

Sustainability in Fashion Industry: A Novel Approach for Consumer Buying Decision in Post Pandemic Era

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Abstract

The buzz word Vegan Apparels has shot up the market of Sustainable fashion industry, the expectations of the marketers and the country. Post-Covid 19 the consumers have become more humanly towards animal cruelty and protection of the environment. This research paper will analyze the shift of the nation towards vegan and sustainable apparels. This is an exploratory paper based on primary and secondary research methods. Findings of the research paper provide that though the apparel industry was worst hit by the pandemic but there would be a rise in the demand for such products in India in the coming future. This paper is a sincere effort of the authors to identify the effect of the pandemic on the purchase behavior of Vegan and Sustainable apparel.

Keywords- Vegan apparels, Sustainable apparels, COVID 19, purchase intention, India.

1. Introduction

According to the trade group, which has 5,000 members and represents 70% of the UK retail business, the terms "vegan" and "sustainable" should not be used interchangeably. Following beauty, footwear is the most-stocked category described as "vegan," according to retail-decision platform Edited. According to Grandview Research (2020), the women's vegan fashion market globally stands at the worth of US \$396.3 billion in 2019 and is predicted to rise at a CAGR of 13.6 percent between 2020-27.

According to the Inter Press Service news agency (2021), the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany, are the countries investing hugely in the vegan market; in the United Kingdom, people are

witnessing a 75% rise in vegan products year over year, while in the United States, there has been an 11 percent increase.

The state of fashion report prepared by Mckinsey (2017) has stated that approx. 65% of consumers from the markets of India, South Africa, South Korea and other emerging countries are using sustainable apparels. Such countries are also supporting movements organized by non-profit global organizations like Fashion Revolution. Such initiatives have led to the inclusion of fashion industry in the UN SDG (Sustainable Development Goals).

However, over the projection period of 2021-2027, the market's expansion would be hampered by the initial cost of items and rising inflation. Also, the concerns have increased about sustainability post pandemic but there still exists an attitude- behavior gap due to which only few consumers actually purchase sustainable fashion products. This attitude- behavior gap is due to various internal and external barriers. Furthermore, demand for vegan women's apparel is expected to expand during the projection period due to cultural trends and the current fashions. On the other hand, several environmental themes, such as circular thinking and biodiversity, climate positivity etc..are propelling the industry forward in 2021. However, a common man uses these words exchangeably.

1.1 Vegan Fashion

It is an apparel that is 100 percent “cruelty-free,” according to PETA India. To put it another way, no feathers, wool, fur, silk, leather or other animal-based fibers are allowed. When we take into consideration not only the aspects of animal welfare but also the harm the environment is facing from the fur trade and animal agriculture, it is obvious that vegan fashion is becoming increasingly relevant. It is a way of life and a philosophy that encompasses all elements of life. In response to the needless suffering and destruction, many people have started thinking of living an animal-friendly lifestyle, caused by animal agriculture.

According to apparel resources business (2020) news veganism has taken a huge leap in the world not only in the food sector but also in fashion, showing that the demands of the consumers are getting wiser. Versace, Gucci, Burberry, Chanel are few brands that have stopped using fur. Also, New Look brand has launched a wide range of bags, shoes and accessories that are completely free from fur.

As per the report of PETA (2020), it has given the title of “Vegan friendly high street retailer” to British brand Marks & Spencer. It has broadened its vegan friendly product offerings to food and fashion domain where it has launched an affordable line of footwear also.

Table 1: Vegan Brands approved by PETA India

Vegan Apparel Brands	Place	Products
DeChevalerie	Shahpur Jat, Delhi	Apparels and Home décor
Hoomanwear	Mumbai	Men & Women Apparels
Lake Peace	Delhi	Women Apparel
Kultureshop	Mumbai	Men & Women Apparels

1.2 Sustainable fashion

As per the report of New India express (2021) Sustainable fashion is a growing trend in the world of pret and couture because ethical lifestyle makes the world a guilt free place to live in whether it is eating, shopping, travelling or building. These days neo- fashion pioneers from India are stepping ahead and crossing boundaries and using beeswax, coconut accessories, rural tile-making and customized natural designs to take the culture of Indian designs at the next stage.

