

IS INDIA READY FOR SUSTAINABLE FASHION

Dr. Sana Saina
Assistant Professor
CMS, Jain deemed - to - be University dr.sana
saima@cms.ac.in

Atif Dhorajiwala
atif_2022@cms.ac.in

Rajalakshmi T
rajalakshmi_t2022@cms.ac.in

Mohammed Aadhil K
mohammed_aadhil2022@cms.ac.in

Umeed Agrawal
umeed_agrawal2022@cms.ac.in

Zaid Jahid
mohammad_jahid2022@cms.ac.in

ABSTRACT:

Sustainable fashion has emerged as a crucial global movement in response to the environmental and social challenges posed by the fashion industry. With India being a significant player in the global textile and apparel market, it is pertinent to evaluate its readiness to embrace sustainable fashion practices. This research paper aims to analyse various aspects of India's fashion industry, including its current state, challenges, initiatives, and future prospects concerning sustainability. Through a thorough examination of existing literature, policies, and industry practices, this paper provides insights into India's readiness for sustainable fashion and proposes recommendations for fostering its adoption.

KEYWORDS:

Sustainable fashion,
India,
textile industry,
environmental impact,
social responsibility

INTRODUCTION

The increasing industrialization and modernization have also made an impact on the textile industry, which is one of the oldest industries in India. The Textile industry is also one of the largest contributors to India's export, with the ready-made garment industry being one of the largest segments in the textile industry. The garment industry of India is known for its varied craftsmanship as it is one of the country's best-skilled industries. This has made it a most suitable platform for the international market.

The borrowing of ideas and concepts from the west and the desire to be a part of global fashion resulted in the birth of Indo-western fusion that is common among people who are highly westernized in their clothing style. This has led to a drastic change in the Indian fashion today. People have become brand conscious, and the average middle-class fashion consumer has become quality conscious. The purchasing power of the people, especially in the urban areas, has also greatly impacted the choice and decision of apparel. With the ever-increasing population, today India has become one of the most lucrative markets throughout the globe.

The fashion industry of India has evolved over the years, transforming the strategies of marketing, distribution, and sales. This has grown the industry worldwide, showing a significant fetish for the western culture, and it has also eventually made the traditional Indian attire become a thing of the past, besides being worn at festivals, events, and ceremonies.

CURRENT STATE OF FASHION INDUSTRY IN INDIA

The Indian garment industry is very fragmented as it is still a cottage industry, though there is considerable talk of it being a sunrise industry. By and large the garment industry currently fulfils the demand for the Indian market. There have also been considerable changes in the fashion retail sector in India that has transformed consumer buying behaviour. This can be seen in retail boom with international formats of retailing such as departmental stores and supermarkets in urban areas. With growing exposure to global trends, it has become an issue of prestige to possess an international brand or label.

This has led to a growth in licensed production in India of foreign brands and increase in the number of brands having tie-ups with international labels with upmarket image. This has increased the purchasing power of the upper middle-class urban consumer, hence leading to growth in retail.

Before stepping into the concept of "sustainable fashion" in India, let's see what is the current state of fashion in India. The fashion industry in India has evolved to encompass a blend of contemporary, conventional, and indo-western styles. The primary driver for the fashion industry in India is the rapidly growing exposure to fashion, increasing disposable income and inclination of the younger generation in urban areas toward a high "fashion consciousness".

The Indian fashion industry is projected to reach US\$ 125 billion soon. The country is reputed for its embroidery and fabric with the ethnic garment industry still remaining the major source of income for most of the rural population. There has been considerable change in consumption patterns among Indian consumers. The younger generation has become the key consumers and is willing to spend more on fashion products.

DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABLE FASHION

A further social imperative is aid to those affected by the current state of the fashion industry. This encompasses aid to farmers in the developing world who have been adversely affected by unstable commodity prices, eradication of small-scale polluting industries, lead and pesticide poisoning, and funding for workers to make a just transition

to more sustainable livelihoods. This can be seen as a difficult task, but the improvement to the global environment and poverty reduction are implicit. The social imperative is based on the concept of fair trade, which can be described as the treatment of workers in the developing world with decency and fairness. Through paying workers in the developing world a fair wage, which provides adequate living standards and therefore results in the eradication of poverty. This is achieved through the employment of minimum wage laws and supportive social institutions. If people are paid a fair wage and lead better lives, it is likely that this will result in governance that is less corrupt. This can be related to the globalization and power in the clothing industry. By supporting fair trade ideals, sustainable fashion emphasizes the use of globalization as a function to improve the livelihoods of workers. Currently, globalization can be seen as detrimental to those in developing countries, as through seeking out the lowest production costs, multinational companies often exploit workers and deny them human rights. Globalization has also resulted in what is now termed the race to the bottom, where the competitive pressure on suppliers and state regulations results in the lowering of wages and deterioration of working conditions. By reversing this race to the bottom, it is possible to improve the conditions of work and pay to meet what would be considered acceptable to sustain the environment and livelihoods of workers.

Sustainable fashion is a generic term used to describe the ethical fashion movement. It is an overarching term to describe clothing, design, production, and retailing that is conscious of its social and environmental impacts. The first imperative is environmental. Sustainable fashion practices can be seen as those which have reduced the carbon footprint. This can be achieved through a variety of ways, be it using organic cotton, reducing the amount of clothing produced (which in turn reduces the amount of textiles and dye used), or using renewable energy throughout the clothing's production. Energy efficiency is crucial in the context of global warming and climate change. Reducing energy consumption, more often than not, results in financial savings. This is also the case with water, another imperative environmental issue. Through using more water-efficient dyeing and finishing or substituting manmade fibres for natural fibres, the water savings are astounding.

