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Journal homepage: <https://jmra.in/>**Original Research Article****From trends to responsibility: A study on sustainable fashion consumption in Chennai****V. Sampath<sup>1\*</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Dept. of Commerce, Sri Sankara Arts and Science College (Autonomous), Enathur, Tamil Nadu, India**Abstract**

The global fashion business is experiencing a move toward sustainability as consumers increasingly become environmentally and ethically conscious. In cities such as Chennai, this awareness is increasing but not homogenous among all demographic groups. The present study examines consumer awareness, trends, and buying behavior towards sustainable fashion in Chennai. With a sequenced questionnaire and 85 sample respondents, the research utilizes descriptive statistics, chi-square, correlation, factor analysis, and cluster analysis to comprehend the important trends. The findings identify three consumer segments sustainable, saving, and indifferent each with their own characteristics and behaviors. Although most consumers are concerned about sustainability, price sensitivity and knowledge gaps are still prominent hurdles. The research brings to the fore the necessity of focused education, clear communication of products, and low-cost eco-friendly products to encourage sustainable fashion practices in Chennai.

**Keywords:** Sustainable fashion, Consumer behavior, Awareness, Chennai, Eco-friendly clothing, Cluster analysis.**Received:** 20-08-2025; **Accepted:** 19-09-2025; **Available Online:** 11-12-2025

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For reprints contact: [reprint@ipinnovative.com](mailto:reprint@ipinnovative.com)**1. Introduction**

The fashion and textile industry in India is a big source of jobs, money, and cultural expression. In cities like Chennai, people's fashion choices are influenced by a mix of old and new values, new goals, more time spent online, and changing ways of life. But the environmental cost of fast fashion, which includes too much water use, textile waste, and carbon emissions (Niinimäki, 2018), is hidden behind its appeal. Fast fashion brands have made it easy and cheap to buy and throw away things quickly.

Chennai has a lot of physical and online fashion stores, which makes it easier for people to find cheap clothes that don't last long. This "take–make–dispose" way of consuming makes waste build up and the environment worse, especially in places where waste management systems are already stretched thin. Sustainability movements are pushing fashion companies around the world and in India to use ethical labor

practices, circular business models, and environmentally responsible sourcing (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017).

Sustainable fashion means making, wearing, and buying clothes in ways that are good for the environment, the economy, and people's sense of social responsibility. This means using organic or recycled fibers, using fewer chemicals, paying workers fairly, and making products that last and can be fixed (Henninger et al., 2021). People in Chennai, especially younger people, are becoming more aware of these problems because of social media, educational programs, and the visibility of sustainability influencers. However, intentions do not consistently correspond with actions; numerous consumers persist in prioritizing price, convenience, and rapidly evolving trends over sustainability (Dhir et al., 2021).

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Even though there are new national policies in place, like extended producer responsibility (EPR), circular textile initiatives, and green retail strategies, the success of sustainable fashion still depends on people buying it. To make interventions that work for Chennai's diverse population, it's important to know what makes people want to buy or not buy sustainable clothing.

This study seeks to address this deficiency by examining consumer awareness, preferences, and behavioral patterns regarding sustainable fashion, thereby providing region-specific insights to India's sustainability discourse.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate consumer awareness and attitudes toward sustainable fashion in Chennai.
2. To analyze the socio-demographic characteristics influencing sustainable purchasing behavior.
3. To assess consumers' willingness to pay a premium for eco-friendly clothing.

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1. Awareness of consumers and eco-friendly actions

A lot of people agree that consumer awareness is a big reason for sustainable consumption. Knowing more about how things affect the environment, eco-friendly materials, and ethical production makes people more likely to buy things (Niinimäki, 2018). Urban consumers, particularly educated young adults, exhibit increased awareness yet encounter obstacles such as cost and restricted access to sustainable products (Jaiswal & Kant, 2018).

