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An Empirical Study on Determinants Influencing the Purchase Intention of Consumers Towards Sustainable Clothing in India

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the paper is to discover the influence of Perception of Sustainable Clothing (PSC), Expectations of Sustainable clothing (ESC), Environment Concern (EC) and Subjective Norms (SN) on Purchase Intention (PI) of consumers towards sustainable clothing (SC) in India.

Methodology: 228 consumers were selected through convenience and snowball sampling. EFA and SEM were applied for data analysis using SPSS 25 and AMOS.

Findings: The findings show that PSC, EC and SN emerge as determinants of PI. However, no association between ESC and PI was found.

Practical Implications: It is a new model on sustainable clothing framework. Moreover, this study offers valuable insights for companies and fashion brands to influence sustainable business practices. This provides a prospect for fashion brands to address the consumers' environmental apprehension and expectations through expansion of sustainable products.

Originality: As per author's knowledge, no study is available on factors exploring the influence of Perception of Sustainable Clothing (PSC), Expectations of Sustainable clothing (ESC), Environment Concern (EC) and Subjective Norms (SN) on Purchase Intention (PI) of consumers towards SC in India. Therefore, the present study fills this gap and explores the association between PSC, ESC, EC and SN on PI of Indian consumers towards SC. This paper is perhaps the first effort to fulfill such gap.

Keywords: *sustainable clothing, environmental concern, perception, purchase behaviour, subjective norms*

1. Background

The fashion apparel industry is the highest polluting industry (Sahni, 2016). This industry brings serious worries and fears to the planet and various environmental matters like air pollution, water pollution, shortage of resources (Niinimäki et al., 2020). The awareness and demands of the consumers for the buying of sustainable products have enhanced (Kilbourne & Pickett, 2007). The growing concern of consumers towards situation around the world has augmented the burden on clothing companies to consider developing sustainable clothing.

In the last decade, various prior studies explored various determinants influencing purchase intention of consumers towards sustainable products like "environmental knowledge, environmental concern and attitudes" (Cowan & Kinley, 2014); "attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, environmental concern and environmental knowledge" (Yadav & Pathak, 2016) "environmental apparel knowledge, Social Status, Green self-concept " (Abrar et al., 2021); "environmental knowledge, environmental attitude and perceived consumer effectiveness" (Tryphena & Aram, 2023).

Limited studies have been conducted in India (Yadav & Pathak, 2016; Tryphena & Aram, 2023). On the basis of prior studies, this study proposed a new model consisting four factors namely, Perception of Sustainable Clothing (PSC), Expectations of Sustainable clothing (ESC), Environmental Concern (EC) and Subjective Norms (SN) affecting Purchase Intention (PI) of consumers towards sustainable clothing in India.

The present paper addresses the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: To what extent Perception of Sustainable Clothing (PSC) effect the buying intention of consumers towards SC in India?

RQ2: To what extent Expectations of Sustainable clothing (ESC) impact the buying intention of consumers towards SC in India?

RQ3: To what extent Environmental Concern (EC) impact the buying intention of consumers towards SC in India?

RQ4: To what extent Subjective Norms (SN) influence the buying intention of consumers towards SC in India?

2. Literature review and hypotheses formulation

2.1. Influence of PSC on PI of consumers towards SC

Lee et al. (2012) explained showed positive association between PSC and PI behaviour. Han and Chung (2014) study showed that consumers believe that sustainable clothing is important to the environment and consumers form positive attitudes towards purchasing them. Thus, the first hypothesis of the study will be:

H_{1A}: PSC positively influences PI of consumers towards SC

2.2. Influence of ESC on PI of consumers towards SC

Tseng and Hung (2013) study showed that consumers propose to buy sustainable products when their expectation matches to their insight. Consumers also suppose brands to follow ethical fashion related commercial practices to form positive attitude (Creyer & Ross, 1997). Thus, the second hypothesis will be:

