

# **A Study on the Impact of Fast Fashion on the Environment and Analysis of Consumer Behaviour**

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**Abstract:** *The fast fashion industry has emerged as a major contributor to environmental degradation, driven largely by evolving consumer behaviour and the rapid rise of social media influence. This study explores the environmental consequences of fast fashion, highlighting issues such as water pollution, textile waste, carbon emissions, and biodiversity loss. While affordability, style variety, and trend responsiveness make fast fashion appealing to consumers, these benefits come at a high environmental cost. Based on secondary data from academic literature, fashion business reports, and brand websites, and supported by a primary survey of 100 individuals aged 18 to 35, the study reveals a significant gap between consumer awareness and action. Although many consumers acknowledge the harmful impacts of their fashion choices, they continue to prioritize low prices and trend conformity over sustainability. The research underscores the urgent need for increased consumer education, brand accountability, and policy regulations. Recommendations include promoting durable clothing, encouraging reuse and donation, and spreading awareness through educational institutions and digital platforms to mitigate fast fashion's ecological footprint.*

**Keywords:** Fast Fashion, Environmental Impact, Consumer Behaviour, Sustainability, Textile Waste, Social Media Influence, Water Pollution, Carbon Emissions, Trend Culture, Clothing Consumption

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The environmental impact of the fast fashion industry is a crucial issue in the modern world and must be addressed urgently to prevent further devastation. Although the increasing demands of consumers drive fast fashion, many individuals remain uninformed or skeptical about its detrimental consequences. The continuous release of fast fashion collections coerces consumers into making frequent purchases, contributing substantially to environmental degradation. Recent growth in social media has amplified the influence of celebrities, promoting rapid changes in popular culture and escalating consumer susceptibility to trends. Ultimately, consumers possess the power to alter the fashion industry through their purchasing decisions. Consumer behaviour, with shoppers determining the volume and types of clothing produced, plays a central role in the environmental outcomes of the fashion industry.

Insufficient consciousness regarding the environmental and social repercussions of fashion consumption perpetuates these adverse effects. Nonetheless, government regulatory measures and consumer education initiatives can effectively mitigate fast fashion's environmental footprint. The research, based on a review of academic journals, fashion business reports, and analysis of major fast fashion brand websites such as H & M, Zara, and Forever 21, employs a qualitative approach utilizing secondary data sources to examine the issue comprehensively. From the consumer's perspective, sustainability has become a highly significant element of sustainable apparel manufacturing. The habit of frequently purchasing cheap clothes boosts the growth of the fast fashion industry. Consumer behaviour, particularly buying patterns and brand loyalty, likewise plays an important role in fast fashion. Although consumers are becoming more aware of the harmful conditions and negative environmental impacts resulting from the association of their clothing purchases with the fashion industry, they continue to show a preference for the affordability, variety, and novelty offered by fast-fashion brands.



## **II. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF FAST FASHION**

Fast fashion derives its name from rapid production. Yet the process stretches far beyond manufacturing. Everything from the transport of raw materials and fabrics to the energy use of washing and drying a garment plays a part in accelerating the environment towards disaster.

The textile and apparel industry has always been water intensive. In 2020, noted that the average pair of jeans requires 1,800 gallons of water to manufacture, while around 2,700 liters go into each t-shirt. John Warner of the mittaga program points out that most of it is not used for the actual plants, but the mechanical process: turning cotton bolls into raw fiber. Warren beauty first stumbled on the problem when walking her daughter to school and seeing the dye run-off of a denim factory go straight into the bay. As many as five different dyes may be used in a single garment, while physical agents like salt, acid, calcium, and infusoria earth complete the toxic cocktail and many more reasons write down below.

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Waste generation — use of toxic chemicals waste is a natural byproduct of human existence, regardless of our efforts to eliminate it. Textile waste, for example, such as fast fashion clothing significantly impacts the environment in a very harmful manner.

Items discarded in landfills do not biodegrade and instead accumulate over time, potentially becoming toxic as they absorb chemicals from the surrounding earth. Approximately 10% of the United States' methane emissions come from landfills. Methane gas is produced during the decomposition of waste from anaerobic digestion. Notably, these greenhouse gases are more potent in terms of global warming potential than carbon dioxide, with methane's impact on climate change being 25 times greater than that of carbon dioxide. Beyond landfills, the pollution emitted from the manufacture of fast fashion garments also contributes heavily to global warming and has a substantial effect on many other industries. Unfortunately, the process is highly polluting and accounts for a significant share of carbon emissions. Animals, ecosystems, and biodiversity also suffer profoundly. For producers of fast fashion clothes, a major strategy to maintain a low cost of production is to maintain a high level of outsourcing as it helps put prices low and reaches a wider customer base.

