall Model Test			
				F	df1	df2	p
1	0.938	0.879	0.877	424	4	233	< .001

Model Coefficients - Intention

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	0.4509	0.0827	5.454	< .001
Performance Expectancy	-0.0521	0.0527	-0.989	0.324
Social Influence	0.1416	0.0470	3.015	0.003
Utilitarian Value	0.0153	0.0649	0.235	0.814
Perceived Ease of Use	0.8819	0.0723	12.205	< .001

The regression model being constructed using the four independent variables and the dependent variable of intention is statistically significant with a p-value of less than 0.001. The adjusted R² generated is at 0.877 which indicates that a unit change in the independent variable causes a change of 87.7% in the intention to use sustainable fashion. Looking into the model coefficients, it is seen that only two factors out of four causes significant influence on the intention to adopt sustainable fashion. These factors are social influence and perceived ease of use. Both have a positive relationship with intention and PEOU exerts the maximum variance in intention out of the two.

As a whole, the analysis section showed the statistical assumption of the three laid down objectives. In the next section, the same would be discussed.

Discussion

The main purpose of conducting the study is to understand the importance of sustainability in the genre of fashion. As fashion is an ongoing day to day consideration for individuals, along with having sustainability in other aspects, this particular method must also be considered. The study here has included a quantitative method of analysing the situation by using first hand data for the purpose. The use of structured questionnaires for data collection from individuals having a knowledge about fashion and sustainability has enabled the study to record essential aspects. The study with a total of 240 responses showed that the dominance of the demographic characteristics such as gender, age, income status and employment on the concerns for sustainability in fashion is statistically proven. The need to include demographic aspects when talking on the matter thus is quite crucial. Secondly, with the use of advance statistical tools such as principal component analysis and multiple linear regression, the factors causing an impact on the adoption of sustainable fashion is realised. The study have shown that there are four items extracted that can define overall need for sustainable fashion. These four factors are categorised based on their characteristics and are termed as performance expectancy measure, the perceived ease of use, social influence and the utilitarian value. All the factors are important considerations in fashion and now are being found to cause an impact on the sustainable fashion aspect as well. However, the intention to adopt sustainable fashion is found to be affected by only two factor including the social influence and perceived ease of use. The variance caused is quite high which shows the need to realise the importance of the two factors and indulge them in the process of strategy making and awareness campaigns for sustainable fashion in the future.

Conclusion & future outlook

The need for sustainability in the present era is quite expected in every domain. While there is much focus laid down in the sectors of manufacturing and production where the amount of harmful inputs are larger, it is also

essential that contribution is made from an industry such as fashion which marks a substantial impact in the economies. The term fashion has now engulfed people across different regions and they are indulged in the updated fashionable lifestyle more after the advent of technology. With social media making the worlds meet have paved way for everyone having their own update on fashion at frequent interval of time. The study here found that there is need for more awareness on the issue of generating consciousness towards purchasing sustainable fashion items. Many individuals do not even consider sustainability in fashion as a major outlook. This perspective needs to be altered in the coming future to ascertain a better living condition across the country. In order to do so the two factors identified significant in the study can be used. The impact of social influence is significant and word-of-mouth can be used as an effective measure in the process of propagating sustainable fashion as a necessity in the future. Similarly, the PEOU factor can be used for selling the items having sustainable elements as they do fulfil the same purpose but have a better impact to the future. At this point of time, after analysing the situation in India it is suggested that the brands conduct more sustainability driven campaigns to increase awareness and then try to reflect on the similarities in terms of ease of use while fulfilling a necessary condition in the present.

The study opens many scopes for future research. The regression model constructed here can be utilised in the future by adding more factors into it. The role of technology has not been considered here in this study which can be included in the future. The role of technology can help in identifying various medium using which the current situation can be made better. Moreover, the study here considers the data from the consumers, the future study may include data from the sellers of sustainable brands to know the situation from their point of view as well. Furthermore, a qualitative method of study can also be conducted in the future.

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