



International
Journal of
Convergent
Research

International Journal of Convergent Research
Journal homepage: [International Journal of Convergent Research](https://www.ijcrjournal.com)



Buyer Behaviour in Fast Fashion: Drivers, Dilemmas, and the Shift Toward Conscious Consumption

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Citation: Chadha Vermani, P., Dey, H. S., & Datt, S. (2026). Buyer behaviour in fast fashion: Drivers, dilemmas, and the shift toward conscious consumption. *International Journal of Convergent Research*, 3(1), 12-20.

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 2nd May 2026
Accepted: 26th May 2026

ABSTRACT

Today, clothing is purchased more readily, discarded more rapidly, and produced on a scale that would have been inconceivable three decades ago. Nevertheless, consumers who drive this pattern often express genuine concern about the environmental costs. This coexistence of awareness and continued participation constitutes the contradiction that this paper aims to examine. Drawing upon scholarship from consumer behavior, social psychology, marketing, and sustainability science, the authors develop a conceptual literature review to explore the authentic motivations behind fast-fashion purchasing and, critically, why environmental concerns seldom translate into corresponding changes in purchasing behavior. The outcome is a four-domain framework that delineates psychological motivations, social influence mechanisms, structural market conditions, and sustainability tensions as mutually reinforcing forces. The analysis is grounded in the Indian market- a context that much of the existing literature has historically overlooked. The fundamental argument is clear: the disparity between knowledge and action is not, fundamentally, due to a lack of information. It is a structural condition. Addressing this gap will necessitate more than improved messaging regarding sustainability.

Keywords: Fast fashion; consumer behaviour; attitude-behaviour gap; sustainable consumption; impulse buying; social identity; green fashion; India.

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to address a particular conundrum. Consumers worldwide including an increasing number of consumers in India purchase more clothing than necessary, dispose of it at a rate that appears economically irrational, and concurrently verbalize genuine concerns regarding the environmental impact of such actions. These behaviors occur simultaneously. While this behavior is not irrational in the strict clinical sense, it remains profoundly contradictory. Furthermore, the study contends that existing mainstream consumer behavior frameworks have encountered difficulties in providing a comprehensive explanation for such phenomena. Within this contradiction, the fast-fashion industry has emerged as its most prominent manifestation. Since the early 1990s, when retailers such as Zara and H&M demonstrated that trend cycles could be condensed from seasonal periods into weeks, the business model has experienced rapid growth. By 2021, the global market value had approximated USD 91 billion; forecasts indicate it will surpass USD 163 billion prior to 2030, with an annual growth rate around 7% (Grand View Research, 2022). Digital platforms have further intensified this trend- rendering trend access nearly instantaneous and transforming the act of wearing garments into a performance for online audiences as much as a pursuit of personal comfort.

India's significance extends far beyond mere statistical data. With a population exceeding 1.4 billion, a burgeoning urban middle class with increasing disposable incomes, and one of the most advanced textile manufacturing sectors globally, India uniquely occupies both ends of the fast-fashion supply chain. E-commerce platforms such as Myntra, Ajio, and Meesho have expanded fashion consumption well beyond metropolitan areas, engaging Tier-2 and Tier-3 city populations in the same consumer dynamics. Concurrently, production hubs in Tiruppur, Panipat, Surat, and the National Capital Region remain intricately integrated into global apparel networks. The nation bears the economic advantages as well as the environmental and

social costs associated with this industry in equal measure. The study constitutes a conceptual narrative literature review rather than an empirical study. The study aims to synthesize scholarship across various disciplines to develop a coherent account of fast-fashion consumer behavior, with particular emphasis on the Indian context- a setting that most existing reviews have either neglected or regarded as a minor variation of Western patterns. Section 2 delineates the scope of the review; Section 3 outlines the methodology; Section 4 presents the thematic review; Section 5 introduces author's integrated framework; and Sections 6 and 7 provide conclusions and suggestions for future research.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The scholarly literature concerning fast fashion is, frankly, disorganized yet in a productive manner. Study's primary focus is on the demand aspect of fast fashion; supply chain dynamics are considered solely when directly relevant to the consumer behaviour domain, but they seldom examine each other's research meticulously. Consequently, the body of knowledge remains fragmented and, to the best of the author's knowledge, has not been integrated to address consumer behaviour within the Indian context. This review seeks to address this gap by pursuing five specific objectives.

