

A Study on the Awareness and Perception towards Sustainable Fashion

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Abstract

Background: With a significant detrimental impact on the environment and society, the fashion industry has emerged as one of the most polluting and resource-intensive sectors of the global economy. This research paper explores the necessity for sustainable fashion, how it will assist to address the aforementioned issues, and how we, as a community, can positively impact the fashion industry and change it.

The paper will cover a variety of subjects and provide a comprehensive overview of the environmental impacts of the fashion industry, including its impact on waste generation, greenhouse gas emissions, and water contamination. Fast fashion's societal impacts are discussed, including subpar working conditions, employee exploitation, and violations of human rights.

Further investigation is done into the meaning and practises of sustainable fashion, as well as its potential benefits, such as its capacity to enhance the social and economic conditions in the industry and minimise its unfavourable environmental consequences.

In order to create a sustainable fashion future, the paper promotes cooperation among businesses, consumers, governments, and civil society. It highlights the pressing necessity for the fashion sector to make the switch to more environmentally friendly practises.

Purpose: The purpose of this research paper is to study consumer attitudes and behaviour towards purchasing sustainable fashion in India and further examines the current scenario of fast fashion and how deeply rooted it is in the mind of consumers.

Method: The method used for this research is quantitative, wherein data is collected from surveys and then statistically analysed to draw meaningful conclusions.

Introduction

The fashion business has a long history of being noted for its rapid pace and ongoing invention of new trends and styles. The ecology and society have suffered greatly as a result of this rapid production and consumption.

In terms of greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution, and trash production, the fashion sector ranks as the second biggest polluter in the world. The industry's labour practises have also come under fire for exploiting employees in developing nations.

Growing interest in sustainable fashion has arisen in response to these problems. Sustainable fashion takes a comprehensive approach to the industry, taking into account the social and environmental effects of every phase of the industry's supply chain, from manufacture to consumption. By promoting moral and ethical behaviour, sustainable fashion practises hope to lessen the industry's detrimental effects on the environment and society.

The purpose of this research paper is to examine the idea of sustainable fashion and the demand for it in the modern world. The introduction of the paper will give an outline of the effects of the fashion business on the environment and society, emphasising the necessity of sustainable fashion practises. The essay will then dig into the fundamentals of sustainable fashion and look at the steps that different stakeholders are taking to promote sustainable fashion.

To provide a thorough study of the need for sustainable fashion, the research paper will consult a variety of academic sources, business reports, and case studies.

10% of the world's carbon emissions come from the fashion industry, which is comparable to the European Union. Despite the fact that 85% of all textiles are disposed of in landfills every year, they damage rivers and streams and dry up water supplies. Just simply washing clothes, 500,000 tonnes of microfibers are released into the ocean annually.

The three main causes of the industry's global environmental effects, according to reports, are fibre production (15%), yarn preparation (28%) and dyeing and finishing (36%).

Further research revealed that while the production of fibre from cotton has the greatest impact on freshwater withdrawal and ecosystem quality, the production of fibre from other fiber-producing plants has the greatest impact on resource depletion due to energy-intensive processes based on fossil fuels.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change predicts that by 2030, emissions from the textile industry alone will increase by 60%.

Review of Literature

Sustainable fashion is a growing field of study that explores the environmental, social, and economic impacts of the fashion industry. The following is a review of some of the key literature in this field.

Fletcher, K. (2010). Sustainable fashion and textiles: design journeys. Routledge.

This book provides an overview of sustainable fashion and textiles, examining the key issues and challenges facing the industry. It explores sustainable design strategies, materials, and production processes, and includes case studies of sustainable fashion brands and designers.

Fletcher, K., & Grose, L. (2012). Fashion and sustainability: Design for change. Laurence King Publishing. This book examines the relationship between fashion and sustainability, exploring the environmental and social impacts of the fashion industry, as well as the role of design in promoting sustainability. It includes

case studies of sustainable fashion brands and designers, and provides practical guidance for designers seeking to create more sustainable fashion products.

Gwilt, A., & Rissanen, T. (2011). Shaping sustainable fashion: Changing the way we make and use clothes. Earthscan.

This book explores the potential for sustainable fashion to transform the way we make and use clothes. It examines the environmental and social impacts of the fashion industry, and provides practical guidance for designers seeking to create more sustainable fashion products.