Viable (sustainable) fashion is primarily concerned with decreasing the environmental impact of clothes alone, finding biodegradable or recycled fibers, and minimizing carbon emissions. Most sustainable firms still include cashmere, wool, leather and silk, in their products, preventing them from being labeled as vegan.

Designers from global fashion industry are converting food waste, plant waste and textile waste into future fashion that has contributed to a decrease in the pollution level on earth (Anna Sophie, 2020). As per the report of good housekeeping institute (2020) ethical or sustainable fashion is taking care of 5 major issues in fashion industry-water usage, hazardous chemicals, short lifecycle, waste, agriculture. A research report published by forbes (2020) indicates that 88% of consumers want brands should be more environment friendly. However, if the fashion industry continues to follow this path then by 2050 it is expected to produce 26% of the world’s carbon footprint.

Table 2: Examples of Sustainable Brands in India

Sustainable Apparel Brands	Place	Products
Kalamargam	Mumbai	Women wear
House of Anita Dongre	Delhi	Men & Women wear
Save The Loom	Kerala	Handlooms

Due to the prolonged impact of COVID 19 globally, there has been a rise in awareness and demand of eco-friendly and vegan products that has given a boost to this category of Apparel products too. However, there seems to be limited research on the impact of pandemic on vegan apparels in India. Keeping in mind the above stated problems, the study

aims to identify the shift in the trends of Vegan and Sustainable Apparels post pandemic in India.

2. Literature Review

This section is divided into two parts- i) Regressand, ii) Regressors

2.1 Regressand or the Dependent variables is the variable being tested and measured.

2.1.1 Vegan Products

Choi and Lee in 2019 outline the vegan-fashion-consuming phenomenon as "an apparel intake extra special sample wherein the idea of vegetarianism is carried out to clothes in particular due to the boom in attention approximately animal care and surroundings that don't sell the use of animal leather-based or fur. Veganism is on the rise, and even consumers who don't identify as vegan may seek out vegan products for a variety of reasons, according to the BRC.

Most vegan style brands, consistent with Choi and Yoh (2013), hire green or recycled substances which include cotton canvas, natural cotton, fake leather-based or suede, and recycled fiber. Furthermore, Kim and Park (2019) divide vegan style's opportunity substances into 3 categories: leather-based, fur, and different alternatives. Vegan clothes and footwear are "ideally positioned to debut" as a result of this, as well as the fact that the number of vegans in the UK has doubled between 2015 and 2019.

Stringer, Mortimer, and Payne (2019) additionally located that there are few other factors like self-transcendence values and openness to change that are having a positive effect on customers' moral issues approximately employee and animal welfare, and the surroundings in the style business. Raggitto, mason, Moretti (2018) stated that any company that encourages its customers to purchase products and services that are environmental friendly and organic adds to its competitive advantage.

Table 3. Summary of Vegan studies in various product categories

Studies	Categories
Twine,R. (2018)	Vegan Foods
Ramey,J.G (2020)	Vegan Leather
Pitman,S. (2018)	Vegan Cosmetics

2.1.2 Sustainable Products- Increase in the usage of PU (polyurethane) and PVC(polyvinyl chloride) (Lee 2019) has become a major cause for environmental hazards over decades. Hence, people are awakening towards the cause of sustainability (Mitchell et al. 2020). This gradual

paradigm is creating a new trend in the footwear and textile industry by creating a shift in consumers mind towards eco-friendly or green products (Rathinamoorthy 2019).