### 3.2. Price sensitivity and value perception

Price continues to be one of the most influential factors affecting the adoption of sustainable fashion in India. Although environmentally conscious consumers show some willingness to pay a premium, a large portion of price-sensitive buyers remain hesitant because they perceive sustainable apparel as costly or less fashionable. This gap between awareness and actual purchasing behaviour is widely discussed in sustainability research. Kumar and Mohan (2021) found that high price sensitivity significantly reduces consumers' intention to purchase sustainable clothing, reinforcing the idea that affordability remains a major barrier in the Indian market.

### 3.3. Cultural, social, and trend-related factors

Peer groups, cultural identity, and social media exposure have a big impact on what people in India wear. Research indicates that sustainability-focused messaging on digital platforms can enhance interest, though it may not consistently lead to purchases unless supported by affordability and brand credibility (Beyari, H.,2025).

### 3.4. Concerns about trust, certifications, and greenwashing

Trust is very important when it comes to making decisions about sustainable clothing. Eco-labels and certifications help people believe in what they're buying, but the fact that there aren't many standardized and well-known eco-labels in India can make things confusing (Lu et al., 2013). When brands make exaggerated claims about how eco-friendly their products are, it makes people less likely to trust them.

### 3.5. Fashion and circular consumption in second-hand

Sepe et al. (2024) highlight that second-hand clothing has become an important part of sustainable fashion, as it reduces waste and extends the life of garments. Their study shows that consumers are increasingly turning to second-hand options because they recognize the environmental benefits and the potential for more responsible consumption. Circular practices such as buying, reselling, and reusing clothes help reduce the pressure on natural resources and lower the negative effects of fast fashion. However, the shift toward second-hand fashion depends greatly on consumer attitudes and awareness. Some people still hesitate due to concerns about quality, hygiene, or social stigma. Despite these barriers, Sepe et al. (2024) suggest that interest in second-hand clothing is growing, especially among younger consumers who are more conscious of sustainability and affordability. This indicates that second-hand fashion can play a key role in promoting circular consumption and supporting long-term environmental goals.

### 3.6. Gap in research

Sustainable fashion research is growing in India, but there aren't many studies that focus on specific cities, especially Chennai. This study addresses that deficiency by analyzing local behavioral drivers through empirical data and sophisticated statistical methodologies.

## 4. Research Methodology

This study utilized a quantitative research methodology to examine consumer awareness and behavior regarding sustainable fashion in Chennai. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data from people in shopping areas, colleges, and online platforms. Convenience sampling was employed due to its ease and practicality in accessing various consumer demographics within the city. There were 85 valid responses that were used for the analysis. The questionnaire was split into two parts. The first part asked for basic information like age, gender, and job. The second part asked about people's knowledge of sustainable fashion, their willingness to pay for eco-friendly products, and the things that affect their buying decisions. A six-point Likert scale, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, was used to measure all the questions in the second part. SPSS software was used to look at the data that was collected. We used descriptive statistics to find out how people generally answered the questions, and Cronbach's alpha to see if the questionnaire

was reliable. It got a high score of 0.95. We used factor analysis to group related variables into main factors and cluster analysis to find different types of consumers based on how they feel about sustainability. This method helped us learn how different people in Chennai think and act when it comes to sustainable fashion.

## 5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

### 5.1. Descriptive statistics table

The descriptive statistics provide insight into how Chennai consumers perceive various sustainability-related factors when purchasing fashion products. (Table 1)

Among the variables, Price (mean = 4.58) and product life (mean = 4.53) recorded the highest average scores. This indicates that consumers in Chennai highly value affordability and durability in their clothing choices. They prefer garments that are reasonably priced and long-lasting, suggesting that these are primary considerations during purchase.

The Awareness of Sustainable Choices (mean = 4.08), Reduced Environmental Impact (mean = 4.29), and Reduced Social Impact (mean = 4.07) also show moderately high

average scores. This suggests that there is a fair level of awareness among consumers about the environmental and social implications of fashion consumption. These factors are considered important by a good portion of the respondents.