Niinimäki, K. (2010). Sustainable fashion design: Case U.P.W.Cycling. Journal of textile design research and practice, 2(2), 139-156.

This article examines sustainable fashion design through a case study of the U.P.W.Cycling project, which explores the potential for upcycling to create new fashion products from waste materials. It argues that sustainable fashion design requires a shift in thinking about the relationship between fashion and waste.

Overall, the review of literature on sustainable fashion offers a thorough understanding of the economic, social, and environmental effects of the fashion industry and offers useful advice for consumers, designers, and educators who want to develop and market more sustainable fashion goods. It also demonstrates that the fashion business has difficulties promoting sustainable fashion, and that everyone concerned must collaborate to find effective solutions in order to develop a more ethical and sustainable fashion sector.

Problem Statement

We now know that the fashion sector is one of the biggest and most significant in the world. Growing demand and consumption have resulted in excess production, which is having a detrimental effect on the environment and society at large. Fast fashion is the term used for this.

This industry's rapid growth has resulted in a number of drawbacks, including as carbon emissions, pollution, and the loss of natural resources. The industry's working conditions are also subpar, and there are growing worries about labour exploitation and claims of human rights breaches all around the world.

As a result, it is important to consider how fast fashion affects society, to advocate for sustainable practises, and to further push for their acceptance by the entire fashion industry.

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the study are:

- The primary objective of this study is to analyze the production landscape of the fast fashion industry and to study its effects on people, their mindsets, and their choices.
- The fast fashion industry has had a significant impact on the environment, the objective is to analyze how it affects different aspects of our surroundings and our habitat, to study the effects and how it can be done better.
- With all the different types of pollution taking place in the world, it is vital for us to preserve our environment and ensure its sustained for future generations. So, the objective is to study the sustainable approaches that can be replaced in the world.

Scope of the study

- This study will take an in-depth dive into the fashion industry and talk about the emergence of fast fashion
- It will be beneficial into understanding the different problems caused by top, emerging fashion brands
- The study will be beneficial in terms of understanding the importance of sustainability in the fashion industry
- It will also give a detailed analysis of the different methods companies can incorporate to be sustainable

What is fast fashion

A business strategy in the fashion industry known as "fast fashion" focuses on creating cheap, stylish items quickly and in big quantities. Fast fashion aims to provide customers with a constant supply of new styles at reasonable rates, enticing them to purchase more frequently and discard their apparel more quickly.

Fast fashion companies frequently use cheap, low-quality materials to make their garments, and they rely on poorly paid labour in underdeveloped nations to keep costs down. These companies frequently put speed and efficiency over moral and sustainable behaviour, which has a negative impact on the environment and society.

Fast fashion clothes manufacture adds to the exhaustion of natural resources, the contaminating of waterways, and the release of greenhouse gases. In addition, the unfavourable working conditions and low pay in fast fashion manufacturers may be detrimental to the health and wellbeing of the employees.

The fast fashion business model has come under fire for promoting excessive consumption, creating a culture of disposable apparel, and adding to the world's trash crisis. Customers can opt to support sustainable and ethical fashion firms, purchase used clothing, or just cut back on their overall consumption of new apparel in order to solve these challenges.

Impact of fast fashion

Water

Fast fashion has an adverse effect on the environment due to the exhaustion of non-renewable resources, the release of greenhouse gases, and the large consumption of water and energy. With 700 gallons needed to manufacture one cotton shirt and 2000 gallons needed to produce a pair of jeans, the fashion industry is the second-largest consumer of water.

Microplastics

Companies use synthetic fibres like nylon, polyester, and acrylic that take hundreds of years to disintegrate. According to a research from the IUCN, washing synthetic textiles like polyester is responsible for 35% of all microplastics, which are microscopic bits of non-biodegradable plastic, in the water.

The tanning process is one of the most toxic in the entire fashion supply chain because the chemicals used to tan leather, including mineral salts, formaldehyde, coal tar derivatives, and various oils and dyes, are not biodegradable and contaminate water sources. The production of leather also requires significant amounts of feed, land, water, and fossil fuels to raise livestock.

Energy

It takes a lot of energy to produce plastic fibres for textiles, and the process also generates a lot of volatile particulate matter and acids like hydrogen chloride. Additionally, cotton, which is used in a lot of fast fashion items, is not produced in an environmentally responsible manner. The use of pesticides deemed required for the development of cotton puts farmers' health in danger.