H_{2A}: ESC positively influences PI of consumers towards SC

2.3. Influence of EC on PI of consumers towards SC

Hu et al. (2010) define EC as, “degree of awareness of the folk concerning the environment and giving support and temperament to resolve those environment-related problems personally”. Many previous studies like (Albayrak et al., 2013; Pagiaslis & Krontalis, 2014; Maichum et al., 2016) found constructive association between EC and PI. Thus, the third hypothesis will be:

H_{3A}: EC positively influences PI of consumers towards SC

2.4. *Influence of SN on PI of consumers towards SC*

Ajzen (1991) define SN as “perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behaviour”. Kaushik et al. (2015) explain it, “one’s perception of social normative pressure determines one's performance of a particular behaviour”. Noble et al. (2009) also found the title role of SN in affecting customers choice to buy an sustainable product. Thus, last hypothesis will be:

H_{4A}: SN positively influences PI of consumers towards SC

On the basis of literature review and hypotheses, the present study proposed new model which aims to explore the impact of four factors on the PI of consumers towards SC in India. Figure 1 shows proposed conceptual model.

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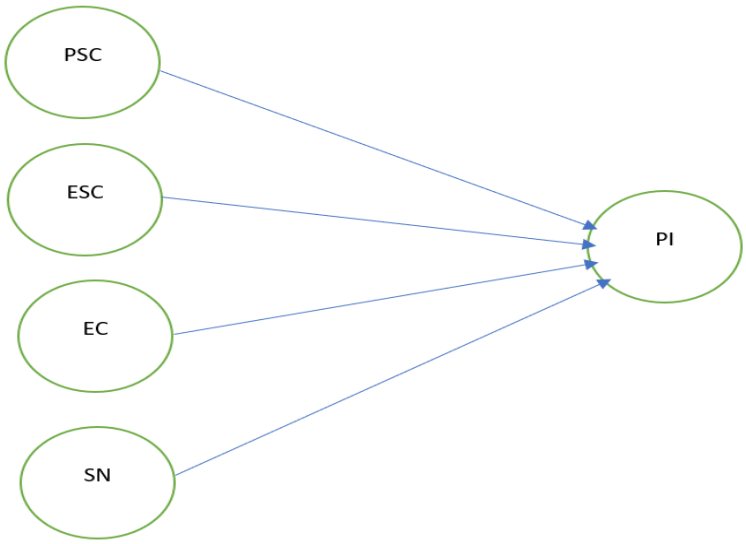

FIGURE 1: Conceptual Model

3. Research methodology

In the present study, cross section research design has been used for studying relationship between variables (Kesmodel, 2018). Approximately, 300 consumers were contacted. A questionnaire was constructed using sources (Kim & Choi 2005; Antonetti & Maklan 2014). The questionnaire consisted two sections. Demographic profile related questions were asked in Section A; Section B contained the statements related to factors affecting the intention to purchase SC. 5-point Likert scale from 5 "strongly agree" to 1 "strongly disagree" was used. The current study was carried for three months October, 2024 to December, 2024 in NCR, India. Out of these collected responses, 72 customers did not return their questionnaires. Therefore, after validation of data, 228 questionnaires were received.

Table 1 shows KMO test of sample adequacy value which is equal to 0.857 and Bartlett's test of sphericity is also significant (p =.000).

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's test

'KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy'		0.857
'Bartlett's Test of Sphericity'	Approx. Chi-Square	2088.332
	Df	351
	Sig.	.000

Source: Author's Own Work

3.1. Measurement of constructs and reliability and validity tests

In order to explore factors, Principal Component Analysis has been applied. Out of 24 statements from Section B, the factor loading of four statements was less than 0.5. Hence, they were not considered for further analysis. Table 2 shows communalities of statements.