These days, huge amount of waste from agro and food processing sectors like plants leaves, fruit peels and dairy whey or bio mass are being widely used in fashion industry (Samanta, Basak and Chattopadhyay 2015). Even in footwear industry, the production trend for eco-friendly products has pushed the revenue for many companies even in companies like Nike and Adidas (UDaily 2014). There are loads of new generation sustainable sources used in textile and footwear industry like Orange Fiber (Rafiq et al. 2018), waste pineapple leaves (Dan and Mez 2019), Green tea (Nam and Lee 2019) etc... Seo and Suh (2019) examined few companies like H&M and Zara that have incorporated vegan fashion marketing tactics as a social value of actions. These firms have started focusing on collaboration with luxurious brands, pressurizing the significance of production, recycling and waste disposal activities and encouraging economic activities based on shared values.

Jaiswal, Kant (2018) states that in order to obtain a positive attitude towards green and sustainable products and green packaging, the products should have healthy ingredients and benefits.

Table 4. Summary of sustainable studies in various product categories

Studies	Categories
Muhammad Hasnain saeed. (2019)	Sustainable mobile covers
McIntosh, Kyle. (2018)	Sustainable personal care products
Haryono, D. (2021)	Agriculture Products

2.1.3 Purchase Intention- Luo, Chen, Chin (2011) purchase intention comes when there is a chance or desire to purchase, and stronger the will to purchase, higher will be the probability that the product will be bought. Motivation, new information and need are the key factors that affect purchase intention. Other than information and knowledge, product image (Ruswanti, 2017) and attitude towards the brand (Chang 2017) also has a direct impact on intention to purchase.

Using the modified planned behavior model, Yoh investigated the drivers for purchase intentions regarding the vegan fashion products in 2018. Consumers' intentions to buy vegan fashion products were influenced by their attitudes, subjective norms, ethical obligation, and ethical identity. As a result, Lee, Karpova, and Bayter (2019) found that various sorts of information is influencing the college students like attitudes and subjective norms regarding the purchase of fur, leather, and wool fashion products.

2.2 Regressors or the Independent variables- are those whose variation does not depend on another.

2.2.1 COVID 19- When 2019 was about to end, an outbreak was caused by a novel coronavirus in Wuhan, China that quickly spread throughout the globe, prompting fears of a pandemic. The microbe for this pneumonia is known as 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) after infection differentiating proof and seclusion and it is declared as a serious intensive respiratory disorder by the WHO. The WHO declared the covid outbreak a Global Health Emergency on January 30, 2020. SARS-CoV-2, in contrast to the SARS-CoV that produced a SARS outbreak in 2003, has a more grounded bandwidth.

Because of the significant rise in confirmed cases, avoiding and controlling COVID-19 is truly remarkable. Despite the fact that COVID-19's facility and indications are governed by respiratory side effects, a few patients have severe cardiovascular harm. Furthermore, some people with basic cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) may be at an increased risk of death. As a result, when we fully comprehend the harm caused by SARS-CoV-2 to the cardiovascular system and its hidden components, we can provide the finest and most effective treatment for these patients, lowering mortality.

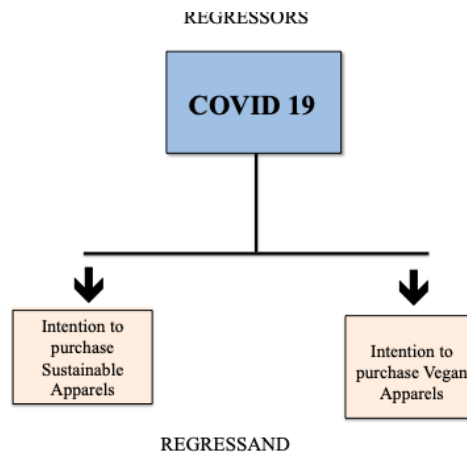
3. RESEARCH GAP

Based on the literature review it has been observed that there have been very few studies on the effect of the recent COVID 19 pandemic hit on the purchase intention of Vegan and sustainable apparel brands in India. Also, there was a dearth in the studies of the paradigm shift in India's trend of Vegan and Sustainable Apparel Brands.