Greenwashing in the fashion industry

In the fashion business, the practise of making false or exaggerated claims about the sustainability or environmental friendliness of a brand or product is known as "greenwashing." The goal of this practise is to trick consumers into thinking they are choosing environmentally beneficial products when they are not.

While many fashion companies make the claim to be ecologically friendly or sustainable, their actions may be everything but. For instance, a company could refer to its items as "organic" or "natural" when, in fact, just a small percentage of the item may be in that category. In addition, although some companies advertise that they employ sustainable materials, they might not reveal how their production and delivery methods affect the environment.

Because it erodes consumers' trust in brands that are genuinely sustainable and environmentally friendly, greenwashing is a serious issue in the fashion industry. Additionally, it might cause uncertainty and scepticism regarding sustainability, making it more difficult for customers to make wise decisions. Consumers should conduct due diligence and seek out companies that are open and honest about their environmental practises and certifications in order to avoid greenwashing in the fashion business. The Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), which guarantees that textiles are manufactured with environmentally and socially responsible manufacturing practises, is one such third-party certification that consumers can search for.

The emergence of sustainable fashion

Sustainable materials are being developed by creative minds throughout the globe to replace fur, leather, and skins in the fashion industry and lessen the negative consequences of one of the most polluting sectors of the global economy. They accomplish this by fusing cutting-edge biotechnological methods with traditional knowledge, natural resources, and other resources.

Fast fashion expanded in the late 20th century as clothing manufacturing became less expensive because of more efficient supply chains, new quick-response manufacturing techniques, and a greater reliance on low-cost labour from the apparel manufacturing industries of South, Southeast, and East Asia, where women make up 85-90% of the garment workforce.

Retailers like Primark, H&M, Shein, and Zara all employ the fast fashion business model to grow into huge international conglomerates by pushing a high turnover of competitively priced, in-style, seasonal clothing that appeals to fashion-conscious consumers.

Before the seventeenth century, making clothing required harvesting and hand-treating raw materials like wool, cotton, or leather, preparing them, and then weaving or otherwise changing them into wearable pieces. The Industrial Revolution, however, which introduced new technology like the sewing machine and textile machines as well as ready-made garments and factories for mass production, permanently changed the world of fashion.

As a result, clothing may be created more quickly, simply, and inexpensively. Localised dressmaking businesses also began to spring up, catering to the middle class and employing both workroom staff and garment workers who worked from home for meagre compensation.

Clothing manufacture became more standardised as a result of the World War II tendency towards more useful patterns and fabric restrictions. As they became accustomed to it, middle-class consumers warmed to

the concept of clothing that was mass-produced. Fast fashion companies produce goods so that the newest trends can be introduced as soon as possible. They put a lot of attention on optimising particular processes in the supply chain so that trendy clothes can be created quickly, produced cheaply, and offered for sale to the general public at cheaper prices.

A manufacturing strategy known as "quick response" and a product-driven concept known as "fast fashion" were created in the United States in the 1980s. By the late 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century, a market-based "fast fashion" model had emerged.

Sustainable Fashion

The term "sustainable fashion" refers to a segment of the fashion industry that is carbon neutral and is built on fairness, social justice, animal welfare, and ecological integrity. It also describes the products, processes, activities, and actors (policymakers, enterprises, and consumers) that are involved in achieving this aim. Concerns about sustainable fashion extend beyond merely talking about clothing or other accessories. It addresses all aspect of garment manufacture, use, and disposal, including who, what, how, when, and where; as well as the estimated product lifespan prior to landfill disposal. In order to combat the large carbon footprint that quick fashion has left behind, the sustainable movement seeks to decrease the environmental repercussions of fashion, such as air pollution, water pollution, and general climate change.

People with a sustainable mindset believe that the fashion business has the potential to operate differently, pursuing profit and growth while also creating new wealth and value for society and, as a result, for the global economy. The goal of sustainable fashion is to actively support the growth of healthy ecosystems and communities. The movement asserts that management at apparel companies ought to give advancements in the environment, society, and ethics first priority.

The goal of the sustainable fashion movement is to lessen the negative effects of the fashion industry on the environment and society.

The principles of sustainable fashion include:

Ethical production:

Sustainable fashion attempts to ensure that clothing is produced in an ethical and socially responsible manner, which includes providing employees with fair wages and secure working conditions.