Table 2: Communalities

Communalities		
	Initial	**Extraction**
PSC1	1.000	.756

PSC2	1.000	.770
PSC3	1.000	.793
PSC4	1.000	.670
ESC1	1.000	.779
ESC2	1.000	.671
ESC3	1.000	.602
ESC4	1.000	.680
ESC5	1.000	.701
EC1	1.000	.727
EC2	1.000	.730
EC3	1.000	.689
EC4	1.000	.674
SN1	1.000	.573
SN2	1.000	.793
SN3	1.000	.607
SN4	1.000	.813
PI1	1.000	.693
P12	1.000	.877
PI3	1.000	.819
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		

Source: Author's Own Work

3.2. Common Method Bias (CMB) Test and Total Variance Explained

Table 3 shows that the eigen value of five factors is above 1 and total variance of 72.08%. Harman's Single-Factor Test is applied for CMB. The rule of a minimum eigen value of at least 1 was considered for exploring determinants. The variance explained by first factor should be less than 50% (Harman, 1976) and the current study reveal it was 40.33% as shown in Table 3 i.e. no CMB.

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Table 3: CMB Results and Variance Explained by Factors

Total Variance Explained									
Component	**Initial Eigenvalues**			**Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings**			**Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings**		
	Total	**% of Variance**	**Cumulative %**	**Total**	**% of Variance**	**Cumulative %**	**Total**	**% of Variance**	**Cumulative %**
1	8.067	40.334	40.334	8.067	40.334	40.334	3.280	16.402	16.402
2	2.432	12.159	52.493	2.432	12.159	52.493	3.101	15.505	31.907
3	1.430	7.151	59.645	1.430	7.151	59.645	2.738	13.691	45.597
4	1.332	6.658	66.303	1.332	6.658	66.303	2.711	13.553	59.150
5	1.157	5.783	72.085	1.157	5.783	72.085	2.587	12.935	72.085
6	.751	3.753	75.838						
7	.680	3.400	79.238						
8	.561	2.804	82.042						
9	.484	2.422	84.464						
10	.458	2.289	86.753						
11	.414	2.072	88.826						
12	.391	1.953	90.778						
13	.359	1.797	92.575						
14	.341	1.705	94.280						

15	.299	1.495	95.776						
16	.218	1.089	96.865						
17	.210	1.050	97.914						
18	.174	.872	98.786						
19	.139	.697	99.483						
20	.103	.517	100.000						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Source: Author's Own Work

3.3. Rotated Component Matrix

Table 4 shows the rotated factor matrix.

Table 4: Rotated Factor Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix[a]					
	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
PSC1	.811				
PSC2	.810				
PSC3	.787				
PSC4	.725				
ESC1		.837			
ESC2		.738			
ESC3		.640			
ESC4		.782			
ESC5		.766			
EC1			.765		
EC2			.740		
EC3			.756		
EC4			.657		
SN1				.665	
SN2				.761	
SN3				.666	
SN4				.768	
PI1					.736

P12					.868
PI3					.846
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.					
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.					

Source: Author's Own Work

3.4. Reliability test

To check the reliability Cronbach alpha was applied which was found to be 0.914 which is more than the cut off value of 0.7.

Table 5: Reliability Analysis

Construct	No. of Statements	Cronbach's Alpha
PSC	4	0.890
ESC	5	0.842
EC	4	0.826
SN	4	0.844
PI	3	0.876
Overall	20	0.914

Source: Author's Own Work

3.5. Validity test

In order to check the validity of all constructs, CFA was used. The CR coefficients are more than 0.70, AVE values are more than 0.50 (Hair *et al.,* 2010) and CR > AVE (Table 6).

Table 6. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (first order construct)

Construct	Composite reliability (CR)	Average Variance Explained (AVE)
PSC	0.864	0.614
ESC	0.868	0.570
EC	0.807	0.513
SN	0.820	0.533
PI	0.858	0.669

Source: Author's Own Work

3.6. Discriminant validity (DV) test

Table 7 indicates that DV is met as square root of AVE is more than its correlation with any other variables used in the study. (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 7. Discriminant validity

Correlations					
	PSC	**ESC**	**EC**	**SN**	**PI**
PSC	**.783**				
ESC	.307**	**.754**			
EC	.573**	.391**	**.716**		
SN	.587**	.387**	.595**	**.730**	
PI	.513**	.250**	.525**	.472**	**.817**
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Source: Author's Own Work

3.7. Multicollinearity test

Table 8 shows the no issue of multicollinearity among variables and variance inflation factor (VIF) values are less than 5 as recommended by Hair et al. (2014).