- i. To synthesize scholarly research on the psychological, social, and economic factors influencing consumer behavior in fast fashion.
- ii. To investigate the reasons behind the persistent discrepancy between documented sustainability attitudes and actual purchasing behaviors.
- iii. To analyze the manner in which digital platforms and influencer culture have transformed the landscape of fast-fashion desire and purchasing behavior.
- iv. To investigate emerging trends related to conscious consumption, circular fashion, and second-hand purchasing.
- v. To develop an integrated conceptual framework for consumer behavior within the fast-fashion industry, with an ongoing focus on the Indian market.

Coverage encompasses peer-reviewed scholarly articles, fundamental theoretical works, and reputable institutional reports from 1987 to 2023. The study's primary focus is on the demand aspect of fast fashion; supply chain dynamics are considered solely when directly relevant to consumer behavior.

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a conceptual narrative review approach, following Torraco (2005). The authors acknowledge that their own disciplinary backgrounds influence our interpretation of this literature; this limitation is further recognized through meta-analytic effect sizes. Given the methodological diversity of the fields the authors are drawing on (experimental psychology, ethnographic labour studies, econometric retail analysis), a meta-analytic framework would be inappropriate and, frankly, misleading. Different epistemological traditions simply do not aggregate in that way. Literature was retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and JSTOR using search terms including "fast fashion," "consumer behaviour," "sustainable consumption," "impulse buying," "social media influence," "circular fashion," "attitude-behaviour gap," and "Indian fashion market," applied in various Boolean combinations. Post-2000 peer-reviewed work was prioritised, supplemented by foundational theoretical contributions- Ajzen (1991), Tajfel & Turner (1979), Rook (1987)- from earlier decades. The paper organizes the findings through thematic synthesis: themes were identified inductively from the literature and subsequently mapped onto the review's stated objectives. Where scholarship was concentrated in Western contexts which it predominantly is the authors highlighted this fact. Research pertaining to the Indian context was actively sought and emphasized. The authors acknowledge that our own disciplinary backgrounds influence the author's interpretation of this literature; this limitation is further recognized in Section 7.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Evolution of Fast Fashion and Consumer Culture

Early scholarly research on fast fashion largely exhibited an indifference towards the consumer. Tokatli's (2008) influential exposition of Zara's sourcing model- and the offshore manufacturing relationships that rendered weekly restocking economically feasible- treated demand as a given. Barnes & Lea-Greenwood (2006) formalized a working definition: fast fashion merges rapid-response production with trend-driven micro-seasonality; its competitive strategy prioritizes replication speed over design originality. These analyses were predominantly supply-side oriented. Consumers, within such frameworks, are portrayed as simply responding to offerings presented by retailers.

Fletcher (2010) decisively shifted the framework. Discussing slow fashion as a counterpoint, she contended that fast fashion should not be understood merely as an innovation in the supply chain that appeals to consumers; rather, it constitutes a cultural formation inextricably linked to a broader logic of disposability and ongoing novelty. The association with Bauman's

(2000) concept of “liquid modernity” is not merely a superficial reference: if social identity becomes increasingly provisional and is performed through consumption, then a retail model based on perpetual change in available identity props serves a culturally constructive purpose for consumers, rather than solely a commercial one for retailers. Cline’s (2012) more empirically grounded analysis documented the transformation of American wardrobes from the 1990s to the 2010s- from smaller collections of durable items to extensive, inexpensive, and rapidly discarded collections and the normalization of this shift is what Bauman (2000) described as the “consumerist syndrome.”

India introduces complications that Western accounts do not anticipate. Khare (2014) found pronounced fashion consciousness and peer sensitivity among urban Indian millennials familiar enough patterns. Yet India also holds one of the most varied and historically rich artisanal textile traditions anywhere in the world: handloom weaving, resist-dyeing, embroidery forms encoding centuries of craft knowledge. When imported fast-fashion logic meets that tradition, something more complex than simple imitation results- consumption identities that are hybrid, contested, and only partially captured by existing frameworks.