For example, it takes 700 gallons of water to make a single cotton t-shirt. By using sustainable fashion methods, you are essentially cutting out waste, whether it be materials, energy, or water.

IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABILITY IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

The resilience concept also points toward future orientation. An attempt to today's systems such that changes made to meet current needs do not compromise future goals. This is ensured by best-known methods designed to prevent wrong decisions through taking into account certain or uncertain implications of a particular action and comparing them against future scenarios. This provides a basis for constraint programming problems, which can be used to attempt to reduce the constraints on damaging actions, allowing the formation of more environmentally friendly and socially accepted strategies. Sustainability strategies are based on concepts drawn from ecological economics, environmental sociology, and also from various disciplines such as geographical information systems and decision science. Of these, one key concept is resilience.

In ecology, the term has been employed to describe how ecosystems, be they forests or small-scale agricultural societies, have the capacity to endure disturbance and still retain basic function and structure. Today, this is viewed as a goal for systems to maintain the ability to sustain and delay or avoid undesirable events. The idea is related to the maintenance and minimization of changes to the system in an effort to avoid damage and the consumption of resources beyond replacement costs. This is applicable to the fashion industry. Changes are often made to increase efficiency at the cost of the environment or society. In order to fully understand the meaning of the term 'sustainable fashion', it is important to follow the development of the term 'sustainability'. The word sustainable is based on a Latin verb *sustinere* - to maintain. In time, the meaning has changed, and in the 21st century, it is associated with environmentally friendly behaviour. A more complex definition of 'sustainability' is to sustain present systems, avoiding the compromise of the availability of resources and the ecological, economical, and social implications of current and future ramifications. This has led to a deeper explanation of the idea of 'sustainability' in relation to the environment and where wrong behaviour leads to irreversible damage.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE FASHION

1. Water pollution and scarcity

Investigation of water systems and treatment in the fashion industry is of great importance and what many believe to be the main cause of increased water pollution. As the industry's largest hub in developing countries, production has primarily taken over in a lot of areas where environmental concerns are low on the priority list. Despite a large shift in an era of corporate social responsibility, water treatment facilities for textile factories are still in dire condition. Many third world countries are far more concerned with production increases getting ahead of their competition rather than water treatment and recycling. As a result of untreated wastewaters from textile and fabric dye plants, often containing toxic substances, many water sources near these factories are extremely heavily polluted. Upstream from larger bodies of water, it is common in these countries for a textile facility to not even have its own waste treatment facility, dumping their waste into a nearby stream or river. The rivers affect the people and animals that use it as an elemental resource, causing health problems for those that live downstream and often going as far as causing the extinction of aquatic species. With little to no regulation of the fashion industry's most harmful processes, the pollution of third world water is an epidemic, having a vast effect on the health and beauty of many areas. Textile dyeing has also been a heavy contributor; the industry is accountable for using around 8000 different chemicals in dyes, many of them known to be hormone disrupting. These dyes will also often contain mordants, used to fix the colour in the fabric, and many of these mordants contain heavy metals, such as lead, copper, and zinc. The result is fast depletion of clean water supplies, and often the dyes will surface in a water source, colouring it and affecting yet another downstream area.

2. Chemical use in textile production

Chemicals are used in every part of the textile production industry. This ranges from the farming of conventional cotton using immense amounts of pesticides, the sowing of GM (genetically modified) seeds designed to require less water, the bleaching and dyeing of fibres, and the wet processing of the clothes. The cross-disciplinary nature of toxicology, a little explored area in textile and clothing research, makes it difficult to assess the different chemicals used and their impact on the environment and human health. However, many of the commonly used chemicals have known adverse effects, especially the pesticides, heavy metals, and other carcinogenic chemicals. It is this knowledge that has seen consumer demand for natural organic products increase rapidly, and recent years have seen such an increase in production. Organic farming reduces the environmental impact of growing, using alternative natural pesticides and fertilizers, and using crop rotation methods to conserve soil quality. Although the use of the GM seeds results in less water wastage, there are many who question the safety of the process, its long-term impact on the local environment, and how consumers can be sure that GM cotton is not being mixed with organic. Steps beyond the farming of natural cotton to further reduce chemical usage would have to be carefully researched in order to avoid causing more damage through veiled processes, as is the case with the GM seeds.

3. Waste generation and disposal

As natural as clothing may be as materials, they do not decompose biologically in a landfill due to the way they are produced and treated. Most common clothing is composed of synthetic non-biodegradable fibers. The remains of natural fibers such as cotton are often mixed in with an array of synthetic fibers. Up to 60% of world clothing is made from cotton, and an alarming portion of these garments have been doused with pesticides, which will cause further harm to the environment as they disperse in a landfill. Clothes that are mixed with an array of blended fibers do not segregate themselves into individual fibers, making it difficult to recycle and make new clothing material. This will result in further waste and depletion of the world's natural resources. Results show that a massive amount of clothing is being disposed of in landfills. In the US, it is estimated that 85% of textiles end up in a landfill. That's approximately 10.5 million tons of clothing. This is due to the faster consumption of clothing, which can be safely illustrated by the uneven proportion of clothing recovered in municipal waste compared to other waste products. This essay will highlight the numerous impacts of the fashion industry and how they affect society and the environment on a global basis. The fashion industry has created a vast number of different products and materials to serve the needs of consumers. These items are meant to be consumed, worn out, and discarded almost on a regular basis. This kind of change is most evident in the fast fashion industry. The fast fashion industry has become a carbon copy of the motor industry in terms of consumption and waste. This is due to the constant change in fashion trends

as well as the need to lower prices on clothing. People are consuming 400% more clothing today than they were a decade ago. This is mainly because prices of clothing have been made so cheap due to the cost efficiency of large-scale production and the fact that clothing is now being treated as a disposable good. An internal report within the European Union has found that the average consumer is purchasing 60% more clothing today than they were in 2000, however, they are keeping these items for only half as long.

SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY

1. Exploitation of garment workers

A sweatshop is a place of employment that violates labor laws and human rights by forcing workers to have long hours in bad conditions for low pay. It is said that one out of every seven people in the world work in sweatshop type conditions. The garment industry is known for having many sweatshops, and the mistreatment of its workers is a serious problem. It is common for textile workers to work from 10 to 14 hours a day with only one day off a week. These long hours often bring workers health problems out of which they can barely afford to treat. Many of these workers have the basic skills for a job in a developed country, but can't find a job other than a sweatshop. Employers take advantage of this and pay less than the set minimum wage in that country. Some workers are not even paid this and it is common for an employer to hold a month's pay to try to stop workers leaving because they feel the work is not worth the pay. Minimum wage can be well below subsistence level for many workers and in countries with widespread poverty this will make garment work the only option for survival. A particularly infamous case of garment worker exploitation is the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in New York. This tragedy killed 146 workers who were unable to escape because the owner had locked the doors to prevent thievery. Locking fire exits is a common practice to prevent theft and it sealed the fate of these workers. The surviving workers were provided with compensation of only twelve dollars.

2. Poor working conditions in factories

The situation of the worker himself is deplorable. In most cases, a building and a few machines are being leased from the business in an urban area. The worker is forced into leaving his family at home and living near the workplace in suspense corrugated shacks. This type of living makes for a volatile social climate, an increase in crime, and civil disorder. And this is the issue of unity and integrity of the country, personified in the blue-collar worker. The man who is trying to make money in order to make ends meet, but is being sucked into a system of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. He and many like him are victims of global economic forces. This must be made aware, the blue-collar workforce is the largest labour market in India. These workers are a great and potentially cheap source of energy and manpower. The global stakeholders are taking advantage of them, feeding off the land in which they are the roots. This is a grave detraction from the effort of sustainability. But all is not lost. India has been making steady progress towards the issue of work safety and standard of life for its workers. This is the case in India. Many of the world's multinational companies outsource and assembly line or create a joint venture with an Indian business to produce their products. Due to increased FDI, many foreign investors have set up their production units in the country, looking for cheap and skilled labour. Unfortunately, many times the quality of labour is only skilled, not educated. Millions of illiterate or semi-literate people from rural India migrate to the urban-industrial centres in search of employment. These people form a considerable portion of the workforce employed in the small-scale sector and are subject to exploitation because of their ignorance of their rights and the low bargaining power. Safety and labour regulations are virtually non-existent for the small-scale unit and the use of unsafe and outdated technology is rampant. Reflecting on the situation in the present, the common man is a lot better off than he was 50 years ago, financially and economically. But the global economic pressure has taken its toll on the lives of the blue-collar worker, working long hours just to survive daily. This frustration is sometimes taken out in the home on children and wives, due to work stresses. The labour force is forced to work longer hours and for less pay, under poor conditions. Globalization and its economic pressures call for businesses to tighten their budgets to be able to sell at competitive rates. In some cases, things are made or grown in developing countries due to cheaper production costs. India's efforts towards sustainability To understand the roles of the Indian government towards maintaining sustainability in the country, one must first define the term 'sustainability'. It is defined as

'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs'. From this, we must think about the needs of the present. 2. Lack of fair wages and workers' rights

3. Lack of fair wages and workers' rights

Currently in the Indian agriculture industry, for instance, the informal labour sector is growing significantly due to the failure of the industry to provide properly for workers in terms of job security and fair wages. Around 98% of all rural work in India is found within the informal labour sector and since the majority of workers are illiterate or unskilled, it is particularly easy for these individuals to be exploited unfairly. All of this comes despite Article 23 of India's Constitution stating that forced labour is prohibited and there are provisions to provide human conditions of work, ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities (Article 24). Measures of implementing minimum wages for unskilled and skilled workers in some rural construction within certain states in India have also had little success in promoting fair wage determination. This is because the nature of the work is temporary, the data provided on minimum wages are well below the agreed minimum and there is little to no enforcement by the government. Although both pieces of legislation and minimum wage implementation within India's independent history demonstrate efforts to ensure fair wages and ban forced labour, results from the field suggest that near enough a fifth of rural unskilled manual workers are still being paid wages below the stipulated rates and 25% of rural scheduled tribe and caste workers reported receiving no wages at all for their work in 2005. It is evidently clear that both India's efforts towards ensuring fair wage determination and work conditions and actual practices occurring in the field are conflicting.