4. OBJECTIVES

1. To study the role of Indian fashion industry in achieving nation wide sustainable fashion
2. To highlight India's shift towards vegan fashion apparel brands
3. To identify the impact of COVID 19 on the customers purchase intention of vegan and sustainable apparel

5. CONCEPTUAL MODEL



Source: Personal

The overall purpose of this research is to identify the next move of India post pandemic in apparel industry. In other words, whether the nation would be inclined towards sustainable apparels or vegan apparels is the question of the hour. Thus a framework is identified to see the impact of COVID 19 on the purchase intention of sustainable and vegan apparels. The model shows two variables i.e. regressors or the Independent variable, which is likely to have an effect on Regressand or the dependent variable.

6. Research Methodology

Undergoing the key aspects of the pandemic that is changing the scenario of Apparel Industry, the major purpose in this paper is to explore the impact of COVID 19 on the purchase intention of Vegan and Sustainable apparels.

To conduct this study the authors collected data from secondary sources like Indian express, Forbes India reports. Experts opinion, pilot studies, phone interviews of Designers and Brand owners were done at the National level. FACE VALIDITY indicates that COVID 19 is a strong factor determining the purchase intention of Vegan and sustainable Apparel Brands in India.

7. Data Analysis

Objective 1: i) Biocouture, a new trend meaning fashion built from more environmentally friendly materials, is becoming more popular in large corporations. To make their textiles, several companies are diligently attempting to employ waste from natural wood and fruits, and other elements. Others are experimenting with different techniques of

coloring their fabrics or looking for materials that decay more quickly once discarded.

ii) The trend of buying less also entails more attention to clothing.

iii) According to some research, online shopping has a lower carbon footprint than visiting traditional stores to buy things, especially if customers reside far away.

iv) Clothing recycling is surprisingly a brand new fashion for lots fabric but cotton and polyester apparel are more and more being recycled into new garments and different products. Some massive manufacturers have began to apply recycled textiles, however it is able to be hard for clients to discover venues to donate their antique apparels.

v) Increasing the use of used products has become fashionable in recent years. It is one of the most effective solutions to the problem of overconsumption.

vi) Fashion industry is instilling a concept of customized clothing as compared to mass production for eco - conscious consumers. This leads to less exploitation of natural resources, raw materials.



Source: Fibre2fashion.com

<https://www.fibre2fashion.com/industry-article/8520/5-ways-to-make-fashion-industry-more-sustainable-in-the-year-2020>

Objective 2: Vegan Sustainable Fashion Wins For the Future

According to the report of Forbes (2020), WHO has estimated that ayurvedic and herbal market is expected to reach a level of \$5 trillion till 2050 with India's share as 2.5%. Pandemic is the best time for India to promote its philosophy of vegetarianism products and beliefs. As per the report of Times Of India (2021) if we talk about vegan leather their primary source is Pinatex (fabric made from pineapple leaf waste), Desserto (cactus leather), apple leather and mushroom leather. Arundhati Kumar, founder of Vegan Leather accessories brand Beej in 2019 observed some research being done on areca palm leaves for making palm leather.

Vegan brands have become a lifestyle and entered all domains of the industry like fashion, foods, cosmetics, Home Decor etc... Consumers in India have started questioning the manufacturers about few materials that can cause allergic reactions. In footwear, leather is used for solings and shoe linings but due to a change in the consumer interest, now manufacturers are forced to go vegan. As per the report of fmi (2020) vegan shoes are more comfortable and crisp in design and appeal. In asia pacific countries people are demanding mushroom leather and other plant based material products. Vegan first daily (2017) showed that vegan fashion and vegan community in India has been growing immensely since 2017. Various fashion shows have achieved success like Ahimsa fest, Mumbai vegan festival etc...

