

# Sustainable fashion brands: A study on consumer perception in Guwahati City.

*Author(s):*

**Rubila Narjinary<sup>1</sup> and Roshni Agarwal<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Students of M. Com 4<sup>th</sup> Semester, Royal School of Commerce, The Assam Royal Global University

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Royal School of commerce, The Assam Royal Global University.

## **Abstract**

This article focuses on the consumers perception on sustainability. With rise in pollution and rise in environmental degradation it has made the consumers more aware about sustainability. Consumers now go for sustainable clothing as well as the textile industries now focuses more on sustainability due to rise in competition and also due to consumer awareness regarding sustainable fashion. Through questionnaires being circulated to the consumers it was found that most of the consumers switched to sustainable clothing for greener environment. They also agreed that sustainable clothing protects us from harmful effects. Consumers are aware about sustainable clothing and are also willing to pay for their purchase as it saves the environment. Sustainability has become an important topic of discussion. With the increase in the depletion of the ozone layer it has made the people concern about their health as well as their lives. People are more concern about the environment as it directly impacts or increase the level of their home being in danger. Industries as well as big companies have kept that in mind and started producing more sustainable or recyclable clothing as the demand for it increases. With the increase of competition in the market all companies have stated producing sustainable clothes.

## **Introduction**

Sustainability has become an important topic of discussion in this generation. With the degradation of the ozone layers in the Antarctica, the melting of the glaciers and the heat wave that keeps on coming, it has made a consumer aware about the consciousness of the environment. They are aware that they are the reason behind all this. Human-beings have over consumed whatever is left and is suffering from its own consequences. The only thing that is left and they can do is that search for measures for the protection of the environment.

Fast fashion is a clothing that uses very cheap materials to produce. The price is so cheap that it attracts consumers to purchase more that they need. It leads to over consumption of the clothing which are likely to end up in landfills as they have a short life that is they don't last long. With many clothing ending up in landfill some are burnt and some are sold as second hand. When burnt these clothing release toxins in the atmosphere which becomes very harmful for human as well.

Consumers are also very concern about the harms that they would cause to the environment. They are aware about the term 'sustainability'. Most of the consumers who are very well educated and are also aware about the fatal effects that a synthetic clothing or fast fashion clothing switches to sustainable clothing. With the rise of consumers being aware about sustainability companies have face many competitions and most of the

companies have started producing more clothing that can be recycled very easily. This has made a very huge impact and a small move to reduce environmental loss.

The companies or the brands have also become very aware of the term 'Sustainability'. With the increase in competition and the consumer perception on sustainability, the brands now focus on greener environment by switching to sustainability. They started producing clothes made from natural fibres as well as started producing clothes made out of recycled products. This is the initiative done by most of the brands. They have reduced the production of synthetic materials.

Many schools and institutions teach their students about sustainability and how to protect the environment. They teach their children what 'sustainability' means so they become very aware about the things that can cause disturbance to the environment. In India in most of the schools and even colleges Environmental Studies which is a subject has been made mandatory as their syllabus. In environmental studies students learn about the environment and about the ways of protecting the environment.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Gazzola, P. et. Al. (2020) Trends in Fashion Industry: The Perception of Sustainability and Circular Economy: A Gender/Generation Quantitative Approach. This paper commits itself to the appearance of fast changing fashion trends that affects the fashion industry and drives it into competitiveness. It also talks about how consumers are more aware about purchasing goods that will meet the need of the future generation and also have a circular economy, which will meet the need of all the generations. A survey was conducted by collaborating with the Insurbia University. To conclude the younger generations are more aware about the sustainability of the products, using the principles of circular economy and companies are paying more attention to it to remain competitive in the market.

Bhardwaj, V. & Fairhurst, A. (2010) Fast fashion: Response to changes in the fashion industry. This article is all about how retailers are more focused with the fast-changing trends in the fashion industry which leads them in producing low quality products, low-cost products and mass or aggressive production. It has affected the fashion industry and have direct impact on the purchasing behaviour of the consumer. Research based understanding of the consumers will help retailers gain more understanding of the consumers purchasing behaviour.