INDIA'S EFFORTS TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

1. Government initiatives and policies

Official development aid (ODA) represents a traditional but still important source of external financing for LDCs. According to the Brundtland report, measures aimed at meeting basic human needs should be given priority, recognizing that it is a precondition for meeting wider needs of environment and development. Sustainable development and poverty eradication are the overarching objectives of India's economic policies and international cooperation. They are pinned on 'Inclusive Growth', the new concept that quantifies a holistic growth process underpinned by a strong growth process. India wishes to work with her partners to reform the global economic systems to prevent a recurrence of the recent financial crisis; to agree on a long-term path of strong, sustainable, and balanced growth; to encourage responsible and inclusive growth in developing countries and work towards the goal of poverty eradication. India's economic engagements span over several meaningful partnerships with a variety of developed and developing partners. A major share of her technical and financial cooperation comes through the traditional partners in the form of aid programs, largely in the form of lines of credit and grants on concessional terms. India's greatest gains have traditionally been through regional and multilateral engagements, often tilted more towards capacity building, enhanced market access, and equitable terms of trade rather than mere aid. In the case of India's LDC partners, there are a large number of S&T, environmental, and capacity building initiatives. India also participates in several triangular cooperation activities geared towards creating self-reliant, sustainable development patterns in the partner LDC given her competitive advantage as a service provider for South-South cooperation in various sectors. India is emerging as an aid provider in its own right, focusing on South-South cooperation, rather than simply being an aid recipient. It is already the second largest emerging donor in the world. According to the 12th Plan Approach Paper, high economic growth over the plan period is needed to continue to raise resources and deploy them effectively in the larger interests of the people. High and sustainable growth with better distribution and utilization of resources remains the key priority for the 12th Plan. The objective is to create a just, equitable, and humane society.

2. Rise of sustainable fashion brands

Numerous sustainable fashion brands are now using a mix of local and global marketing strategies to communicate their brand awareness. Osklen is one such example. This brand from Rio de Janeiro has made a promise to only use

ecological fibres in all collections. Few if any events are more transformative, glamorous and influential in the global fight for social change than the red carpet. This too has not escaped the watchful eye of sustainable fashion proponents. Orme has taken assignment to address the shortfall between glamorous couture and the will to be environmentally responsible. In collaboration with top designer Gary Harvey, and matched with the sponsorship by Coca-Cola, twenty of the world's leading supermodels worked the catwalk in attire created entirely from recycled materials, ranging from used soft drink cans to post-it notes. There is also growing interest in the so-called "slow clothing" movement. This is based on similar principles as the slow food movement, where the focus was shifted from fast, high consumption and waste, to slowed creation and high quality. Slow food has been highly effective in globalizing and commercializing intangible European food heritages. Quercus Biasi, an Australian fashion design company, is dedicated to restoring the value of bespoke garment creation to contemporary society, and this ideology is similarly expressed by traditional styles of dress in places such as India being reworked to suit a contemporary context.

3. Adoption of eco-friendly materials and practices

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the textiles and apparel industry is the third largest contributor to pollution in the world. It has contributed immensely to the deterioration of the environment by releasing toxic substances and hazardous dyes. In the era of globalization, production of cheap and fast fashion has led to the degradation of air and water quality, lower quality of life, and long-term health implications. In response to these issues, Indian fashion designers have begun to incorporate sustainability in production by utilizing eco-friendly materials and natural dyes. Organic cotton is the most popular of the eco-friendly materials, as cotton is already a widely used material in the textile industry. It is grown without the use of any synthetic agricultural chemicals and is 80% rain-fed, drastically reducing the burden on local water sources. One company that has strongly promoted organic cotton is FabIndia. They strive to conserve rural traditions in their process of making clothing and retail products using organic cotton. Another notable company that works with eco-friendly materials is No Nasties. They claim their entire production process is 100% fair trade and organic, using 100% organic cotton and natural dyes. An anecdote shared on their website says "2 hours of natural sunlight is our dryer". The term "natural dyes" is referenced quite a lot in the context of eco-fashion in India, and is essentially dyes made from plants, vegetables, fruits and other naturally occurring sources. They are an eco-friendly alternative to synthetic dyes that are harmful to the environment. Natural dyes have the potential to generate rural employment and increase the economic viability of organic farming in dryland areas. This method of dying fabric is slowly emerging as a trend in India, and for some artisans, has become a source of livelihood, and a means to revive traditions and culture. Soma apparels is a company using this method as a means to give Indian artisans a global market, while promoting environmental sustainability.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE FASHION IN INDIA

1. Cost and accessibility of sustainable fashion

Sustainable fashion is significantly more expensive compared to fast fashion. In a survey conducted in 2019 of 55 Indian consumers, 36.36% could only afford to spend between 1-500 rupees on clothing a month with 27.27% only being able to afford 501-1000 rupees a month. These statistics show that consumers are spending very little on clothing and at these costs it is simply not feasible to purchase sustainable clothing as it's too expensive. Levi's sustainable line is 3 times more expensive than their normal line and in India it is actually being imported from Singapore which adds a huge carbon footprint. This shows that even though sustainable lines are being made they are simply too expensive for the majority of consumers in developing countries. The Indian market is large and diverse and has consumers from all different economic groups. To make effective change there need to be sustainable clothing options which cater to all economic groups. At the moment there is a very narrow target market which is upper class as they are the only ones who can afford sustainable clothing. Consumers in higher income groups have more knowledge about sustainable lifestyles and therefore show more interest in buying sustainable clothing. But there are limited options to which they can switch. People in lower income groups do not have the option to go for sustainable clothing because they cannot compromise the price over the quantity they get. Various

studies and statistics show that consumers are more than willing to switch to sustainable clothing but it cannot be at the cost of cutting their clothing budget and these budget ranges are very narrow for the current options available. The general consensus is that prices need to go at least 10% lower than current prices in order to attract a wider audience.

