

# CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR TOWARDS FAST FASHION: A STUDY ON H&M WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COIMBATORE

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## Abstract

The fast fashion industry has rapidly expanded in India, driven by changing consumer preferences, global trends, and digital influence. This study explores the buying behavior of consumers towards fast fashion, with a particular focus on H&M in Coimbatore city. The research aims to understand the socio-demographic profile of consumers, key factors influencing their purchasing decisions, the role of social media and brand image, and their awareness of environmental impacts related to fast fashion. Data was collected from 102 respondents using a structured questionnaire via Google Forms, and analyzed using percentage analysis and the Chi-square test. The findings reveal that affordability, style, and trendiness are the primary motivators for purchase, especially among young consumers aged 18–25. Despite a moderate level of awareness about sustainability, consumers continue to prioritize fashion and price over ethical concerns. The study highlights the need for fashion brands like H&M to integrate sustainability with their marketing strategies and to educate consumers about responsible consumption. These insights can help retailers design more effective branding, customer engagement, and sustainability initiatives tailored to emerging urban markets.

**Keywords:** *Fast Fashion, Consumer Buying Behaviour, H&M, Sustainability, Trend-Driven Consumption, Brand Image, Environmental Awareness, Youth Fashion.*

## INTRODUCTION

The fast fashion industry has revolutionized the way consumers approach clothing and fashion, offering quick, trendy, and affordable options. Among the leading global brands, H&M has established a strong presence, catering to diverse consumer preferences. This study focuses on understanding consumer buying behaviour towards H&M, with particular emphasis on the Coimbatore market. By evaluating various factors such as motivations, purchase decisions, brand perception, and consumer satisfaction, this research aims to provide insights into the factors driving consumer engagement with the brand.

Rapid fashion has changed significantly throughout the years because to shifts in customer behavior, market dynamics, and production methods. Its inception dates to the middle of the 20th century, when mass manufacturing methods gained traction and made it possible for ready-to-wear apparel to appear as well as the creation of international supply networks. The phrase "fast fashion" became well-known in the 1980s when merchants started implementing rapid reaction plans. Zara, a Spanish retailer, rose to prominence at this time by simplifying production procedures and supply chains so that they could react quickly to new trends

## POPULAR FAST FASHION BRANDS

As of February 2025, the availability of the mentioned fast fashion brands in Coimbatore is as follows:

- **Zara:** Currently, there is no official Zara store in Coimbatore. However, Zara has been expanding into tier-2 cities in India, so it's possible that a store may open in the future.
- **H&M:** H&M has established a presence in Coimbatore with a store located in Prozone Mall.
- **Forever 21:** There is no official Forever 21 store in Coimbatore at this time.
- **Shein:** Shein re-entered the Indian market in 2025 through a partnership with Reliance Retail, primarily operating online via platforms like Ajio.com. While there isn't a physical Shein store in Coimbatore, you can access their products online.
- **Uniqlo:** Uniqlo has been expanding into tier-2 cities in India, including Coimbatore. However, as of now, there isn't an official Uniqlo store in the city.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the widespread popularity of H&M, the specific preferences, perceptions, and satisfaction levels of consumers in Coimbatore have not been extensively explored. Understanding the motivations behind consumer choices, the influence of pricing, style, trends, and convenience. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by analysing consumer behaviour towards H&M, providing valuable insights for the company to enhance its offerings and strengthen its market position in Coimbatore.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the motivations behind consumers' preference for H&M.
2. To explore the factors that influence consumers' purchase decisions on H&M (such as price, style, trends, and convenience)
3. To evaluate consumer satisfaction with the quality and variety of products offered by H&M.