Psychological Drivers of Fast Fashion Purchasing

Begin with hedonic motivation- the most consistently reported driver in the consumer behaviour literature. Arnold & Reynolds (2003) showed that fashion shopping carries hedonic value in ways that, say, grocery shopping simply does not: there is the pleasure of discovery, the social dimension of browsing with friends, the satisfaction of finding something that fits an emerging sense of self. Fast-fashion retail environments are engineered around exactly these pleasures. Flash collections, immersive store design, and push notifications positioning each new release as an event worth missing create conditions ripe for impulsive, pleasurable purchasing. Loss aversion contributes here as well- the felt urgency of securing something attractive before it disappears. The pursuit of novelty warrants greater emphasis than it typically receives within sustainability discourse. Bianchi & Birtwistle (2010) demonstrated that consumers with a high orientation towards novelty are disproportionately inclined to engage in frequent purchasing and rapid discarding- precisely the consumption pattern that fast fashion aims to accommodate. For such consumers, sustainability messages based on reducing consumption stand in contradiction to their underlying shopping experience. This is not merely a matter of inconvenience; rather, it is fundamentally incompatible with their perception of shopping. Any intervention that neglects this structural discrepancy is unlikely to achieve significant progress.

Impulse buying constitutes a related yet distinct mechanism. Rook’s (1987) foundational definition- describing an unplanned purchase prompted by an external stimulus, characterized by urgency and diminished deliberation- accurately encapsulates the objectives of digital fast-fashion retail. Features such as the single-tap checkout on Myntra or Meesho, the countdown timer during flash sales, and the “only 3 left” notifications are deliberately designed to influence consumer behavior. Aragoncillo & Orus (2018) demonstrated how social media facilitates the embedding of purchase triggers within aspirational content streams, thereby blurring the boundary between product exposure and acquisition. The cognitive gap between viewing and purchasing has been significantly reduced. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) provides the most structurally robust of these psychological frameworks. Fashion serves as a medium for indicating group membership and delineating distance from groups that individuals reject. Fast fashion democratizes this signaling by offering trend-current apparel accessible across various income levels. Among young urban Indians- who are increasingly constructing their social lives on platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat- the social cost of appearing outdated is perceived as both genuine and consequential. This exemplifies social pressure in the precise sense addressed by the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which refers to it as “subjective norm.” Its influence on purchasing decisions warrants significant consideration.

The Attitude–Behaviour Gap in Sustainable Fashion

The attitude–behaviour gap represents the primary challenge in sustainable consumption research. Its occurrence has been consistently observed across various cultural contexts and product categories, rendering its existence beyond reasonable doubt. The pertinent question concerns the appropriate measures to address this phenomenon; however, many of the proposed solutions seem to be misguidedly aimed at the incorrect level of the issue. Ajzen’s (1991) theory of planned behaviour offers the prevailing theoretical framework for comprehending this discrepancy. Behavioural intention is influenced by three variables: attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the context of sustainable fashion, attitudes are generally positive; however, subjective norms tend to exert an opposing influence, as peer behaviour normalizes frequent purchasing, and social media amplifies this visibility. Perceived behavioural control is limited, given that identifying genuinely sustainable alternatives at comparable prices remains, in practice, quite challenging. Even when intention is present, it often fails to translate into action at the moment of purchase. Accordingly, the discrepancy is, in this sense, multifactorial- resulting from multiple converging pressures rather than a single causal factor.

Young et al. (2010) identified price as the most robust structural barrier: concern for ethics predicts intention reasonably well, but intention collapses when sustainable alternatives carry a significant price premium. This is not a psychological failure on the part of consumers. It reflects how markets are structured. Bray et al. (2011) introduced the concept of “ethical shopping fatigue”- an underappreciated phenomenon in which extended exposure to sustainability messaging produces cognitive