Use of sustainable materials:

The use of sustainable materials like bamboo, recycled polyester, and organic cotton is encouraged by sustainable fashion. This lessens the fashion industry's environmental effect and promotes sustainable agriculture and production.

Recycling and upcycling:

Sustainable fashion encourages the recycling and upcycling of materials, reducing waste and reducing the amount of new resources needed.

Reducing water and energy consumption:

Sustainable fashion aims to reduce the amount of water and energy used in the manufacture and delivery of clothing, hence lowering the carbon footprint of the fashion sector.

Minimal packaging:

Minimal packaging and the use of recyclable or biodegradable materials are encouraged by sustainable fashion.

Clothes that are long-lasting and durable are encouraged by sustainable fashion, which also reduces the need for frequent replacement and trash.

Transparency:

In order for consumers to make educated decisions and know that the clothing they purchase is manufactured in a socially and environmentally responsible manner, sustainable fashion promotes supply chain transparency.

In general, sustainable fashion aspires to develop a more moral, green, and socially conscious fashion sector that helps both people and the environment.

Sustainable clothing dyes that are available

There are many problems with current textile dyeing and treatment practices, and almost all of them are related to excess water consumption and pollution.

We know that a large amount of potentially toxic chemicals are used to dye our clothing, but there's a lack of knowledge and transparency about their properties in relation to human and environmental health.

Pigments from microbes

Labs across the world are discovering a new way to create colour for our clothing: bacteria. *Streptomyces coelicolor* is a microbe that naturally changes colour based on the pH of the medium it grows inside. By changing its environment, it is possible to control what type of colour it becomes. The process of dyeing with bacteria begins by autoclaving a textile to prevent contamination, then pouring a liquid medium filled with bacterial nutrients over the textile in a container.

The bacteria is “live dyeing” the material, meaning that as the bacteria grows, it is dyeing the textile.

Natural Dyeing Method

Nature actually provides plenty of natural options for rich vibrant colours and finishing options. "Rather than using harsh chemicals to soften and finish the fabric a finish made of beeswax, Aloe Vera and Vitamin A are a good alternative.

Oxygen Based Bleaching Method

"Chlorine bleach" contains toxic to customers and the environment but it is still used to bleach material. The alternative option of that could be oxygen-based (hydrogen peroxide). Some of the factories already have started to use ozone. "This technology relies on cool water rather than having to maintain the fabric in a hot water bath for many hours.

Sustainable Fabrics available

Eco-friendly rubber from Algae

Cruelty-Free Leather From Pineapple Leaves

Vegan Fur Made From Seaweed

Wool From Coconut Husks

Silk From Banana Stem

Research Gap

Sustainable fashion is a rapidly growing concept that is not yet fully understood academically. Through a thorough examination of several forms of research centered around the emerging phenomenon of sustainable fashion, there are several gaps that could provide the most successful context for mobilizing the movement through the global market. First, there must be a clear and accessible way to inform all demographics about the definition of sustainable fashion, the harsh realities of standardized clothing production and manufacturing, and the necessity to move away from subscribing to fast fashion in order to create a greater social, ecological, and economic sustainability (Cervellon et al, 2012). Secondly, a marketing approach that is sustainable for both the eco-conscious and those willing to learn must be created in a way that makes sustainable fashion easily understandable, accessible, and equally as appealing as fast fashion (Park et al, 2016)

Research Methodology

As a tool for this exploration grounded on the mindfulness and perception towards sustainable fashion, an online questionnaire in relation to the google forms platform was used. The snowball system was employed for the distribution of the questionnaire, via dispatch, social networks, and private connections. There are no exact standardized tests that are curated for similar exploration and hence some external help was taken from colourful spots and exploration papers to understand the content more deeply and form an on- point questionnaire.

The questionnaire consists of an aggregate of 16 questions. All the questions included are multiple choices and are more directed towards the particular opinions and particular habits of the population at large. It largely relates to the replier's station and gets towards the colourful aspects of sustainable fashion.

In this questionnaire, the following possibilities as implicit answers to the below- mentioned questions were offered Likert's five- point scale and tone- assessment scale and the selection of the statement that utmost likely corresponds to the respondent's attitude. Likert's five- point scale was chosen, being the most common scale used in exploration and utmost well- known to the actors. The repliers freely completed a questionnaire on the content of sustainable fashion.