## **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The Report Titled “Consumer Buying Behavior Towards Fast Fashion: A Study On H&M With Special Reference to Coimbatore” Delves This study Which aims to analyze the consumer buying behavior towards fast fashion, specifically focusing on H&M in Coimbatore. The scope of the research covers various aspects of consumer behavior, including factors influencing purchase decisions, brand perception, price sensitivity, sustainability concerns, and shopping preferences

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study focuses on the population residing in Coimbatore city. Primary data was collected directly from respondents through a structured Google Form consisting of 14 carefully designed questions, keeping in mind the key aspects of the research. The sampling technique used was stratified sampling, wherein the population was divided into distinct subgroups based on socio-demographic characteristics, and random samples were drawn from each subgroup to ensure proportional representation. A total of 102 respondents participated in the study. For data analysis, percentage analysis was used to interpret the responses in terms of proportions, while the chi-square test was applied to examine the association between categorical variables and to derive meaningful insights from the data collected.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Fast fashion has emerged as a significant trend in the global apparel industry, characterized by quick turnaround of designs, affordability, and mass production. According to Joy et al. (2012), fast fashion brands capitalize on the constant demand for new styles by offering runway-inspired clothing at affordable prices. This business model appeals particularly to younger consumers who seek trendiness without long-term investment in clothing. Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010) highlight that consumer behavior in this segment is heavily influenced by psychological, social, and cultural factors, with brand image and peer influence playing a critical role.

Solomon (2011) asserts that fashion consumption is not purely functional but symbolic, as consumers often express identity, lifestyle, and values through their clothing choices. Social media further accelerates this behavior, creating a digital environment where trends are rapidly disseminated. Studies by McNeill and Moore (2015) emphasize the impact of influencers and digital marketing in shaping consumer preferences, especially among Millennials and Gen Z, who are highly responsive to online content and fashion trends.

While fast fashion meets the desire for affordability and style, several scholars have raised concerns about its sustainability. Niinimäki and Hassi (2011) argue that despite growing awareness of environmental and ethical issues, this awareness seldom translates into sustainable consumer behavior, indicating a gap between attitudes and actual practices. This is echoed by Harris et al. (2016), who suggest that while consumers may express concern about unethical labor and textile waste, their purchase decisions are still driven by price and style.

Overall, the literature reveals that fast fashion consumption is shaped by a complex interplay of affordability, trend-consciousness, social influence, and convenience, often outweighing environmental or ethical considerations. This review sets the foundation for examining how these factors manifest in the buying behavior of H&M consumers in Coimbatore.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The study on consumer buying behavior towards fast fashion, with special reference to H&M in Coimbatore, revealed that the majority of respondents, particularly in the age group of 18–25, are highly influenced by fast fashion trends. A significant number of consumers are drawn to H&M due to its affordability, trendy designs, and frequent new collections. The findings indicate that style and price are the primary factors influencing purchase decisions, followed by quality and brand image. Most purchases are made occasionally, with social media and online promotions playing a pivotal role in shaping consumer preferences. Additionally, convenience and easy availability through both physical stores and online platforms contribute to customer satisfaction. However, the study also found that while many consumers are aware of the environmental impacts of fast fashion, this awareness does not significantly alter their buying behavior. This highlights a gap between sustainability awareness and actual consumer practices. Overall, the research underscores the importance of trend-conscious marketing strategies and the need for greater awareness initiatives to bridge the gap between fast fashion consumption and environmental responsibility.

### **1. Demographic Profile of Respondents**

The study captured responses predominantly from individuals aged between 18 and 25 years, reflecting the youth's strong engagement with fast fashion brands like H&M. A majority of respondents were students and young professionals, indicating that fast fashion is more appealing to a younger demographic with a strong desire for trendy, affordable clothing. Gender-wise, female respondents slightly outnumbered males, further affirming that women are more active consumers in the fast fashion segment.

## **2. Purchase Patterns and Preferences**

The frequency of purchase was found to be occasional, with most respondents shopping for fast fashion apparel on a monthly or quarterly basis. The preference for H&M stemmed from its ability to offer up-to-date fashion trends at reasonable prices. Style and affordability were identified as the most influential factors in the buying decision, followed by brand reputation and product quality. The convenience of both in-store and online shopping platforms has further contributed to customer satisfaction, with online platforms slightly edging out in-store experiences among tech-savvy youth.