overload and emotional depletion, ultimately driving consumers back toward habitual, low-effort purchasing as a way of managing an otherwise exhausting information environment. Moraes et al.'s (2012) concept of "coherent inconsistency" constitutes one of the most valuable contributions to this discourse. The term precisely describes the phenomenon many consumers encounter: an explicit acknowledgment that their behavior conflicts with their values, yet they continue with such behavior. The rationalization strategies employed to manage this discomfort- such as moral licensing, delegating responsibility to brands or governments, or selectively disregarding sustainability information- are not indicative of moral deficiency. Instead, they are psychologically efficient adaptations to a market environment that renders ethical purchasing genuinely inconvenient. A comprehensive understanding of these mechanisms is essential for anyone endeavoring to develop effective interventions. In the Indian context specifically, Joshi and Rahman (2015) identified perceived behavioural control as the weakest link within the intention chain. While price plays a significant role, information quality is equally critical: the certification of sustainable fashion in India remains underdeveloped, supply chain transparency is limited, and greenwashing is sufficiently pervasive that even consumers committed to making ethical choices often lack the confidence to accurately interpret what "sustainable" signifies for a particular product. The structural obstacles to ethical purchasing are notably more formidable in this market.

Digital Platforms, Influencer Culture, and Social Media

Digitalisation represents more than the introduction of an additional channel for fashion retail; it has fundamentally reorganised the psychological and social conditions under which the desire for fast fashion arises. This distinction is significant: a new distribution channel would, in principle, be neutral concerning consumption volume. However, algorithmically curated social media is not neutral; it actively generates and amplifies the very desires it subsequently aims to meet. Godey et al. (2016) discovered that engagement of fashion brands on social media significantly enhances both brand equity and consumers' purchase intentions, with Instagram identified as particularly effective for fashion-related promotions. The underlying mechanisms are straightforward: outfit posts, haul videos, and "get ready with me" content create aspirational visual narratives in which frequent purchasing behaviors are perceived as normal, fashionable, and worthy of emulation. Influencer-generated content amplifies this effect further. Unlike traditional advertising, it is presented as an authentic personal narrative, thereby diminishing the skepticism typically associated with overtly promotional material. When a trusted content creator features a fast-fashion haul as a form of personal expression rather than a commercial transaction, the persuasive structure remains largely unobtrusive.

India's social media landscape exhibits notable characteristics. With over 600 million internet users (Statista, 2023), engagement metrics consistently surpass Western standards, complemented by a vibrant ecosystem of regional-language content creators. These creators have significantly expanded the reach of fast-fashion beyond English-speaking urban populations. It is not coincidental that fast-fashion brands recognize that a micro-influencer possessing 50,000 followers in cities such as Indore or Coimbatore may induce greater purchase conversion than a campaign featuring a national celebrity. Shein and analogous competitors exemplify what Niinimäki et al. (2020) have termed "algorithmic fast fashion"- a paradigm that integrates real-time social media behavioural data directly into production decision-making processes. An emerging micro-trend identified on TikTok on a Tuesday may be transformed into a commercially available product by Thursday. This phenomenon establishes a consumption feedback loop wherein the interval between cultural emergence and retail availability has effectively vanished. The ramifications for waste generation are significant and continue to be insufficiently examined.

Conceptual Anatomy of Fast Fashion

It is important to establish an early distinction: fast fashion is not merely synonymous with inexpensive clothing. Throughout the twentieth century, inexpensive apparel has existed without giving rise to the waste volumes or purchasing frequency characteristic of contemporary fast-fashion markets. The defining feature of fast fashion lies in the strategic combination of low prices with deliberately engineered aesthetic obsolescence. Garments are not only affordable; they are designed- through reliance on trends, structural fragility, or both- to appear outdated within a single season. The driving mechanism for repeated purchasing is not physical failure but rather the constructed perception that existing possessions have already become obsolete. Fletcher (2010) argued that this system demands structural rather than behavioural analysis. Boström & Micheletti (2016) extended the point: the environmental damage produced by fast fashion is not a byproduct of individual bad choices by shoppers or even by specific brands. It arises from the structural logic of a system built around maximum throughput. That framing carries a sobering implication: consumer-facing interventions, regardless of how well they are designed, will not generate system-level change unless they operate alongside regulatory, market, and infrastructural changes that alter the underlying incentive structure.

