



IDENTIFYING DETERMINANTS OF SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN APPAREL INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The purpose of this research paper is to identify the determinants which influence the sustainable consumer behavior in the apparel industry. The data was collected through a questionnaire in which 100 people have responded. The Findings suggest that there is a significant correlation between the determinants which are marketing strategies, brand reputation, price sensitivity and environmental consciousness and buying behavior of apparel products.

INTRODUCTION

The apparel industry is a major contributor to global economic activity, supplying clothing and textiles to billions of consumers worldwide. However, the rapid growth and global reach of the industry creates a range of environmental and social problems, from resource depletion and pollution to labour exploitation and unethical behaviour in supply chains.

To end the all problems the apparel industry has started to focus on the concept of sustainability. The concept of sustainability has pushed forward the stakeholder to think about their roles and responsibilities to promote environmentally and socially responsible practices. Despite the growing interest towards sustainable fashion, understanding the determinants which drive the sustainable consumer behaviour is important because it is complex and multifaceted and comprises of numerous factors. Many consumers may prioritize factors like carbon footprint, environment others may place more importance on ethical factors such as labour practices.

The sustainable behaviour of a customer could be understood by analysing main factors that influence the buying decision like price, brand reputation, environmental consciousness etc.

Therefore, the purpose of the study is to identify determinants which drive the sustainable consumer behaviour in the apparel industry.

After the comprehensive review of the empirical analysis, this research aims to find out determinants which influence the decision in context of buying of sustainable apparel products.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the research are two-fold

- (1) To understand the factors which influence sustainable consumer behaviour
- (2) To understand the most important determinant of sustainable consumer behaviour among (price, environment, brand, marketing strategies)

LITERATURE REVIEW

- (Hill & lee 2012) seek to explore consumers' actual knowledge and sentiment towards sustainability and environmental issues, both in general and in the apparel industry. Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected through open-ended survey questions collected from 80 young Generation Y college students, aged 18-25. Findings – Findings show a low level of knowledge of the holistic principle of sustainability and specific adverse effects of the apparel industry.

- (DeLong et. al., 2013) takes a bottoms-up approach to sustainable practices of designers within one industry in a specific locale. In researching sustainability in the apparel industry, one must consider the fashion system in which apparel designers operate. This research examines apparel designers in Minnesota and their perspectives about best practices that will encourage sustainability.
- The subject of (Fulton & Lee) was to identify retailers selling sustainable apparel goods on the internet and examine their sustainable initiatives in the supply chain based on the United Nation's Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), one of the most widely used sustainability reporting guidelines. Design/methodology/approach – A total of 156 sustainable apparel websites were content analyzed based on presence or absence of the website contents. A systematic coding scheme was developed based on previous research on the sustainability of the apparel industry and the GRI. Findings support the GRI as a useful framework to assess sustainability in online apparel retailers.
- The existing research on sustainability in the apparel industry provides no clear consensus on the definition of sustainability for the apparel brands and how sustainability of apparel brands as it is perceived by consumers can be measured. To fill this gap in research (Park, 2016) propose and tests a confirmatory model of sustainability for apparel brands based on the three pillars of sustainability (i.e., economic, environmental, social sustainability) theorized in the Triple Bottom Line model.
- (Ahn, 2017) explored the development of a new institutional logic for a self-regulatory institution as a result of the hybridization of founding firms' disparate logics. Deploying an inductive study of sustainability in the apparel industry helped in examining different logics the founding firms bring to a self-regulatory institution, and uncovered a process model of logic hybridization.”
- The objective of (Jayasena et. al., 2019) was to model the environmental sustainability of facilities management (FM) functions in apparel industry in Sri Lanka. The assessment of environmental sustainability of FM in apparel industry revealed that there is an emerging necessity in the present day, which was addressed in this research.
- (Rajapakshe et al., 2023) examined the impact of aggressive strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic on business sustainability in the apparel industry of Sri Lanka. This was a cross-sectional study with data collected from 384 employees in the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. The findings provide additional knowledge to the existing literature, enabling employees and employers to predict causes of stress and serve as a significant knowledge base for further studies

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The research is conducted through quantitative survey to investigate the degree of influence of determinants on sustainable customer behavior. Quantitative survey was used which will help to gather data on consumer preferences and behaviors and provide comprehensive understanding about the buying behavior in context to the sustainability.