The preliminarily conducted experimenters have set up that sustainability mindfulness increases with age and youngish people are less apprehensive of sustainability. On the other hand, social media influencers have further influence on the young group of people, so those who follow accounts that promote ethical consumption could show lesser mindfulness of sustainability. This exploration was more directed towards the teenage group. Further number of woman scholars have shown interest as compared to the manly scholars.

The main thing of this exploration was to examine how important fashion sustainability is to consumers when buying clothes and whether they are informed about the sustainability programs of a particular fashion brand before coping.

Results

As it was mentioned earlier, we chose to circulate google forms to collect the required data for awareness and perception of people towards sustainable fashion. We got a mix response from people regarding this. The questionnaire was collected from a total of 101 individuals.

People mostly purchase clothing items every few months. There are around 68% of the teenage population that prefer buying clothes in every few months and about 24% of the population who buy them every few

days. Today even though the topic of sustainable fashion is a top trend there are people who are not aware that of this concept. In our survey we learnt that about 24% of the people who filled the form are not aware of what sustainable fashion is and around 79% of them know what it is. But the main question is do they buy clothes of sustainable nature? It is difficult to change the regular preferences of the people but I believe its not impossible. Through our survey we did understand that while purchasing clothes people do consider the ecological safety of the material being purchased. There are about 54% who do realize that this is an important factor while buying clothes and that's a good sign, but unfortunately for 46% of the population it does not matter. Not only this, but only 44.3% of the population are worried about the environmental effect of the clothes that they wear on a daily basis and that is not a good sign for the environment as less than half the population is worried about the effects of the clothes they wear, whereas 55.7% are not really worried about this. So how important is sustainability to people when they are purchasing clothes? Well surprisingly 35.6% of the people are neutral about this, while 13% of the population thinks it is not important and 30% of the population feels like it is important.

When we talk about sustainability of clothes, the first step is to being able to reuse or repurpose the old clothes and although not everyone has heard or believe in sustainability of clothes, around 74.3% of the population repurpose the clothes they have been used and only 25.7% of them throw them away. Keeping this in mind a good percentage of 52.9% of the population have used clothes of sustainable nature and only 47.1% of the people don't use or have never used clothes of sustainable nature. Well, not everyone believes in sustainable fashion and hence only 78.6% of the population believes the fact that there will be positive impact of sustainable fashion on the environment whereas 20% of the population are neutral about this and less than 10% of the population believe there is a negative impact of the same. By 62.9% of the population, it is believed that the fashion industry will still be able to maintain its profitability while 28.6% are not very sure about this while 8.6% don't think this will bring any profits to them.

The rising interest in sustainable fashion in recent times, having in mind the current dislocation in the preliminarily established way of life, could pave the way for a more significant addition of sustainable behaviour and greater consumer mindfulness of the consequences when consuming fashion particulars

Scope of future studies

High-end fashion companies use innovative techniques to make garments and accessories from recycled materials. Vintage clothes is becoming more popular, but designer firms are also promoting sustainable fashion. In order to produce a variety of sustainable apparel, recycled materials and fresh materials like horseradish plants and chestnuts are being used.

Future fiber-to-fibre recycling in the garment industry is a goal of fashion designers. Major fashion firms take note as sustainability makes its way into the fashion business and change their designs to reflect it. Safe factory conditions are ensured by sustainable clothes.

It enables businesses to be truthful about their goods and responsible for their deeds. More individuals are becoming interested in sustainable fashion today. Everyone adopts innovative methods to assist sustainable fashion, from tiny clothing start-ups to the enormous fashion business. Because it encourages a safer and greener planet, sustainable fashion has a large market potential.

Conclusion

Despite the numerous advantages of working to develop a sustainable fashion industry, efforts to persuade consumers to buy more ethically produced clothing have met with only patchy success. However, as people become more aware of the drawbacks of the current apparel industry, a more sustainable future may be in

reach. Consumers must be made more aware of the consequences of their clothes purchases and the harsh reality of unethical brands in order to facilitate a change in the global fashion sector. With the emergence of a new fashion industry, there also needs to be a new, multifaceted marketing approach to develop a stronger, more positive relationship between consumers and brand explicitness, credibility, and quality. Realising that opaque businesses are probably not producing their goods in an ethical way is a great place to start in encouraging customers to investigate more sustainable options on the market.

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