Environmental Impact

The environmental data are, by now, widely cited- though that familiarity may itself be part of the problem. Cotton cultivation is responsible for roughly 16% of global insecticide use; producing one kilogram of cotton fabric can draw between 10,000 and 20,000 litres of water depending on where and how it is grown (Kooistra et al., 2006). Textile dyeing and finishing processes contribute an estimated fifth of all global industrial water pollution (United Nations Environment Programme, 2019)- a figure with particular relevance for India, where dyeing clusters in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu discharge into river systems

supplying both drinking water and agricultural irrigation. The sector's carbon footprint- ranging from 4% to 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions, a figure surpassing the combined emissions of the aviation and shipping industries (McKinsey & Company, 2020)- encompasses the entire product lifecycle: fibre cultivation, manufacturing, transportation, consumer laundering, and disposal. Synthetic fibres, which constitute the majority of global textile production, present an additional concern: microplastic shedding during washing. It is estimated that approximately 35% of the ocean's microplastic load originates from synthetic textile laundering (Niinimäki et al., 2020), representing a dispersed form of pollution lacking a clear proximate source to assign responsibility to. Global textile waste amounts to approximately 92 million tonnes annually. Less than 1% of this waste is recycled into new fibre, while the remaining portion is either incinerated, buried, or shipped offshore- often to markets in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In these regions, oversupply driven by consumption in wealthy countries engenders new economic and environmental challenges (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). In India, Panipat has developed a comprehensive economy centered on the processing of imported textile waste; however, the adverse impacts on local soil and groundwater resources are extensively documented and are deteriorating.

Social and Labour Impact

The labor force involved in fast fashion manufacturing occupies, structurally, among the most precarious positions within the global economy. Bangladesh employs approximately four million garment workers, over 80% of whom are women; similarly, countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Ethiopia host predominantly female workforces. The International Labour Organisation (2020) has extensively documented the systemic nature of these conditions- encompassing wages below a living wage, limited collective bargaining rights, gender pay disparities, and hazardous working environments- and the persistence of these issues despite decades of compliance audits. The collapse of Rana Plaza in April 2013 rendered these conditions impossible to overlook. Over 1,134 workers lost their lives, and more than 2,500 sustained injuries when a structurally compromised building- whose cracks had been identified the previous day- collapsed. This tragedy led to the establishment of the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety and rekindled legislative focus within the European Union concerning mandatory due diligence frameworks. Progress thus far has been gradual and inconsistent. The commercial incentives that motivate brands to select the least expensive suppliers have not undergone fundamental change. India's stance within this labor landscape is notably complex. Mezzadri's (2017) examination of the "sweatshop regime" is particularly pertinent: informalization propagates downward through subcontracting tiers, thereby amplifying vulnerability at the foundational level- such as home-based workers engaged in embroidery and finishing tasks in Delhi or Jaipur- while enabling brands higher in the supply chain to preserve plausible deniability. These workers remain largely unseen by compliance audit systems, engaged in informal employment arrangements, and are among the lowest paid participants within the global apparel network.

Psychological Impact on Consumers

The psychological literature on fast fashion has predominantly focused on the factors attracting consumers to it. Conversely, the question of how sustained high-frequency purchasing impacts consumer wellbeing has received comparatively less attention; however, this area is gradually gaining scholarly interest. Compulsive buying represents a significant concern. Faber & O'Guinn (1992) characterized it as a recurrent pattern of obsessive purchasing that persists despite adverse consequences and entails a gradual loss of control over purchasing behavior. The circumstances created by fast-fashion retail- such as low unit prices, continuous novelty, social reinforcement through engagement on outfit posts, and frictionless checkout- are not neutral regarding this risk. For consumers who are already susceptible to anxiety or depend on external validation, these conditions may actively promote compulsive purchasing behaviors.

Richins and Dawson (1992) discovered that materialism- characterized by assigning personal identity to possessions- is correlated with reduced life satisfaction and increased anxiety across various income brackets. The connection between frequent fashion purchasing and materialism is well-documented in scholarly literature (Joung, 2014). This prompts an important empirical inquiry: does fast fashion consumption indicate an inherent materialistic disposition, or does habitual engagement in fast-fashion purchasing serve to cultivate and strengthen such an orientation? The direction of causality in this relationship remains to be conclusively determined. "Eco-guilt"- the discomfort experienced by environmentally conscious consumers when they purchase fast fashion despite their awareness- constitutes an additional psychological burden that infrequently emerges within commercial or policy discussions. Moraes et al. (2012) identified coping mechanisms employed by consumers to manage this tension, including selective attention, moral licensing, and the externalization of responsibility to brands or governments. While these responses may serve immediate functions, they tend to sustain the attitude-behaviour gap rather than eliminate it.