Sampling

The convenience sampling technique was used which aimed at covering all the age section of survey which were 19-29, 30-59 ad 60+. Throughout the survey a data of 100 respondents were gathered which was mix of both male and female.

Quantitative data collection.

The main questions of survey are based on Likert scale to measure the degree of agreement with statements in the context of price sensitivity, environmental consciousness, brand reputation and marketing strategies. The survey was collected through channels like social media, person-to-person. The data collection took a time period of 2 weeks and the survey covered demographics such as age, gender to identify differences how different age groups and gender perceive sustainability during their buying decisions.

Analysis

The analysis of the gathered data is done through descriptive statistics, correlation and multivariate regression to identify the degree or percentage of influence of determinants towards sustainable consumer behavior.

Limitations

The study faces limitation in evaluating all the other determinants which may not have a direct effect on the sustainable consumer behavior but may be affecting the buying decision of consumers indirectly.

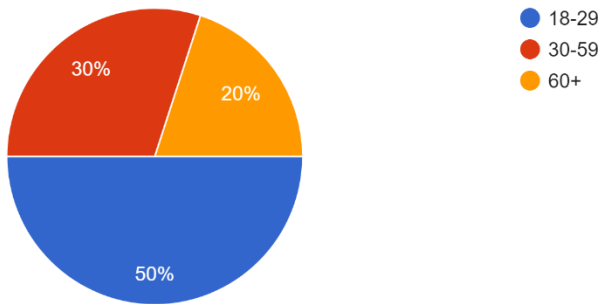
Conclusion- the study uses methods which help in investigating the influence of determinants over sustainable consumer behavior in the apparel industry. Despite the limitations, the results contribute towards to a deeper understanding of the sustainable consumer behavior in the apparel industry which create a positive impact in the minds of sustainable brands to have a better understanding how consumer perceive sustainable clothing and what are factors which contributes towards sustainable buying decisions.

DATA INTERPRETATION

Demographics

Age

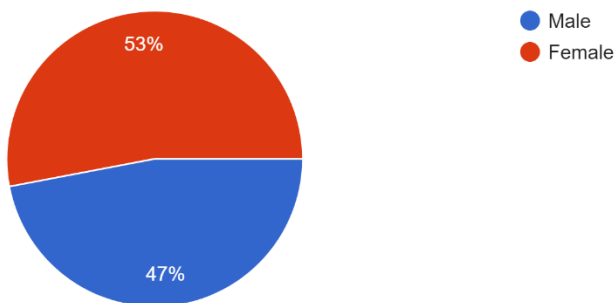
100 responses



The data in the pie chart represents that the 50% of the participants are from the age group 18-29, 30% from 30-59 and 20% from 60+ age group