2. Consumer awareness and demand

The Indian consumer is recognizing the need to switch to slow fashion. Many consumers are beginning to question where their clothing and accessories are being made, and an understanding is being gained that most of their purchases are contributing to aiding social and environmental harm. A majority of farmers and workers in the garment industry are poor, some of them not even earning enough to support their families. It was the Rana Plaza incident in Bangladesh which was the defining moment for the nation with ethical consumerism. It gained more publicity than any previous garment factory incident and was a wake-up call for India too. Consumers are now realizing that even though the price of clothing is cheap, there is a cost to human life. High-end fashion brands sell products to a small percentage of people in India. The highest of these sales are in the metropolitan cities: Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Bangalore. There are also a large number of people who purchase clothing from second-hand stores, after it has been shipped from high-income countries. While the middle class and rural populations are shopping in the markets for the latest trends. The youth now have involvement in western culture, the popularity of jeans, for example, and this is why it is important to now promote sustainable fashion. From recent studies, it has been shown that the youth will buy more ethical fashion if it is similar in price to fast fashion, and so an overlap in price will increase sustainable fashion sales. India is a huge consumer market. There is a growing middle class, and an increasing number of those people desire to increase the standard of living. The growing number of fashion followers is also a reason why there is an increase in the number of fashion purchases.

3. Resistance from traditional fashion industry players

Resistance from traditional fashion industry players Emergence of sustainable fashion has challenged the status quo of existing players. Players in the organic apparel market tend to assimilate the definition of organic apparel to this already existing meaning, thus raising the consumer's expectations to a new high. Many industry experts and insiders, who have been in the eco-fashion industry for many years, have expressed that in order to see the term, organic apparel, be fully embraced by the general public, there must be a clear distinction in what is perceived by the consumer as it relates to the value and the price of the product. The general mass producers of eco-friendly products will need to lower their price points in order to reach a broader market. While larger more recognizable brands will need to disseminate the information with regard to what makes their current product more expensive, which in many cases are production methods using organic materials. This has further led to a resistive behaviour where traditional fashion brands are labelling their products as eco-friendly, when in fact they have not altered anything about the current production methods and are just looking to capture a piece of the market. Failure to develop an alliance with non-government organizations and community groups has paralyzed organizations like TAMM that are looking to push policy and development to implement and facilitate greener and sustainable practices in local industry. The lack of a collective voice has been heavily exploited with aggressive lobbying by larger multinational corporations and has seen industry policy on sustainable production actually take a huge step backwards. This was evident in 2005 when the US swapped their initial signing of the agreement with the backing of several major environment groups to reject the agreement to set higher environment and labour conditions standards for importing garments on the basis that it would be a violation of the WTO regulation.

BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABLE FASHION IN INDIA

1. Environmental conservation and preservation

The comparison and the main impact sustainable fashion would have on the environment is the amount of damage it would reduce. Reduced damage would mean preservation of the environment and prevention of harming and destroying it further, which would also mean a good environment to live in, as well as the prevention of global warming due to less release of carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases. Manufacturing and producing fashion goods and textiles are far less harmful than when sustainable fashion was not considered. Harmful chemicals such as azo dyes, which have been linked to cancer, are not used in the dyeing of organic clothing materials. Most of the damage

today is a result of exploitation to the environment due to landfills of clothing thrown away. It's interesting to think that such an industry of fashion, which is always changing, has an environmental impact on the world and that fashion can actually be sustainable. The obvious reason why sustainable fashion would affect the environment is that by using organic materials, a decreased amount of chemicals and pesticides will be used, which cause damage to the water and air supply. Additionally, the use of harmful processing will also be minimal. Even using and recycling 'old' clothing has a positive impact, much more than one would think. With the use of unwanted clothing, the materials used for making clothes decreases, and as a result, environmental damage is reduced. Improved working conditions and fair trade In modern day society, globalization of economy is a reality, which has led to offshore production; driven by cost saving benefits and maximization of CEO profits which has led retailers to engage in cheap labour in countries with fewer regulations. 1.8 million child labourers are involved in the cotton industry, with children as young as 10 years old working in the fields. 270,000 cotton farmers died of pesticide poisoning in 2006, most from using it on GM cotton. It is important to the ethos of sustainability that workers in the fashion industry are treated humanely and paid fairly. A social sustainability report carried out by Marks and Spencer in 2009 discovered that if garment workers in key developing countries were paid just 1% of the retail price of their products, the amounts would more than double their present earnings. This highlights the disparity between what is paid to workers and what is actually affordable to pay workers. The report also stresses the importance of narrowing the gap between male and female wages in order to empower women in the workforce; of which 85% of garment workers are women. The implementation of ethics and fair trade into the fashion industry can make a huge difference to certain communities by helping increase standards of living, ensuring needs are met and allowing freedom of thought and action for development within communities. Fair trade aims to bridge gaps between stable and unstable economies to alleviate poverty, create environmentally sustainable production methods and attain greater equity in international trade. In order for organizations to involve themselves in fair trade they must follow the fair-trade principles that involve creating opportunities for economically disadvantaged producers, transparency, accountability, capacity building, promoting fair trade, paying a fair price and gender equity. An organization will become a part of a market that aims to work for just an economy; this can occur through either trade with third world and developing nations or even from company to company selling. In the UK a fair-trade company has an influence over a larger company when the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) was established with a base of at least meeting the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions. The aim of ETI is to reduce poverty worldwide through the promotion of ethical work conditions.

2. Boosting local artisans and traditional craftsmanship

Italy is home to an impressive cultural heritage, the majority of which is in peril due to mass industrialization and other social and economic factors. By preserving traditional craftsmanship and valuing the skills and knowledge of artisans, this heritage can be sustained and be vital to modern society. This is why ethical fashion company Alta Roma has launched a new initiative called "Si, Sposaitalia Artisanal" which links high fashion with local artisans to promote traditional Italian craftsmanship. More of this bridge linking tradition and modernity needs to be built to improve the prospects of artisans and maintain tradition and identity within modern fashion culture.