Designers in India like Anita Dongre, owner of Brown Boy have also started their online stores to cater to masses and even collaborated with E-commerce platforms. Things may be moving more slowly at home country, but this is definitely not due to lack of many projects aimed at mainstreaming veganism. The Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) has been working with PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) to promote vegan fashion for several years, asking companies and designers to commit to this cause. In reality, this year's fashion week did not deviate from the trend. PETA India produced a new vegan fashion lookbook starring supermodel and actor Milind Soman and his wife, Ankita Konwar, to coincide with FDCI and the Lakmé Fashion Week's Sustainable Fashion Day, themed on leather-free fashion.

Objective 3: Impact of COVID 19 on Purchase intention of Vegan Apparels

The choice of many human beings nowadays to steer an animal-pleasant way of life is in by and large because of the struggling and destruction because of pandemic. Some industries have end up a lot fluctuating like beef (and leather) industry, that are expected to absolutely disintegrate by approaching 2030.

According to the report of PETA India released on April10, 2021 there are many innovations in vegan fashion industry that will come up like

Fleather, Vegan wool, Bio Based faux fur etc which are going to increase the purchase intentions of the consumers. Lyst stated that searches for "vegan leather" had jumped 69 percent year over year in April of 2020, while retail intelligence platform Edited suggested that the pandemic could also be to blame for the increased demand for vegan commodities. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), animals are responsible for 60% of all human infections and 75% of new or emerging infectious illnesses.

Impact of COVID 19 on purchase intention of Sustainable Apparels

As in step with the record posted in forbes on May 10, 2020 the style and comfort industries are the maximum negatively impacted and the income are shattered via way of means of 30-40%.

But the consumer is predicted to spend more on brands that are sustainable and would be more concerned about ethical manufacturing. The New Indian express states that various designers like Mandeep Negi (Design director, Shades Of India), Manjula Gandhi (Head of design and merchandizing, Numero Uno) have declared that post pandemic sustainability will be a driving factor rather than an additional element. According to a current survey record given via way of means of Sustainable Apparel Coalition members, the agencies that duly achieve preserving the consistency of sustainability programs & commitments on this disaster will really advantage a benefit as soon as the pandemic ends.

Conclusion and Future outlook

In the middle of the storms of a changing apparel industry, we all stand in a position from where predictions about the future are tough because we are still in the middle of the pandemic. However, it is clear from the studies that once the pandemic is over people are going to move towards vegan and sustainable apparel brands in India.

From this short review, it is clear that sustainable sources have huge potential in the coming years. Also, increasing concerns towards the environment is pushing the fashion industry to opt for research and innovation based sustainable products. This industry is changing drastically and providing a window for research, innovation with the help of natural fibers that are environmental friendly. For example, the current scenario of fashion market is focused on expanding the use of agro waste to produce innovative materials that is highly impactful. But the cost of production or scalability is extremely high for a developing country like India.

The fashion industry is becoming a major area to extend help for animal welfare and rights. The pandemic has showed us the repercussion of animal cruelty and harm to the nature. Vegan brands are a subset of

sustainable brands and the current trends are showing us the change in consumer demand for such nature-derived products in future. The fashion and apparel industry needs to be ready to adapt, because due to continuous research and development in this industry shows high level of inconsistency, ambiguity and irregularity. Overall, vegan world is about to take over the artificial textile products in terms of prospective business opportunities and lifestyle.

Limitations and future scope for research

Some limitations may be considered while doing this study like-

- This study covers India broadly, however the demand patterns might vary for different cities and states. Future study should analyze the trend of such apparels area wise.
- This study focuses on Post pandemic results and we are still in the middle of the crisis. There could be some different outputs once COVID 19 actually ends.
- In the framework model, only 1 factor has been studied i.e. impact of COVID 19 on the purchase intention of Vegan and sustainable apparels. However, there could be other factors also like Price, income level, life of the product etc... that needs to be studied in further researches.
- There was a dearth of facts and figures showing the consumption patterns of vegan apparels in India. Hence, more in depth studies can be done in this regard.
- Pilot study done on apparel brand owners in local areas like Delhi Haat, Lajpat Nagar market showed that small brand owners are not aware about vegan apparels. Hence, data could not be collected from them.

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