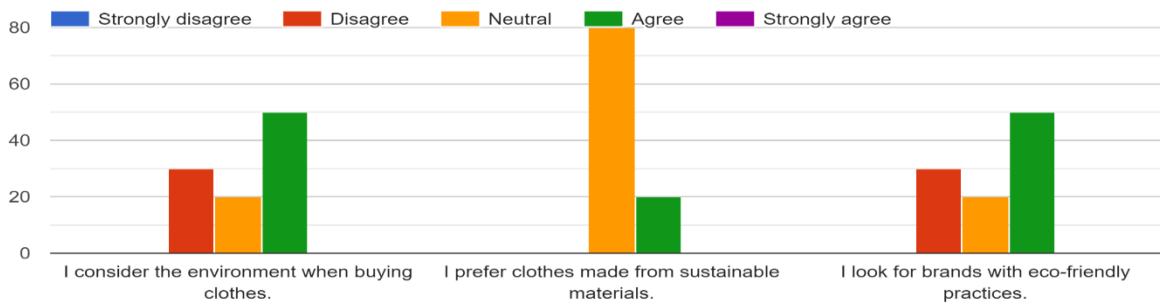
Gender

100 responses



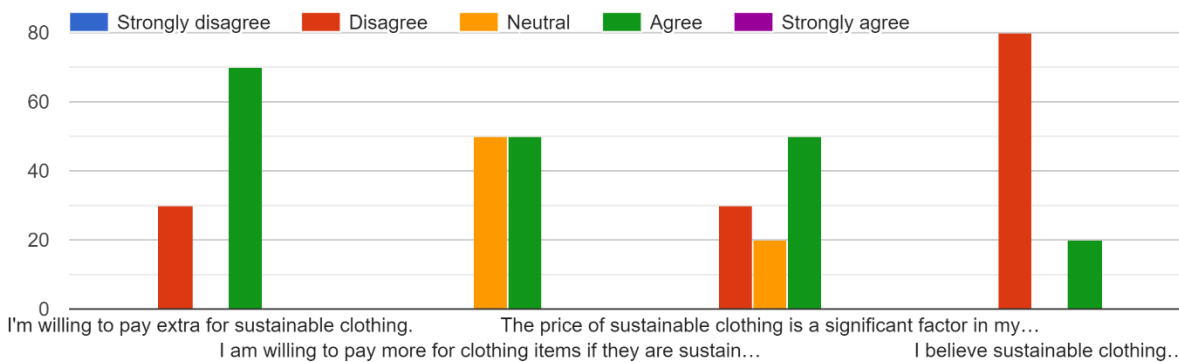
About 53% of people are female and 47% are male

Environmental consciousness



The above clustered column graph consists of three different questions which represent the environmental consciousness as a determinants of sustainable consumer behavior. It can interpret that 50% of the people consider the environment when buying apparels and look for brands with eco-friendly practices and the remaining 30% do not consider environment or look for brands with eco friendly practices. There is a perfect correlation between consideration towards environment and eco-friendly practices adopted by the brands. Environmental consciousness is an important factor when consumers look sustainable clothing.

Price sensitivity



I am willing to pay extra for sustainable clothing

70% of respondents agree

30 % of respondents disagree

This shows that the majority of respondents which is 70% are willing to pay extra for sustainable clothing and do not care about price if its sustainably produced where 30% of respondents disagree with the notion.

I am willing to pay more for clothing items if they are sustainably produced

50% of respondents agree

50% of respondents are neutral

This survey result represents that the 50% of respondents are ready to pay more apart from materials used in the clothing which signifies that the respondents are ready to pay more if the sustainable products are produced sustainably by adopting sustainable manufacturing processes and 50% of respondents are neutral which represents that they might be in loop of thoughts or do not care if charged more for sustainably produced products.

The price of sustainable clothing is significant factor in my purchasing decisions.

50% of respondents agree

30% of respondents disagree

20% of respondents are neutral

The survey results represent that the majority of respondents which is 50% for them price plays a significant factor in purchasing decision this means that whenever they are buying sustainable clothes, they look upon the price tags of that clothes. 30% of respondents does not consider price when they are purchasing sustainable clothes and the rest 20% are neutral. This represents that how much people are sensitive to the price of sustainable products which influences sustainable behavior.