Waren, A. (2021) Sustainability in the Fashion Industry-Effect on consumer Perceptions and Purchasing Habits. The authors aim in this paper was to see the connection between the sustainability and consumer perception. This paper is all about how sustainability can affect customers buying behaviour and perception. It was concluded that luxury brands are more focussed on the sustainability of the products. It was shown that sustainability was very important and have change the thoughts of the consumers drastically.

Collett, M. et. Al. (2013) Consumer perceptions the limited lifespan of fast fashion apparel. This paper focuses on the factors that contribute to the short lifespan of fast fashion apparels. Thirteen female undergraduates were interviewed and the factors such as what stop them from wearing fast fashion apparels, how the

consumers felt about the products and how the consumers felt about the short lifespan of the products were studied. The response here were neutral and negative.

Harris.F, et. Al. (2015) Sustainable clothing: challenges barriers and interventions for encouraging more sustainable consumer behaviour. This paper talks about the challenges faced while going sustainable. It has also revealed that most of the consumers have a very less knowledge about sustainable clothing. The findings in this identifies or shows the challenges that are being faced and also they ways where the challenges can be overcome. In conclusion this paper showed that encouraging the consumers to purchase sustainable clothing will not make consumers change their buying behaviour as well as their disposal behaviour.

Kuruppu RU (2018) Consumer Perceptions on Sustainable Fashion and Strategy for Competitiveness. Purchasing a sustainable clothing has become a trend among the consumers as the consumers today are more focussed on going green and saving the earth. The concept of sustainability is being popularised in textile or apparel industries as well. As more waters or energy are being consumed this has brought to the matter to the public. This paper focus on making consumer aware of sustainability as well as staying competitive in the market as well. The competition is the main concern of most of the industries. Keeping all of that in mind this paper will study the consumer perception as well as study the competitiveness of sustainable fashion apparels.

Schivinski, B. et. Al. (2016) The effect of social media communication on consumer perceptions of brands. This paper shows that how social media communications have an impact on the consumers. It shoes that firm created social media communication affected only brand attitude and the user generated social media has a good influence on both brand attitude and brand equity.

Pookulangara, S. & Shephard, A. (2013) Slow fashion movement: Understanding consumer perceptions. This paper talks about how fast fashion or just in time fashion are having mass production of clothing at a low price which makes consumers purchase more and later ends up in trash creating major issues to the environment. Hence keeping in mind, the consumers demand slow fashion has been implemented as it has a more holistic approach and has no harm to the environment.

Mandacic, D. et. Al. (2022) The impact of fashion brand sustainability on consumer purchasing decisions. The study of this paper is focused on how the consumer perceive sustainability to be and how this perception motivates them in their buying decisions. The target of this paper is to find out the difference between attitudes and purchasing behaviour of the Croatian customers. 263 respondents give their survey and the results showed that the respondents felt more positive about sustainability with clothing brands.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

### Meaning

Sustainability means meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In addition to natural resources, we also need social and economic resources. Sustainability is not just environmentalism. Embedded in most definitions of sustainability we also find concerns for social equity and economic development.

**WHY IS SUSTAINABILITY IMPORTANT**

Sustainability have become very important over the years. It is well known to improve the health, life of the people as well as the environment. Sustainability has been known to reduce the harms or the environmental pollution.

**To have a good future for all**

We live in an environment that does not only belong to us that is the human species but also belongs to the animals or mammals of this planet. Human beings are born smarter so it is our responsibility to look or take care of the environment so that we will have a secure future. If we put the practice of being sustainable it would mean choosing ethical choice for the welfare of the future.

**To minimize usage of energy**

Switching to sustainable way of using energy leads to less utilization of energy as well as energy cost. Using solar or wind energy have been known to reduce high cost of electricity consumption and reduce monthly utility fees.

**Makes the habit healthy**

Switching to sustainability have been known in making the habits of the people very healthy. Switching to sustainability will help in reducing toxic chemicals being released or the over consumption of carbon footprint. The more we focus on sustainability the more it leads to healthy environment for all to live safe and sound.

**Impacts on society**

Switching to sustainability leads to a very huge societal impact. It leads to more people switching to sustainability and more people being encouraged to sustainability. Encouraging people to use eco-friendly products leads to more happy and greener environment, less from pollution and any other health effects.