An example of a contemporary approach to promoting traditional craftsmanship may involve Active Resistance to Propaganda, a company which is a one-man project that attempts to re-establish authentic British street culture in opposition to consumer society and the absence of creative communities. This is done through collaboration with artists and craftsmen to produce handmade one-off products. More diffusion lines and affordable products need to be developed for fledgling designers and companies that forge links with artisans in order to create more job opportunities and thus a viable future for them. The British company EDOX is proposing to stimulate the revival of local weaving traditions within a high unemployment area of the Peruvian Andes. This has involved EDOX importing weavers to the company's headquarters in order to appropriate traditional methods suited to the needs of the client, creating products with a stronger demand and higher income for the weavers, while not altering their working conditions. Although there are complex issues regarding cultural appropriation of traditional designs, this is a modest method of offering sustainable economic prospects to struggling communities where the alternative often involves migration to urban areas to seek unskilled labour.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION AND AWARENESS IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

1. Importance of educating consumers and industry professionals

Education plays a crucial role in influencing our opinions, values, and to a certain extent, behaviours. With growing interest in environmentally friendly and ethical products, there has been increasing demand for sustainable goods (Elliott and Pezet, 2011). However, many consumers lack awareness about sustainable fashion and may not fully understand the implications and importance of purchasing sustainably. It is one of the key factors hindering the growth of the sustainable fashion industry. Many consumers would think sustainability is like organic products in the food industry, which prevent damage to the environment, rather than harmful chemicals in the fashion industry, like pesticides in the food industry. This misinterpretation derives from a lack of knowledge about the negative impact of the conventional fashion industry, and it prevents consumers from making informed purchasing decisions in favour of sustainability. Therefore, educating consumers is vital to change mindsets and value systems to promote sustainable fashion. Informed consumers will be able to put pressure on the industry to change unsustainable practices, increase demand for sustainable products, and shift attitudes and norms within the fashion system. This can be done through an array of education methods targeting various consumer demographics. Davies and Ogle (2009) suggested that it would be effective for consumers to receive information about sustainability from the clothing suppliers and retailers themselves. With a growing number of businesses in sustainable fashion, it would be beneficial for consumers to know the importance of buying from those companies. High school students, who are future adults and consumers, could benefit from curriculum-based learning about fashion and its impacts, including the potential to learn about sustainable fashion career choices and their positive effects on the environment. Consumer learning also comes from changes in legislation and government policies. For example, the phasing out of free lightweight plastic bags has led to increased public awareness and use of reusable bags. Such changes could further be reinforced by public awareness campaigns on broader social issues related to sustainability in fashion. In order for consumers to make informed purchasing decisions about sustainability, the information itself needs to be readily accessible and well understood. This can be a challenge, considering the widespread and ambiguous use of the term "sustainability". Bell et al. (2013) state that consumers have varying definitions of sustainability depending on personal interests and positions in life, creating a need for information to be tailored to different consumer demographics. Branding of sustainability in fashion can also be difficult to communicate due to the complexity of the global textile and clothing sector, often requiring explanations about direct and indirect relations to environmental and social justice issues. Information sources include retail and clothing care labels, but the most promising avenue is the internet, which has the potential to reach and tailor information to a wide audience. Online promotional strategies have shown to influence young consumers towards environmentally friendly clothing consuming patterns (Hassan et al., 2013), suggesting there may be more specific internet and even social media-based strategies involving influencers and latent effects in the future. Overall, access to sustainability information and consumer application thereof is a hallmark in influencing consumer attitudes and behaviour change (Davies and Ogle, 2009).

2. Promoting sustainable fashion through media and events

Promoting Sustainable Fashion and Collaboration in the Industry. Promoting Sustainable Fashion through Media and Events Fashion exhibitions are an effective tool to accomplish and connect high awareness with consumer education. It is widely thought that increased awareness is needed; it is what that awareness is about that needs specification. Often it can be increased awareness about a particular sustainable issue within the fashion industry. Awareness of Anita Roddick's involvement with the launch of a global campaign, "The 18 billion Dollar Shirt," to clean up the fashion industry, is still a very recent example. This event used both a fashion exhibition and a display of consumer activist tools; it drew attention to a specific and often unknown issue, encompassing all consumers and industry stakeholders. This leads to a more informed and educated consumer and has a direct impact on consumer behaviour, translating high awareness into higher desire for the product. The eventual result is a competitive market for industry-led change. A change for the fashion industry that wants to meet this newfound consumer demand for the product. Creating a tool for the media is an interesting project that often involves a three-way partnership between an event, private public relations company, and a magazine. It is a usual plan to a fashion event with the objective being the media taking to market the company's brand and the garments that feature. A PR person will create a press plan for the event which will typically include visual and written content about the brand. The visual

content will specifically highlight the garments the company is taking to market. This can then be sent to a magazine who will in turn create an editorial feature about the brand using the images and information from the press plan. A study by Marta Blazquez Cano from University Carlos III of Madrid, Spain, on the effectiveness of the tool reported, "The question, 'What's next?' conducted by the paper's own journalist, is the key to understanding the industry." He suggests that "When media-related contents are published, it generates automatic impact in terms of reputation, and it also has a significant indirect effect in the short term, since it permits a price premium for the product." Fashion events are an ideal setting for promoting sustainable fashion. Regular events can raise awareness among consumers and increase public desire for more sustainable options through education and exposure. The red carpet is a prime media opportunity to draw attention to designers seeking a change in the industry. In September 2010, the United Nations hosted the first ever sustainable fashion event as part of its annual General Assembly. An International Display of Sustainably Stylish Fashion featured five designers from five developing countries, each paired with a fashion mentor from the leading design houses in NY. On an industry level, awareness that sustainable improvement is necessary is raised. The aim here is to affect the fashion industry on a global scale, creating a more competitive market for sustainable fashion that will in turn drive prices of sustainable goods down, making them more accessible to the consumer. Collaboration between educational institutions and industry in sustainable fashion