Table 8: VIF values

Constructs	VIF value
PSC	1.733
ESC	1.236
EC	1.822
SN	1.860

Source: Author's Own Work

4. Results and Findings

4.1. Influence of PSC on PI of consumers towards SC

The current study results (Table 9) show significant association between PSC and PI (β =0.20, p < .05 i.e. 0.032). Thus, results are in the conformity of H_{1A}. The results are in support with the findings of Nam et al., 2017 who demonstrate significant association between PSC and PI. However, the findings do not align with the study of Kim & Chung, (2011). Consumers' perception of sustainable clothing plays a key role in shaping their purchase decisions, as positive perceptions related to eco-friendliness and quality, increase their intention to buy. When consumers view sustainable clothing as reliable and valuable, they are more likely to buy it. This study shows that favourable perceptions significantly contribute to purchase intention, thereby highlighting the importance of awareness and brand positioning in promoting sustainable clothing consumption.

4.2. Influence of ESC on PI of consumers towards SC

The regression results (Table 9) show positive but insignificant association between ESC and PI (β =0.03, p > .05 i.e. 0.716), therefore, the results are not in conformity with $H_{2A.}$ The findings are not in support with previous results of Lee et al. (2014) and Nam et al. (2017).

4.3. Influence of EC on PI of consumers towards SC

The results (Table 9) also show significant association between EC and PI (β =0.35, p < 0.05 i.e. ***) So, H_{3A} is accepted in this study. The findings are in support of previous findings of (Pagiaslis & Krontalis, 2014; Farzin et al., 2023) that consumers' ecological concerns are a key motivator for sustainable clothing purchases. This shows that EC emerges as a key motivator that positively shapes consumer purchase intentions towards sustainable clothing. As also seen in countries like China, Korea, and Japan, keen environmental awareness and enhanced product knowledge have motivated consumers to act more responsibly.

4.4. Influence of SN on PI of consumers towards sustainable clothing

The current study results (Table 9) show significant association between SN and PI (β =0.27, p > .05 i.e. 0.004). So, H_{4A} is accepted in this study. Thus, the results show that subjective norms play a significant role in shaping consumers' purchase behaviour. In markets like South Korea, China and Malaysia, social pressure and reference groups significantly motivate sustainable clothing consumption. However, in emerging nations like India, sustainable clothing consumption is still at an emerging stage. Findings of the current study are in conformity of Yadav and Pathak (2016) and Farzin et al. (2023) research who also showed positive influence of SN on PI.

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Table 9: Path coefficients

Hypotheses			Path coefficient	p value	Result
PI	<---	PSC	.20	.032	Accepted
PI	<---	ESC	.03	.716	Not Accepted
PI	<---	EC	.35	***	Accepted
PI	<---	SN	.27	.004	Accepted

Source: Author's Own Work
Notes: Significant levels p< .05, p<.10

Table 10 shows fit index GFI =0.852, CMIN/df= 2.380, RMSEA= 0.09 is also within satisfactory range. Thus, the proposed model is acceptable.

Table 10. Overall structural equation model (SEM)

Model	CMIN/df	GFI	RMSEA
Proposed	2.380	0.852	0.09

Source: Author's Own Work
Table 11 shows the combined influence of predictors (PSC, ESC, EC and SN) on PI i.e. 35.5% (R square value). Thus, four factors combined together in the proposed conceptual model do influence PI.

Table 11: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.596[a]	.355	.332	.57659

a. Predictors: (Constant), PSC, ESC, EC and SN
Source: Author's Own Work

4.5. Demographic Profile of respondents

Table 12 shows that majority of the respondents are male i.e. 59.6%, while 40.4% are female. Among the respondents, 56.5% belong to 25-50 years age group, followed by 22% with age more than 50 years. Additionally, the 21.5% of respondents belong to below 25 years age group. Majority of respondents are married i.e. 52.1%, while 47.9% are unmarried.