**CONSUMER PERCEPTION**

Consumer perception refers to the way a consumer feels or belief about a certain product or a brand. It has been noticed that it plays a crucial role in the building of customer loyalty as well as the good image of particular brand. If a consumer feels good about a certain product that a company or brand is producing it increases the brand loyalty as well as the company have a good brand image. The company should also understand the consumers as well. Their needs, wants and demands should be looked after for better understanding of the customers. If a consumer have a great experience about a certain products then a consumer will have a very good perception about that certain products. Perception all depends on a product or services offered by a particular company.

**Factors affecting consumer perception**

There are many factors affecting consumer perception. Some of the factors are as follows:

## **Price**

Price is one factor that affects the consumer perception. If the price of a particular product is reasonable to the consumer, then the consumer will have a very good perception about a certain or a particular product. If the price of a particular product is comparatively higher as compared to the price of the other products in the other markets, then the consumer will have a bad perception about particular product.

## **Quality**

Quality is another factor that affects the consumer perception. Quality is one of the most vital factors that affects a consumer perception. The quality of a particular product should meet the customers satisfaction in order to have a good perception. The quality of a product and the price of a product should match. If the price of a product is too high and the quality is very bad as compared to the price taken then the consumers have a very bad perception about a certain or a particular product. Here communication also plays a very important role. Word of mouth regarding a particular product also tells a lot about the product. Word of mouth about a quality of a product travels very fast from consumer to another consumer.

## **Service quality**

The quality service is one important thing that is very important to attract more consumers or not to have any bad impression on the consumers. The service quality can over shadow even the quality as well as the price of a certain product. What matters to most of the consumer is the service that they get before or after they purchase a certain product. It can have a very huge as well as long lasting effect on a consumer. If a company provides services to a consumer while they encounter a problem, it makes the consumers gain trust which again becomes very helpful for the company as the consumer will perceive good things about a company.

## **Branding**

The brand also plays a very important role in consumer perception. If a consumer knows about a certain brand, then the consumer will feel safe to purchase from a particular brand. This is called building a good brand image. Some brands that are well known by everyone are considered to be very trust worthy and have given good services throughout the years.

## **Packaging**

The way a particular product is presented also plays a very important role in consumer perception. If the packaging of a certain products is not done in a proper manner the consumers have a very bad perception of a particular product. If we receive any parcel or products in a defective or very badly packed, we have a very bad impression about a product. Packaging should be done in such a way so as to attract the consumers and so that a consumers would have a good perception about a certain product.

## **Reputation of brand**

Name or reputation of a brand also plays a major role in consumer perception. A brand reputation is built through word to mouth as well the overall experience about a certain product or brand that a consumer has

had over the past few years. The consumers may however have a bad perception about a certain product if it does not fulfil its needs or provides a defective product to them which makes them change their minds.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To examine the factors affecting consumer preference towards sustainable cloth.
- To examine the satisfaction level of consumer towards sustainable cloth brands.

## **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. It comprises of theoretical analysis of the study of methods and principles associated with the branch of knowledge

1. **Area of study:** Area of the study is Guwahati, Assam.

2. **Nature of Data:** Both primary and secondary data have been used for the present study.

□ Primary data: Primary data is also known as raw data which is collected from a source. Questionnaire was used in this study to collect primary data which were supplied to the participants through Google forms.

□ Secondary data: Secondary data is referred to as those data which is collected by someone other than the person using it. Websites, journals, articles were used in this study to collect secondary data.