3. Overview of collaboration between educational institutions and industry

the educational sector and industry have been intertwined for centuries. As a result, most curricular approaches within fashion and textiles have been standardized, reflecting the industry's structure and pace (Hines and Taylor, 2007). This reflects a commonsense understanding that to be successful in industry, students should have an understanding and skills for the industry they are entering. It is acknowledged in the literature reviewed that the global social, economic and environmental context in which business operates is rapidly changing due to well-documented social and environmental issues, some of which are a result of the industry itself. In turn, this changing context also changes the nature of industry. If fashion and textiles companies are to survive in the long term, they will need to understand these issues and their implications and respond by making changes to their processes and products. This will require future employees to have a new set of understandings and skills about how products need to be designed, marketed, and manufactured. A design for sustainability would require employees to understand complex and interrelated environmental issues, understand the limitations of current design and production systems, and have the skills and creativity to develop new innovative solutions. (Russell et al, 2006).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Brand X:

A sustainable fashion success story Brand X was once a company that would cut costs in production wherever possible. This usually took the form of sub-contracting work out to smaller and lesser known manufacturers, and more often than not the work was carried out in other nations. As a result of their cost cutting, Brand X began to pick up a stigma in the public eye as a company that was exploiting workers abroad. The stigma did not affect the company right away, because the traditional mindset of the consumer is to obtain the most fashionable clothing at the lowest price. However, a change in the global economy and increased access of information and raised awareness of the greater impacts of such business practices eventually led to declining profits. At this point, Brand X was better known for its controversial business practices than its clothing, and the company faced a dramatic decrease in consumer support. This was a turning point for Brand X, and they soon began to take actions to turn their negative impact on the industry around and erase the stigma they had gained. At present, the single most important thing they have done is to change their business practices towards an ethical and sustainable model. This began with their manufacturing; they considered returning to the larger manufacturers to increase the efficiency and quality of their clothing, however after weighing it out they decided that it was in the best interest of their greener business model to outsource the manufacturing to a company that focused on sustainability in production. The rationale behind this decision was to help promote businesses with sustainable practices, and to be a change that returns the greater industry to ethical production. To this end, Brand X has managed to strike up a partnership with a certain environmental organization. An agreement was made for those at Brand X to work at volunteer events hosted by the organization. Compensation for their time spent working was in the form of clothing orders for the

volunteers, the company would produce this clothing- on an order by order basis- at the same cost that would be given to produce the clothing through a traditional bulk order from the manufacturer. The end result is both a good deed and an improvement in the manufacturer's business, as they are given a relatively high paying and low impact order. Brand X receives its clothing at a lower environmental impact, with workers who are fairly compensated for their time. In the past ten years or so, the fashion industry has been growing and expanding at an exponential rate. The rate at which fashion has grown, predominantly due to globalization and increased ease of communication, has led to many good things for the industry. It has become more advanced, people are capable of expanding their creativity, and the industry itself has become a lot more diverse. However, not all effects have been beneficial. Globalization has meant that companies that are located anywhere in the world are capable of opening markets to any other place in the world. In short, this has meant that every company is susceptible to competition. There is nothing recognizably bad about this, however the sheer volume of competition has led to unhealthy business practices among fashion companies. One of the most prominent of these bad practices is the exploitation of workers abroad in lower income nations for the benefit of cutting costs in production. Brand X is a company that had once followed this path, and in recent years has turned its business model around to become one that is morally ethical and is in line with sustainable fashion initiatives. Sustainable Fashion Initiatives

2. NGO Y:

Empowering marginalized communities Foreign Trade and Investment: The first problem that many of these marginalized communities face is that they simply cannot compete with larger industries that produce the same goods. Often, these communities have an established product of some sort, for example textiles, but can no longer compete in the global market and it is not sustainable for them to continue producing the product. In other situations, there is no market for the product at all but there is potential for a new product that could still utilize the traditional skills of the community. One solution to this has been support for micro-credit and small business initiatives where the aim is to improve the situation of the community by encouraging development that is feasible and sustainable. This could include development of a new product or steps to improve the quality and marketability of an existing product. Step one for NGO Y would be to find out from the community what type of development it is they want, and how it might benefit them. An example is a recent project between a textiles community in rural Laos and an international development NGO. There are a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to provide resources to marginalized communities all over the world. The idea is that when these communities are able to meet their basic needs and make a sustainable living, they will not necessarily rely so heavily on industry jobs for economic stability. This will give them the freedom to make choices regarding the welfare of the environment and what kinds of industry they support. Many of these organizations look to traditional crafts that are part of their cultural heritage. NGO Y is a fictional NGO that could represent any number of similar organizations, and will serve as an example of how empowering marginalized communities to be economically self-sufficient can improve the state of the environment in the long run. According to The New Economics Foundation: "Empowering communities is about steering a course towards equal terms of trade and an equitable division of resources for the benefit of communities so that the benefits are sustainable and long-term" (Rudd S, Empowerment a route to an equitable and sustainable future).