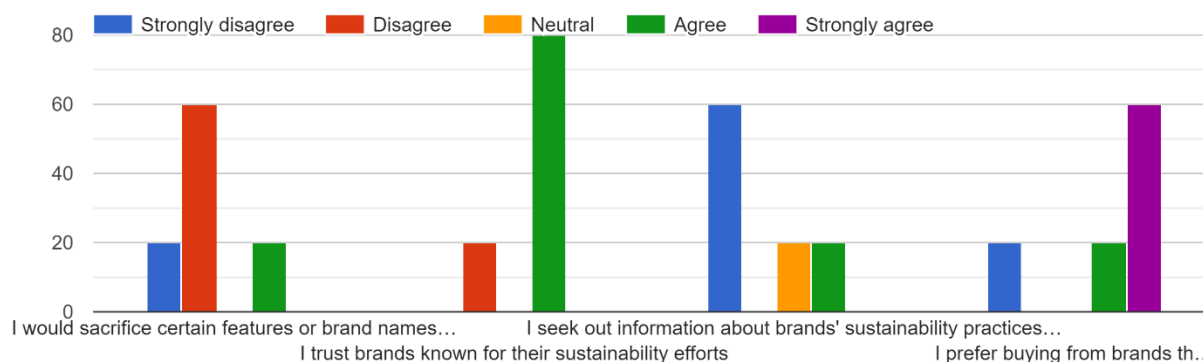
I believe sustainable clothing options are generally more expensive than non-sustainable options.

80% of respondents disagree

20% of respondents agree

This survey results represents that for 80% of respondent’s sustainable options are not expensive than non-sustainable. This represents the ideology of seeing sustainable products as inexpensive as they are made from either waste so they might be cheaper or are willing to invest in sustainable clothing for its positive environment impact and social impact.

Brand reputation



I would sacrifice certain features or brand names to purchase sustainable clothing at a lower price

60% of respondents disagree

20% of respondents disagree

20% of respondents agree

This represents that the about 60% respondents are not ready and 20% of respondents totally disagree to sacrifice features and brand names to purchase sustainable clothing. it can be analyzed that the brand names and features cannot be overlooked when sustainability comes into the picture as these contributes towards the quality, durability and overall satisfaction of clothing item.

I trust brand for their sustainability efforts.

80% of respondents agree

20% of respondents disagree

It is evident that after seeing the graph 80% of respondents trust brands for their sustainability efforts. It is being portrayed that the 80% of respondents are having high level of confidence in brands which are having commitment towards the sustainability and those 80% of people may be frequently buying products from the brands which are socially responsible and putting their efforts towards sustainability.

I seek out information about brands sustainability practices before purchasing

60% of respondents strongly disagree
 20% of respondents agree
 20% of respondents neutral

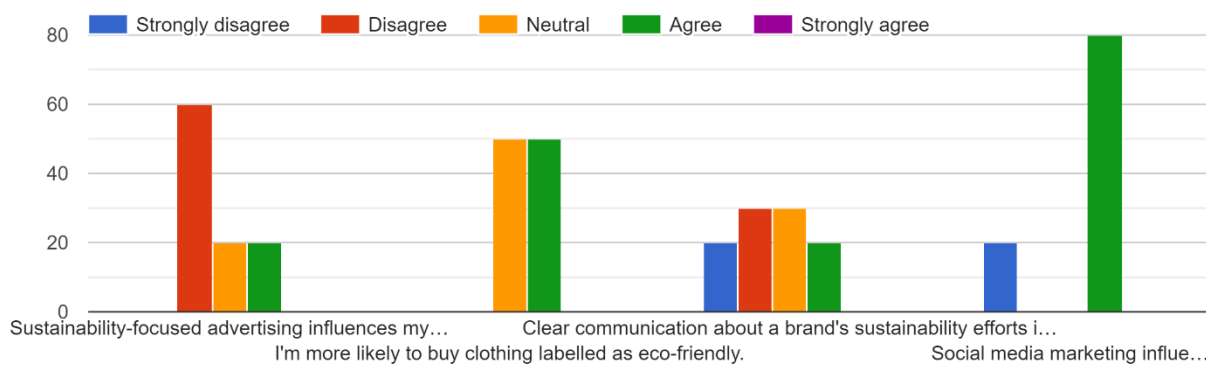
The results reveal that the 60% of respondents strongly disagree which is the majority, they do not seek information about brands sustainability practices before purchasing. There could be many reasons behind it. It is possible the respondents prioritize different factors such as price, convenience etc. or the respondents do not know how to access reliable information about brand sustainability practices where as 20% of respondents consider to seek information as they might be highly conscious about the environment and want to create a positive impact in the environment by seeking out sustainability practices of those brands which are putting efforts towards sustainability and buying from those respective brands.