## **3. Influence of Marketing and Social Media**

Social media emerged as a powerful influencer in shaping consumer perceptions and purchasing behavior. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook, along with influencer marketing, have significantly contributed to brand visibility and desirability. Respondents reported that advertisements, promotional offers, and endorsements by fashion influencers directly impacted their intention to purchase fast fashion items.

## **4. Environmental Awareness vs. Buying Behavior**

Although a considerable number of respondents acknowledged being aware of the negative environmental impact of fast fashion—such as textile waste and unethical labor practices—this awareness did not substantially affect their purchasing choices. The findings point to a notable attitude-behavior gap, where environmental consciousness exists, but sustainable buying practices are not yet widely adopted. The allure of trendy, low-cost clothing continues to override concerns about sustainability.

## **5. Brand Loyalty and Customer Experience**

Respondents indicated a moderate level of brand loyalty towards H&M. While some favored trying other brands for variety, many expressed satisfaction with H&M's customer service, product quality, and pricing. Visual merchandising, ease of return policies, and the in-store ambiance were also mentioned as contributing factors to a positive shopping experience.

## **6. Implications of the Study**

The findings suggest that while H&M successfully meets the fashion and pricing expectations of young consumers, there is an opportunity to educate and engage customers in sustainability initiatives. Retailers could leverage this by integrating eco-friendly collections, transparent sourcing, and recycling programs, thereby attracting the environmentally aware segment without compromising on style or affordability.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ **Enhance Consumer Awareness on Sustainability:**

H&M should intensify campaigns about sustainable fashion and eco-friendly practices to bridge the gap between awareness and actual consumer behavior.

➤ **Introduce Affordable Sustainable Collections:**

Launching eco-conscious clothing lines at competitive prices may encourage environmentally aware customers to make more responsible purchase decisions.

➤ **Leverage Influencer Marketing for Ethical Fashion:**

Collaborate with influencers to promote sustainable collections and responsible consumption among trend-sensitive youth.

➤ **Improve Product Quality:**

While affordability attracts customers, ensuring better quality will enhance customer satisfaction and brand loyalty over time.

➤ **Personalize Marketing Strategies:**

Use data analytics to understand individual preferences and provide personalized offers, recommendations, and loyalty programs.

➤ **Conduct Regular Customer Feedback Surveys:**

Understanding consumer expectations through feedback will help improve product offerings and customer service.

➤ **Enhance In-Store Experience:**

Improve visual merchandising, staff interaction, and store layout to create a memorable and engaging shopping experience.

➤ **Integrate More Circular Fashion Initiatives:**

Encourage practices like clothing recycling, buy-back offers, or discount vouchers for returned garments to promote circular economy principles.

➤ **Strengthen Online Shopping Experience:**

Optimize the website and mobile app interface to provide a seamless and user-friendly online shopping journey.

➤ **Expand Localized Marketing in Tier 2 Cities:**

Implement regional marketing strategies in Coimbatore and similar cities to increase brand reach and relatability with local audiences.

## CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to explore consumer buying behavior towards fast fashion, with a specific focus on H&M customers in Coimbatore. The findings reveal that fast fashion is highly popular among young consumers, primarily due to its affordability, trendy styles, and ease of availability through both online and offline platforms. Key influencing factors include price, fashion appeal, brand image, and social media presence. Although there is a moderate level of awareness regarding the environmental and ethical issues associated with fast fashion, this awareness has not significantly influenced purchasing behavior, indicating a clear gap between consumer values and actions.

It is evident that while fast fashion satisfies the immediate fashion needs of consumers, there is a growing need for brands like H&M to align consumer appeal with sustainability. Integrating eco-friendly initiatives with marketing strategies could encourage responsible consumption without compromising on style or affordability. The study also highlights the importance of digital influence, especially among Gen Z and millennials, in shaping fashion choices. Overall, the research contributes valuable insights for marketers, policymakers, and fashion retailers to understand consumer motivations and promote a balance between trend-driven consumption and ethical fashion practices.

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