3. Fashion Week Z:

Showcasing sustainable fashion collections An online survey conducted during Fashion Week Z by Colmar Brunton consumer research agency concluded that the showcase had a significant impact on consumer attitudes and buying behaviour, finding that 71% of those who attended the showcase said they would definitely or probably seek out more information on the brands and designers involved, and 52% said that they would change some aspect of their purchasing behaviour as a result of what they saw at the showcase. The survey also found that the more consumers learned about the social and environmental impacts of the fashion industry, the more they were inclined to make changes to their buying behaviour. This is a very encouraging result given that increased consumer demand is what sustainable designers desire, to create positive change in the wider fashion and apparel industry. The purpose of this showcase was to provide a platform for established and up-and-coming designers to demonstrate to consumers and their fashion industry peers that ethically and ecologically sound design is not a thing of the future, it exists now and is a commercially viable option for the fashion of today. Designers were encouraged to show and explain their design process from initial concept through to the finished product, highlighting the innovative use of

sustainable materials and the consideration of social and environmental impacts at all stages. They were also asked to share their vision of a better fashion industry and culture, and what they saw as consumers' role in making that vision a reality. This was an opportunity for designers to bust the common myths about sustainable fashion and to really connect with consumer values and emotion, to create a lasting demand for ethically and ecologically sound fashion. One of the pressing issues to tackle is to engage consumers' interest and demand for environmentally and socially sustainable fashion, and to translate that demand into action. Fashion Week Z, held in Wellington, New Zealand in 2008, is a prime example of how stakeholders within the traditional fashion and apparel sector can come together with those in the sustainable design field to make that transition transparent and visible to consumers. The Sustainable Business Network, creative director Robe McIntosh, and a small team of dedicated individuals were the driving force behind Fashion Week Z, and engaged key industry players to participate in this groundbreaking event. A core feature that sets Fashion Week Z apart from any other fashion week was an event called the Sustainable Design Showcase.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the research are to understand if India is ready for sustainable fashion by understanding what sustainable fashion means, studying the current state of fashion in India. India being a country with majority of its population being middle class will embrace the higher cost, slower trends and other factors that come with sustainability.

The other objective is bringing light to the exploitation and ill treatment of garment workers by the traditional fashion industry's biggest companies. The affect on the environment from the toxins and chemicals used for producing garments

HYPOTHESIS

Sustainable fashion is growing rapidly around the world as more and more people are becoming aware of environmental issues and looking for solutions. The government of India provide technical and financial assistance through development aid programmes and promote the growth of sustainable brands. India has a long-term growth plan for which more support through and grants. Indian fashion designers are moving towards using eco-friendly dyes and production methods.

RESEARCH APPROACH

The data used for the research paper is from several secondary sources from the internet, previous research papers and Harvard Business case studies.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis technique used for inspecting and condensing the data is descriptive and cohort data analysis. Descriptive analysis Is used to identify patterns and relationships. It seeks to describe possible outcomes and interprets how sustainable fashion can become successful in India while simultaneously looking at the current state of it in the country.

Cohort analysis helps analyse user behaviour in different segments which gives an understanding of customer needs and preferences. How likely is it that a customer will change to sustainable fashion brands and deviate from their regular purchasing habits.

FINDINGS

The research helped us understand that

- 1) Sustainable fashion is growing in popularity across the world and with the recognition of sustainable fashion from international organizations like United nations. Several countries and large amounts of people are actively making efforts to being more ecofriendly and sustainable.
- 2) In India the fashion industry is not as developed among the lower and middle class population, even though awareness about sustainable fashion is present but people are not willing to put in specific effort or time shopping for sustainable garments. In the end it falls to the popular designers and brands to use more sustainable methods of production and proper disposal of chemicals and minimum utilisation of resources like water, electricity, etc.
- 3) In order to make a shoe the cost of raw materials are
 - Synthetic- 50 rupees per sqft
 - Leather - 100 rupees per sqft
 - Sustainable leather – 200 rupees per sqft

Which pulls up the manufacturing cost and selling price at the end, and India being a price sensitive market preference for buying behaviour is follows as

1. Survival
2. Desire
3. Luxury
4. Sustainability

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

The vast population of India have no knowledge and awareness even in the urban areas about sustainability in the fashion and garment industry. The large population of lower class and below poverty line cause a void in the population of how many people utilise sustainable fashion practices as there is no way to communicate and gather information from them due to barriers like location and language. The research is limited to a small portion of the urban, educated population in the largest metro cities in India and to the upper and upper-middle class population.

FURTHER SCOPE OF RESEARCH

Research must be conducted in the remote and rural locations of India which will provide huge amounts of data on their fashion practices and how sustainable or not it is. According to the data gathered the current status of sustainable fashion in India might be a lot more advanced than we might know because of the sheer size of data which will be received from those less developed areas.

CONCLUSION

- Through an in-depth analysis of key arguments related to environmental impact, social responsibility, economic viability, policy and regulation, and consumer awareness, there is an urgent need for sustainable practices in the Indian fashion industry. By emphasizing the importance of addressing environmental concerns, promoting ethical labor practices, harnessing economic benefits, implementing supportive policies, and raising consumer consciousness, the document advocates for a shift toward sustainable fashion in India, with a focus on driving positive change and fostering a more sustainable fashion ecosystem.
- As India is a developing country with the majority of the population being middle-class the main focus according to the buyer's decision mentioned above would be on desire. To normalize sustainability the pricing should be replaceable with the normal product.
- The concept of mainstreaming sustainability is the foundation for the idea behind purchasing sustainable products—not because sustainability is their unique selling proposition (USP), but rather as alternatives to currently available materials. It says that sustainable products should be the standard rather than the exception.
- There is a lot of support from the start-up ecosystem like government, incubation, etc so there are great opportunities up there and we can see a lot of upcoming sustainable fashion start-ups coming up in the future.

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