Table 12: Demographic profile of respondents

Demographic Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
Less than 25 years	49	21.5%
25- 50 years	129	56.5%
More than 50 years	50	22%
Gender		
Male	136	59.6%

Demographic Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	92	40.4%
Marital Statis		
Married	119	52.1%
Unmarried	109	47.9s%

Source: Author's Own Work

4.6. Findings related to factors

Table 13 shows findings related to all factors i.e. Perception of Sustainable Clothing (PSC), Expectations of Sustainable clothing (ESC), Environment Concern (EC), Subjective Norms (SN) and Purchase Intention (PI) of consumers. It revealed a positive interest of consumers towards sustainable clothing. In terms of purchase intention (PI), a majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they intend to buy sustainable clothing in the near future and are willing to make efforts to prefer it over regular clothing, with less than 5% showing disagreement. Similarly, for PSC factor most participants recognized its eco-friendly aspects such as use of recyclable packaging, non-polluting materials and high recyclability, with agreement levels more than 70%. On EC factor, respondents showed high level of awareness, accepting human responsibility in environmental degradation and the need to live in balance with it; more than 80% showed strong concern. Regarding ESC factor, while many expect sustainable apparel to be durable, convenient and meet performance standards, the responses revealed high neutrality regarding quality and convenience. Finally, in the SN factor, while family and reference groups appeared as stronger influencers on purchase intention (over 70% agreement), the role of friends and wider society showed more mixed responses.

Table 13: Findings related to Factors

PI1: I intend to buy sustainable clothing the next time I need new apparel.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	89	39
	Agree	110	48.2
	Neutral	23	10.1
	Disagree	2	0.9
	Strongly Disagree	4	1.8
	Total	228	100
P12: I will make a special effort to choose sustainable clothing over regular clothing			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	114	50
	Agree	102	44.7
	Neutral	5	2.2
	Disagree	1	0.4

	Strongly Disagree	6	2.6
	Total	228	100
PI3: I plan to buy sustainable clothing in the near future.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	108	47.4
	Agree	110	48.2
	Neutral	4	1.8
	Strongly Disagree	6	2.6
	Total	228	100
PSC1: Sustainable clothing uses environmentally friendly packaging.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	52	22.8
	Agree	108	47.4
	Neutral	60	26.3
	Disagree	2	0.9
	Strongly Disagree	6	2.6
	Total	228	100
PSC2: Sustainable clothing uses recycled packaging materials.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	48	21.1
	Agree	126	55.3
	Neutral	41	18
	Disagree	9	3.9
	Strongly Disagree	4	1.8
	Total	228	100
PSC3: Sustainable clothing is made from non-polluting materials			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	50	21.9
	Agree	123	53.9

	Neutral	43	18.9
	Disagree	8	3.5
	Strongly Disagree	4	1.8
	Total	228	100

PSC4: Sustainable clothing is highly recyclable.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	53	23.2
	Agree	131	57.5
	Neutral	30	13.2
	Disagree	8	3.5
	Strongly Disagree	6	2.6
	Total	228	100

EC1: I feel that human activities are a major cause of environmental destruction.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	63	27.6
	Agree	123	53.9
	Neutral	38	16.7
	Disagree	2	0.9
	Strongly Disagree	2	0.9
	Total	228	100

EC2: I think the environment is extremely fragile, and even minor disruptions can cause damage

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	94	41.2
	Agree	126	55.3
	Neutral	4	1.8
	Disagree	2	0.9
	Strongly Disagree	2	0.9
	Total	228	100

EC3: I worry about the impact of environmental problems on my future and well-being.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	104	45.6
	Agree	104	45.6
	Neutral	12	5.3
	Disagree	4	1.8
	Strongly Disagree	4	1.8
	Total	228	100
EC4: I believe humans must adapt their lifestyle to live in balance with nature.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	88	38.6
	Agree	101	44.3
	Neutral	27	11.8
	Disagree	8	3.5
	Strongly Disagree	4	1.8
	Total	228	100
ESC1: I expect sustainable clothing to have an appealing appearance			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	59	25.9
	Agree	80	35.1
	Neutral	65	28.5
	Disagree	18	7.9
	Strongly Disagree	6	2.6
	Total	228	100
ESC2: I expect sustainable clothing to perform well in everyday use.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	53	23.2
	Agree	104	45.6
	Neutral	39	17.1
	Disagree	24	10.5