3. **Sampling Technique:** Simple random sampling was applied to collect primary data

4. **Sampling Size:** Sample size refers to the number of respondents to be selected for the purpose of getting primary data. The sample size of this study is 100

5. **Tools of data analysis:** Pie chart and Tables

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

1. According to the analysis it shows that most of the respondents were the age group of between 21-23 that is 56% out of 100%.
2. According to the analysis female respondents were more as compared to male respondents that is 62% out of 100% were females and 38% were males.
3. According to the analysis it is shown that most of the respondents use sustainable clothing brands that is 79% of them use sustainable clothing brands.
4. According to the analysis it shows that 45% of respondents purchases clothes once a month which stood at the highest.
5. According to the analysis it shows that the preferred type of clothing were branded clothes which stood at 52% out of 100%
6. According to the analysis the respondents neither agreed or disagreed with the statement that that “branded clothing company focuses more on sustainability”, stood at neutral.
7. According to the analysis it shows that H&M was the most preferred brand. It stood at 53% out of 100%.
8. According to the analysis it shows that the respondents were satisfied with their quality.
9. According to the analysis the respondents were at neutral side when it came to no animal cruelty.
10. According to the analysis it shows that the respondents were at the neutral side with 100% organic cotton being used.

11. According to the analysis it shows that the respondents were at a neutral side when it comes to affordability.
12. According to the analysis it shows that the respondents were at neutral side about their preferred brand cost.
13. According to the analysis it shows that the respondents were at a neutral side when it came to satisfaction level of the brand giving huge discount.
14. According the analysis it shows that most of the respondents were at neutral with their satisfaction level with location.
15. According to the analysis it shows the respondent's satisfaction level with attractive showrooms were at a neutral side.
16. According to the analysis it shows the respondents were at a neutral side with the good service given by their preferred brands.
17. According to the analysis it shows the respondents were satisfied with the advertisement of their preferred brands.
18. According to the analysis it shows that the respondents were satisfied with the trend that their preferred brand follows.
19. According to the analysis it shows that the respondents were highly satisfied with their preferred brands.
20. According to the analysis it shows that the consumers would recommend their preferred brand.
21. According to the analysis upon the meaning of sustainable being asked most of the respondents choose "meeting the present needs without compromising the future generation" as the meaning of sustainability.
22. According to the analysis it showed that majority of the respondents agreed that wearing sustainable clothes protects us from harmful effects.
23. According to the analysis it shows that majority of the respondents agreed to pay more for the purchase of sustainable clothes.
24. According to the analysis it can be seen that majority of the respondents were aware that wearing sustainable clothes can protect the environment.
25. According to the analysis it shows that majority of the respondents motive for wearing sustainable clothes was for greener environment.

## CONCLUSION

Sustainability has become an important topic of discussion. With the increase in the depletion of the ozone layer it has made the people concern about their health as well as their lives. People are more concern about the environment as it directly impacts or increase the level of their home being in danger.

Industries as well as big companies have kept that in mind and started producing more sustainable or recyclable clothing as the demand for it increases. With the increase of competition in the market all companies have stated producing sustainable clothes.

Consumers are aware that sustainable clothes is a small step from their side to protect the environment. They are aware that it can protect them from harmful side effects and prolonged illness.

The survey also shows that consumers are aware that sustainable clothes can protect the environment from harmful side effects of health. The consumers are also willing to pay more for the purchase of sustainable clothes. Their motive for switching to sustainable clothes is to promote more greener environment.

## SUGGESTIONS

1. It would be better for us as well as for the environment if we all can promote sustainability.
2. It is suggested to wear recycled clothing.
3. It is suggested to promote wearing sustainable clothing as it can protect us from harmful side effects.
4. It is suggested for everyone to follow the 3 R's that is "reduce", "reuse", "recycle".

## REFERENCES

John. R. D., Forever 21 sustainability initiatives, A move in right direction, 2017. Accessed from <https://www.sbstatesman.com/2019/09/29/sustainable-fashion-is-on-the-rise-as-forever-21-nears-its-end/>

Gonikberg. X, Sustainable fashion is on rise as Forever 21 near its end, 2019. Accessed from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/josephdeacetis/2021/05/06/hm-drives-innovation-in-sustainability-with-2021-style/?sh=7bd244d45346>

Acetis, J. H&M drives innovation with in sustainability with 2021 style,2021. Accessed from [H&M Mission, Vision & Values | Comparably](#)

A timeline history of textile industry in the world. Accessed from : <https://dugarco.com/en/development-of-textiles-and-the-textile-industry/>

Zara Mission and Vision Statement Analysis. Accessed from [Zara Mission and Vision Statement Analysis | EdrawMind](#)