Emerging Trends: Second-Hand Fashion and Conscious Consumption

A countermovement is present and merits thorough analysis, rather than being dismissed as mere aspirational noise. The sectors of second-hand purchasing, clothing rental, peer-to-peer swapping, repair, upcycling, and active engagement with brands that are demonstrably- and not solely rhetorically- committed to supply chain ethics are all experiencing growth. The more challenging question is whether the rate and scope of this growth can counterbalance the ongoing expansion of fast-

fashion consumption. Presently, the evidence does not offer reassurance. Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen (2015) identified four motivational clusters among second-hand fashion consumers: economic rationality, environmental ethics, the appeal of aesthetic individuality, and nostalgia. The most practically relevant finding is that environmental concern was rarely the primary motivator. Second-hand consumption predominantly gains traction through hedonic and identity-based appeals- such as uniqueness, perceived value, and personal style- rather than through ethics-centric messaging. Sustainability serves more as a co-benefit rather than the primary attraction.

The global resale fashion market attained a valuation of USD 197 billion in 2023 and is anticipated to expand at an annual rate of 15–20% through 2028 (ThredUp, 2023). Platforms such as ThredUp, Depop, Vinted, and The RealReal have professionalized what was formerly an informal sector, thereby reducing barriers to participation, enhancing quality indicators, and- perhaps most significantly- destigmatizing the purchase of second-hand items by framing it as a style-conscious and financially astute choice rather than one driven by financial necessity. In India, the second-hand fashion ecosystem is modest yet dynamic and expanding actively. Platforms such as Thrift Club, Relove, and Bombay Closet Cleanse have established digital infrastructure that facilitates peer-to-peer exchanges, which were previously conducted through informal social networks. Singh & Verma (2022) observed that urban Indian consumers aged between 20 and 35 demonstrate a greater willingness to participate in second-hand fashion markets than earlier projections indicated, particularly when these platforms effectively address perceived quality uncertainties and diminish associated social stigma. The extent to which this engagement transcends specific urban, educated demographic segments remains an open question. Clothing rental warrants concise consideration. Formal rental platforms are still in their early stages in India compared to Western markets; nonetheless, there exists a genuine cultural precedent to build upon: the informal practice of borrowing garments for weddings and festivals is already well-established. Whether platform-based rental services can formalise and expand this practice remains an empirical question yet to be resolved- however, the cultural legitimacy that such models frequently lack in other markets is already inherent here.

INTEGRATED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF FAST-FASHION BUYER BEHAVIOUR

The thematic review presented above encompasses a broad spectrum of findings spanning various disciplines. The subsequent effort aims to organize these insights into an analytically useful framework- not as a definitive theory of fast-fashion consumption, but as a navigational map of the landscape that future empirical research can examine and enhance.

Four interrelated domains are identified. The initial domain- psychological motivations- encompasses hedonic impulses, the pursuit of novelty, tendencies toward impulse purchasing, and consumption requirements based on identity at the individual level. These are not inherent personality traits; rather, they are activated and influenced by social feedback and market stimuli. An individual may exhibit significantly different behaviors depending on whether she is engaging in online shopping alone during late hours or browsing with friends in a shopping mall.

The second domain- social influence mechanisms- encompasses peer behaviour, social comparison, reference group norms, and influencer-mediated aspiration, all of which amplify individual psychological motivations, particularly the identity-signalling dimensions of fashion. In India, this domain encompasses family and community expectations around occasion dressing- weddings, festivals, religious ceremonies- that operate through social pressures not well-captured by Western TPB frameworks. A garment purchase in these contexts may be simultaneously an act of self-expression and a compliance response to community expectation, and treating it as only one or the other misses something essential.