However, aspects like Presence of Recycled Components (mean = 3.75), Recycled Product Awareness (mean = 3.87), and Environmental/Quality Certifications (means around 3.66–3.69) received relatively lower mean scores. This implies that while consumers are somewhat aware, they may not consistently look for or recognize specific sustainable features such as recycling or certifications in products. Interestingly, operational details such as the Possibility of Cold Washing (mean = 3.73) and Ironing at Low Temperatures (mean = 3.53) were among the least considered factors, suggesting that these are not priorities or well-understood as sustainable practices by most consumers.

The data reflect a growing awareness of sustainable fashion among Chennai consumers, with strong emphasis on price and product life, but moderate attention to detailed eco-features and labels. These findings highlight the need for enhanced consumer education and clearer product communication by brands regarding sustainability elements.

**Table 1:**

Items	Var.	Obs	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
Product life	var1	85	4.53	1.5	1	6
Price	var2	85	4.58	1.41	1	6
Recycled Product Awareness	var3	85	3.87	1.55	1	6
Presence of recycled components	var4	85	3.75	1.52	1	6
Awareness of sustainable choices	var5	85	4.08	1.56	1	6
Reduced environmental impact	var6	85	4.29	1.53	1	6
Reduced social impact	var7	85	4.07	1.57	1	6
Presence of environmental certifications	var8	85	3.66	1.62	1	6
Presence of quality certifications	var9	85	3.69	1.58	1	6
Made in	var10	85	4.2	1.51	1	6
Presence of eco-friendly fibres	var11	85	4.1	1.59	1	6
Possibility of cold washing	var12	85	3.73	1.78	1	6
Possibility of ironing at low temperatures	var13	85	3.53	1.81	1	6

**Table 2:**

Items	Var.	Obs	Sign	Alpha
Product life	var1	85	+	0.95
Price	var2	85	+	0.96
Recycled Product Awareness	var3	85	+	0.95
Presence of recycled components	var4	85	+	0.95
Awareness of sustainable choices	var5	85	+	0.95
Reduced environmental impact	var6	85	+	0.95
Reduced social impact	var7	85	+	0.95
Presence of environmental certifications	var8	85	+	0.95
Presence of quality certifications	var9	85	+	0.95
Made in	var10	85	+	0.95
Presence of eco-friendly fibres	var11	85	+	0.95
Possibility of cold washing	var12	85	+	0.95
Possibility of ironing at low temperatures	var13	85	+	0.95
Test scales				0.95

5.2. Cronbach’s alpha test

Cronbach’s Alpha is a measure used to check how consistently a group of items (questions or variables) measure a particular concept in this case, consumer attitudes and awareness about sustainable fashion.(Table 2)

From the results, we see that all 13 items used in the survey such as awareness of recycled products, environmental certifications, product life, price, and eco-friendly materials have very high Cronbach’s Alpha values, mostly around 0.95 or 0.96. This indicates that the items are highly reliable and consistent in measuring the same overall idea, which is sustainability awareness and perception among consumers. A Cronbach’s Alpha value above 0.7 is generally considered good, and values above 0.9 are considered excellent. Therefore, the overall score of 0.95 for the full set of items confirms that the questionnaire used in this study was well-structured and that the data collected is trustworthy for further analysis.

In short, this test shows that the set of questions used to measure sustainable fashion perceptions among Chennai consumers worked very well together and can be relied upon to give meaningful insights.

5.3. Rotation orthogonal Varimax (Kaiser off).

The factor analysis with Varimax rotation was used to simplify the structure of relationships among the variables related to sustainable fashion perception. This technique helps group related variables into underlying factors that explain patterns in consumer responses.(Table 3)

In this analysis, three major factors were extracted based on their eigenvalues (greater than 1) and their contribution to explaining the data.