I prefer buying from those brands that actively promote their sustainability initiatives.

60% of respondents strongly agree
 20% of respondents strongly disagree
 20% of respondents agree

The number of 60% and 20% of the surveyed population agrees which suggest that there is growing importance towards brands who promote their sustainability initiatives. Consumers are seeking out brand which align their values and beliefs with the concept of sustainability in their respective businesses. The numbers signify that respondents like to buy from brands who promote their sustainability initiatives.

Marketing strategies



Sustainability focused advertising influences my clothing purchases

60% of respondents disagree
 20% of respondents agree
 20% of respondents neutral

This 60% of surveyed population disagree which is the majority are not influenced by sustainability focused advertising during their clothing purchases. Sustainability focused advertising may not be the primary factor in their buying decisions.

Sustainability focused advertising by the brands may be false and the people are aware about the greenwashing by the brands and for 20% of respondent's sustainability focused advertising is an important factor in buying decision and maybe as equal as price.

I am more likely to buy clothing labelled as eco-friendly

50% of respondents agree
 50% of respondents neutral

The survey results reveal that a majority of respondents which is 50% agree with the statement indicating a preference for clothing labelled as eco-friendly. The number of 50% indicates that their strong preference of clothing labelled as eco-friendly. This signifies that labelling plays an important role in their buying decision when it comes to sustainability. And the other 50% of surveyed population indicates labelling is not an important part of their buying decisions.

Clear communication about a brands sustainability efforts influences my purchasing decisions.

20% of respondents agree

20% of respondents strongly disagree

30% of respondents disagree

30% of respondents neutral

The results indicate there is mix responses when talked about clear communication about brands sustainability efforts. It can be ascertained that respondents have mix feeling towards the statement. Some of the respondents strongly disagree and some of them agree. To conclude majority of the respondents are disagreeing towards the statement and do not consider the factor of clear communication about brands sustainability efforts when it comes to their purchasing decision.

Social media marketing influences my buying decision

80% of respondents agree

20% of respondents strongly disagree

The results portray that for 80% of respondent's social media marketing influences buying decision. It signifies the ideology of trusting what is being displayed in the social media as it is a part our daily life. It has become a platform where brands connect with their consumer and increase their engagement by social media marketing. Social media is acting is a trusted medium for consumers where people put their perceptions and findings about the brands which make the consumers believe that it is a trusted source and 20% of respondents do not consider social media marketing as a factor in buying decision.

CONCLUSION

Environmental consciousness, price sensitivity, brand, marketing strategies influences the sustainable consumer behavior to a large extent. Through the research, we look at the different factors which are influencing the buying decision of consumers in context of sustainability. By examining the factors, we aim to uncover how these factors play an important role in the buying decision and to how much extent what are the factors are being considered by the consumers.

A comprehensive review existing literature and empirical research identified determinants which drive the sustainable consumer behavior and significantly affect the buying decisions.

Using quantitative research, we were able delve into the thinking process of consumer how do they perceive sustainability. Using descriptive statistics, we are able to find out what are the factors which affect the sustainable consumer behavior and what is the most important factor in buying decisions.

Despite, the limitations we were able to add value to our research. By understanding the factors in the decision making these insights would be fruitful for the brands to know how they should position themselves as when it comes to sustainability and make informed strategies.

We were able to find out how all the factors were being looked upon by the surveyed population. This research discovered that the most influential factor in buying decision is the price. People are ready to buy sustainable products even if they cost more than the non-sustainable clothing. The results signified that the people are disagreeing the fact that sustainable clothing options are expensive than the non-sustainable clothing which shows the degree of awareness towards sustainability and its importance now a days.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into sustainable consumer behavior and what role the factors plays when it comes to decision making process towards sustainable products. By understanding the factors, I am able to conclude that price, environment consciousness, brand and marketing strategies used by brands are the determinants of sustainable consumer behavior in the apparel industry.

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