The third domain- structural market conditions- reflects the straightforward asymmetry between fast fashion and sustainable alternatives. Fast fashion is more cost-effective, readily accessible, frequently innovative, and seamlessly purchasable. This disparity is not incidental; it results from decades of investment in supply chain efficiency, digital retail infrastructure, and platform design, all aimed at reducing barriers to purchase. Conversely, sustainable fashion incurs higher costs, demands greater cognitive effort to evaluate credibly, and offers less novelty. Interventions that focus solely on individual motivations while leaving this structural asymmetry unchanged are unlikely to produce enduring change.

The fourth domain- sustainability tensions- encompasses the range of attitudes, emotions, and rationalisation strategies through which consumers navigate the conflict between environmental values and purchasing behaviour. The attitude-behaviour gap is the most prominent feature of this domain; however, elements such as eco-guilt, ethical fatigue, and moral licensing also operate within it. Emerging practices of conscious consumption serve as partial resolutions of these tensions for certain consumers. Nonetheless, mainstream adoption of these practices depends on favourable conditions across all four domains simultaneously. This interdependence explains why interventions targeting a single, isolated domain consistently fail to meet expectations. Altering one domain without concurrent modifications in the others is analogous to pressing on only one corner of a mattress.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This review has limitations that warrant acknowledgment. It reflects author's disciplinary backgrounds and search decisions in ways that are partly invisible even to us. The literature the study draws on skews heavily toward Western consumer contexts- the United States, United Kingdom, and Northern Europe dominate the empirical base- and the extent to which frameworks derived from those settings transfer to India is an empirical question, not a working assumption. Indian-context research on fast-fashion consumption is growing but remains thin, especially for non-metropolitan populations.

The predominantly cross-sectional nature of the empirical studies in this field constitutes a further limitation. Consumer attitudes and behaviors within this domain evolve in response to platform modifications, sustainability developments, and policy reforms. Cross-sectional snapshots are inadequate for capturing such dynamism; therefore, adopting longitudinal research designs would significantly enhance the robustness of the evidence base.

Future research priorities can be:

- i. Quantitative assessment of the proposed four-domain framework was conducted using representative Indian consumer samples, encompassing non-metropolitan and lower-income segments that are seldom accessible in existing studies.
- ii. Qualitative investigation of culturally specific social influence mechanisms in Indian fast-fashion consumption- particularly the role of family, community, and religious occasion in shaping purchasing decisions.
- iii. Longitudinal studies investigating the impact of sustainability communication and policy interventions on the attitude-behaviour gap among Indian consumers over time, rather than at a single point in time.
- iv. Experimental and observational research into how specific platform design features- recommendation algorithms, flash sale mechanics, one-click checkout- shape fast-fashion purchase behaviour, with implications for regulatory and design intervention.
- v. Investigation of the conditions under which second-hand and circular fashion models attain mainstream adoption in emerging markets, with specific emphasis on trust, stigma mitigation, and platform architecture as influential variables.

CONCLUSION

The study commenced with a question: why do consumers, despite understanding the costs associated with fast fashion, persist in their purchasing behaviors? Upon reviewing evidence from disciplines such as psychology, sociology, marketing, and sustainability science, the study's conclusion is that framing this issue solely as a matter of knowledge is itself a part of the challenge. Consumers are not unaware of the consequences of fast fashion; rather, their awareness is actively managed, constrained, and routinely overridden by structural and social forces that sustainability messaging alone fails to address. Fast-fashion consumption is heavily influenced by multiple interconnected factors. Hedonic gratification, the expression of social identity, structural pricing advantages, algorithmic promotion, and the social normalization of frequent purchasing all collaboratively exert influence and reinforce each other. Conversely, the forces promoting sustainable alternatives- such as ethical considerations, the expanding second-hand market, and shifting generational values- are presently significantly weaker. Recognizing this asymmetry explicitly appears to be an essential initial step for those seeking to effect change. The Indian context underscores the critical importance of these issues. A market comprising over 600 million social media users, an extensive informal garment workforce, and a retail sector undergoing rapid digitalisation- faster than regulatory frameworks can adapt- constitutes not merely a substantial market but also a domain where the repercussions of either mismanaging or correctly managing the fast-fashion transition will be experienced on a large scale. The framework presented herein serves as a conceptual foundation for the empirical research that subsequently needs to be undertaken.

ETHICAL DECLARATION

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Financing: This research received no external funding.

Peer review: Double anonymous peer review.

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