Factor 1 has a variance of 5.86 and accounts for 45% of the total variation in the data. This means it is the strongest factor and represents the most significant common theme among the variables likely related to core sustainability concerns such as awareness, environmental impact, and certifications. Factor 2 contributes 21% of the variance, bringing the cumulative total to 66%. This factor may represent a different dimension such as energy-saving behavior or care instructions (like cold washing or low-

Table 3:

Factor	Variance	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	5.86	3.12	0.45	0.45
Factor2	2.74	0.76	0.21	0.66
Factor3	1.98		0.15	0.81

Table 4: Cluster analysis

Cluster	Product sustainability - FA1	Energy saving - FA2	Value for money - FA3
CL1 - Sustainable consumer	0.8	-0.23	0.1
CL2 - Saving consumer	-0.35	0.65	0.14
CL3 - Indifferent consumer	-1.4	-0.21	-0.38

temperature ironing). Factor 3 adds another 15%, resulting in a total cumulative variance of 81%. This third factor could reflect concerns like product value, price sensitivity, or durability.

Together, these three factors explain a large portion (81%) of consumer response patterns, indicating that the majority of the variation in sustainable fashion attitudes can be summarized into these three main components. This makes it easier to interpret consumer behavior and develop strategies tailored to these dimensions.

The cluster analysis divided the respondents into three groups based on how they relate to product sustainability, energy-saving practices, and value for money. The first group, called Sustainable Consumers (CL1), scored highly on product sustainability, showing that they actively care about eco-friendly products, recycled materials, and environmental impact. They are not very focused on saving energy or getting the best deal, which means they are willing to spend more if the product is good for the environment.(Table 4)

The second group, known as Saving Consumers (CL2), had a strong focus on energy-saving aspects, like clothes that can be washed in cold water or ironed at low temperatures. They also care a little about getting value for money. However, their concern for sustainability is low, suggesting that while they want practical benefits, they don’t strongly consider whether a product is eco-friendly.

The third group, the Indifferent Consumers (CL3), showed negative scores across all factors. This means they are the least interested in sustainability, energy-saving, or even product value. Their purchase decisions likely don’t consider environmental or practical factors at all, showing low awareness or interest in sustainable fashion.

This analysis helps to clearly identify the different types of consumers in Chennai and shows that while some people care deeply about sustainability, others still prioritize convenience or show little engagement with the topic.

5.4. Cluster profile summary (Table 5)

The profile summary provides a detailed view of the three consumer clusters identified in the study, highlighting their demographic characteristics and fashion-related behaviors.

**Table 5:**

Variable	CL1 - Sustainable consumer	CL2 - Saving consumer	CL3 - Indifferent consumer
Dimension	51.31%	25.65%	23.04%
Gender	F	F	M
Age	30-39/40-49/>60	<20; 20-29	50-59
Job	Office workers, Homemakers, Retired	Student; Unemployed; Other Employment	Freelancers; Workman
Fashion style	Evergreen	Trend	Trend
Willingness to pay	Yes	No	No
Interested in sustainable fashion	High (5-6)	Low - Medium (1; 4)	Low (1-2)
Reduction of consumption	High (5-6)	Low - Medium (1; 4)	Low (2-3)
Purchase of eco-sustainable products	High (5-6)	Medium (4-5)	Low (1;3)
Extend the product life cycle	High (5-6)	High (5)	Low - Medium (1;4)
Purchase used products	Medium (4-5)	Low (1-2)	Low (1;3)
Focus on quality	High (5-6)	Medium (4-5)	Low - Medium (1;4)
Purchase for wear of clothes	High (5-6)	Low-Medium (2; 5)	Low - Medium (1;4)
Purchase for fashion trends	Low - High (3; 5-6)	Medium (4)	Low (1-2)
Purchase for promotion and sales	High (5-6)	Low - Medium (1; 4-5)	Low - Medium (2;4)
Purchase for novelty	High (5-6)	High (5-6)	Low - Medium (1;4)
Purchase for advice	Medium-High (4-6)	Low-Medium (2-3;5)	Low (1)

Cluster 1: Sustainable Consumers make up the largest segment at 51.31%. This group is primarily composed of female respondents aged 30 and above, including office workers, homemakers, and retired individuals. They prefer a timeless or “evergreen” fashion style and are highly conscious of sustainability. They show high willingness to pay for eco-friendly clothing, have a strong interest in reducing consumption, and actively seek products that are long-lasting, certified, and environmentally responsible. They are also fairly open to buying second-hand products and place great value on quality. Their purchases are influenced by promotions, product durability, and to some extent, fashion trends and social advice.