## **III. CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR**

Consumer behaviour in fast fashion plays a significant role in the environmental impacts of apparel production and consumption. The following four key trends deserve attention: urgency; abundance; recency; and loyalty. Urgency — shoppers are now conditioned to expect fast fulfilment and need satisfaction. The emergence of same-day delivery epitomises this urgency and consumers quickly get fed up with clothes that do not perform, do not fit or that constitute a wrong buy. Overproduction of cheap apparel and its easy availability might result in an increase in the overall consumption of clothing, as the cost of replacing damaged clothes is lower than the cost of repairing them. This urgency in substitution leads to a shorter lifetime for clothes.

Abundance — increased accessibility and affordability have led to the growth of consumer shopping, and an increase in clothing purchase volumes. Buying clothes more frequently, and the widespread practice of multiple purchases, including bulk buying and “buy 2/3/4, pay for 1 offers have led to increased consumption. Consumers quickly get bored with the current.

Nowadays, people prefer trending clothes, especially those that are inexpensive and stylish. People tend to follow current fashion trends. They are highly influenced by designer clothing worn by social media influencers and try to replicate those styles. Some believe that wearing the same clothes again would reduce their social status, so they avoid repeating outfits. This mindset toward clothing trends is harming not just the environment but also making ordinary people feel inadequate for not being able to keep up.



#### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

##### Research Methodology and Findings by Age Group

This study involved a primary survey of 100 individuals from Azmatgarh village near Mansurpur, Muzaffarnagar, aged between 18 and 35 years. The aim was to understand local consumer behaviour in relation to fast fashion and environmental awareness. Participants were divided into three age groups-

**Group A: 18–22 years**

**Group B: 23–28 years**

**Group C: 29–35 years**

the survey asked about their shopping frequency, brand preferences, influence of social media, environmental awareness, and willingness to adopt sustainable practices.

##### Findings by Age Group

###### Group A (18–22 years)

Most respondents buy clothes every month.  
Influenced heavily by Instagram trends and online influencers.  
Favourite brands like Urbanic, H&M, and Zudio.  
Environmental awareness is very low.  
Clothes are not reused; image and trend matter most.

###### Group B (23–28 years)

Buy clothes once every 2–3 months.  
Balance between fashion and affordability.  
Moderate level of awareness about fast fashion's impact.  
Some reuse clothes or give them to relatives.  
Interested but not fully committed to sustainable brands.

###### Group C (29–35 years)

Buy new clothes only when required.  
Prefer simple, long-lasting clothing.  
Most aware of environmental and economic concerns.  
Frequently reuse or donate old clothes.  
Supportive of sustainability if price is reasonable.

##### Age Group-wise Fashion Consumption & Awareness

Age Group	Buying Frequency	Main influence	Environmental Focus	Fashion Focus	Sustainable Actions
18-22	1-2 time/month	Social media influencer	Very low	Trendy & stylish	Rarely reuse, no donation
23-28	Every 2-3 month	Mix of trends & budget	moderate	Style & value mix	Sometimes reuse/donate
29-35	Only when needed	Practicality & budget	High	Comfort & durability	Frequently reuse/donate

#### V. KEY OBSERVATION

To understand the environmental harm caused by the rapidly spreading fast fashion industry and to raise awareness among people. to study consumer behaviour—how they purchase and wear clothes, and what they prefer. To understand people's awareness level and suggest solutions. Many people buy new clothes every month to follow the latest fashion trends. They avoid repeating old outfits to maintain their image. Most people prefer brands that sell trendy clothes at low prices, as it allows them to shop more often. While choosing clothes, people focus more on style and cost rather than the environmental impact.



## **VI. SUGGESTIONS**

We tried to give suggestions to these individuals, encouraging them to: choose good quality, durable clothes. Reuse clothes and donate them to someone in need after use. Fashion brands should produce environmentally friendly clothing. Awareness should be spread through schools, colleges, and social media platforms.

The fashion industry is one of the most environmentally damaging sectors globally, contributing significantly to pollution through multiple channels, including water. Fast fashion is a product of mass-scale production, and garments reach customers through numerous intermediaries and distribution channels. It was created in response to the discovery of new materials and technology that allowed for a quicker release cycle for ready-made garments. These garments can be made quickly and cheaply, yet sold at a low price to the consumer. Due to a lower price point, more consumers experiment with styles offered by fast fashion. Consumers buy from Zara or H & M as young state that these brands launch new collections weekly that meet consumers' needs and wants. Such purchases often result in the clothes being worn only a few times before being discarded, thereby contributing to environmental harm.

Existing literature already sheds light on various aspects of the industry. For instance, de los Santos states that water pollution, textile waste, carbon footprint, and declines in biodiversity are some of the devastating effects of fast fashion. Nonetheless, the extensive manufacturing supply chain and expanding textile market with efficient distribution have increased accessibility, satisfying consumer needs. Such an evolution of demand for fast fashion contributes to environmental damage. Regardless of awareness campaigns highlighting the environmental impact of fast fashion, prices remain low enough to encourage continued buying. Based on the pre-analysis, a quantitative secondary source data analysis was designed to measure, test, and prove these effects and tendencies