	Strongly Disagree	8	3.5
	Total	228	100

ESC3: I expect sustainable clothing to be simple and convenient to use.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	64	28.1
	Agree	114	50
	Neutral	32	14
	Disagree	10	4.4
	Strongly Disagree	8	3.5
	Total	228	100

ESC4: I expect sustainable clothing designs to meet quality standards and requirements.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	53	23.2
	Agree	93	40.8
	Neutral	51	22.4
	Disagree	27	11.8
	Strongly Disagree	4	1.8
	Total	228	100

ESC5: I expect sustainable clothing to be durable and long-lasting.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	55	24.1
	Agree	82	36
	Neutral	56	24.6
	Disagree	31	13.6
	Strongly Disagree	4	1.8
	Total	228	100

SN1: Friends influence purchase intention of consumers towards sustainable clothing

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	35	15.4

	Agree	85	37.3
	Neutral	60	26.3
	Disagree	42	18.4
	Strongly Disagree	6	2.6
	Total	228	100
SN2: Family members influence purchase intention of consumers towards sustainable clothing			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	38	16.7
	Agree	127	55.7
	Neutral	47	20.6
	Disagree	10	4.4
	Strongly Disagree	6	2.6
	Total	228	100
SN3: Reference groups influence purchase intention of consumers towards sustainable clothing			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	50	21.9
	Agree	135	59.2
	Neutral	26	11.4
	Disagree	11	4.8
	Strongly Disagree	6	2.6
	Total	228	100
SN4: Society has a role in purchase intention of consumers towards sustainable clothing			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	41	18
	Agree	122	53.5
	Neutral	51	22.4
	Disagree	10	4.4
	Strongly Disagree	4	1.8
	Total	228	100

Source: Author's Own Work

5. Discussion

The main aim of this study was to explore the influence of perception of sustainable clothing, expectations of sustainable clothing, environment concern and subjective norms on PI of consumers towards SC in the national capital region of India. The results show that there is no significant impact between expectations of sustainable clothing and purchase intention. This study suggests that consumers expectations may not exhibit more positive purchase behaviour towards sustainable clothing. On the contrary, it was revealed that perception of sustainable clothing, environment concern and subjective norms showed a significant impact on sustainable clothing purchasing behaviour. The results show that consumers who are environmental concerned are more likely to buy SC. The results of this study provide empirical support to formulated hypotheses. Moreover, the results of the study stressed on influence of perception and subjective norms on consumers' behaviour in making sustainable clothing purchases.

6. Managerial and social implications

As per this research, no previous work is available that has explored these four determinants together in NCR, India. It is a new model on sustainable clothing framework. Moreover, this study offers valuable insights for companies and fashion brands to influence sustainable business practices. This provides a prospect for fashion brands to address the consumers' environmental apprehension and expectations through expansion of sustainable products. The study provides empirical understanding into four factors that are important drivers of sustainable clothing among Indian consumers. Marketers should design campaigns to highlight the importance of sustainable clothing and encourage consumers engagement that can result into change of their purchase behaviour. Marketers should also create awareness programs on benefits of choosing sustainable fashion clothing.

7. Conclusion and shortcomings of the study

In the last decade, preceding studies exploring determinants influencing PI of consumers towards sustainable clothing have been conducted outside India i.e. Malaysia, South Korea, USA, Turkey, etc. with limited studies have been conducted in India. The results show that PSC, EC and SN emerge as determinants of PI. However, no significant association between ESC and PI.

The current research overlooks the longitudinal research design and covered only NCR region of India; therefore, results may not be suitable to other regions and countries. This study ignores the impact of socio-demographic factors like age, culture, gender, etc. which might affect the intention to buy sustainable clothing.

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