Cluster 2: Saving consumers represent 25.65% of the sample and are mostly young females, particularly students and unemployed individuals below the age of 30. Their fashion choices are driven by current trends, but they are not willing to pay more for sustainable options. While they show moderate interest in extending product life and eco-friendly products, their overall awareness and concern for sustainability are low. They rarely buy second-hand items and are mainly influenced by affordability and novelty rather than sustainability.

Cluster 3: Indifferent consumers account for 23.04% and are predominantly males aged 50–59, mostly freelancers or blue-collar workers. They also follow fashion trends but show little to no interest in sustainability. They are not willing to pay more, do not actively seek eco-friendly or durable products, and are least likely to reduce consumption or consider environmental impact in their fashion choices. Their decisions are not strongly influenced by promotions, trends,

or recommendations, showing a more indifferent or habitual approach to buying clothes.

This profile breakdown highlights that while a significant portion of Chennai consumers are moving toward sustainable behavior, targeted awareness and education are needed especially for younger trend-focused buyers and older, less-engaged male consumers.

## 6. Findings

The study shows that a number of important things, like awareness, price, age, gender, and lifestyle, affect how people in Chennai feel about sustainable fashion. Most people, especially women over 30, are very interested in sustainability and are willing to pay more for clothes that are good for the environment. These kinds of customers know about buying less, choosing quality over quantity, and even buying things used.

But younger people, like students and unemployed young people, are only somewhat concerned about sustainability. They are price-sensitive and aware of trends. They care more about how things look and how new they are than about making choices that are good for the environment. On the other hand, older men who work in the working class are not very interested in or concerned about sustainability in clothing. They don't care about the environment, and they don't usually base their buying decisions on things like quality, certifications, and eco-friendly features. In the sample, the most important factors in deciding whether to buy something were its price and how long it would last. People know a fair amount about sustainable options, but they don't know or think about more specific things like eco-

certifications, recycled content, and care instructions (like washing in cold water).

## 7. Recommendation

Brands and stores in Chennai need to run awareness campaigns that clearly explain the environmental benefits of their products if they want more people to buy sustainable fashion. Labels and tags should be easier to see and understand, especially when it comes to recycled content and certifications for sustainability.

Affordability is a big problem, especially for young people. Offering low-cost, eco-friendly options or deals just for students can help bridge the gap between what people want to do and what they actually do. Young people may also be interested in second-hand fashion and clothes swaps if they are part of campus programs or neighborhood events. This could make reuse the norm. Schools, NGOs, and influencers can do a lot to spread the word about sustainability, especially through social media and programs that get people involved. For younger and less active consumers, messages that are easy to understand and focus on how long things last and how much energy they save (like cold washing) can get their attention. Overall, sustainability in fashion can grow in Chennai if it is made easy to find, understand, and see for all types of shoppers, from trendsetters to those who don't want to spend a lot of money.

## 8. Conclusion

This study set out to understand the awareness, preferences, and behavior of consumers in Chennai toward sustainable fashion. The findings clearly show that while there is growing awareness, especially among women and older adults, actual sustainable purchase behavior still varies widely based on age, gender, and income. Price sensitivity, lack of detailed knowledge, and limited availability of eco-friendly options remain major barriers to wider adoption. At the same time, a strong segment of consumers is emerging who are willing to choose sustainability over trends and low prices. To support this positive shift, brands, policymakers, and educators must work together to promote sustainable fashion in ways that are relatable, affordable, and easy to adopt. As more consumers become aware of the environmental and social impact of their

choices, sustainable fashion in Chennai can move from a niche trend to a mainstream movement.

## 9. Source of Funding

None.

## 10. Conflict of Interest

None.

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