

Understanding Indian Consumers' Perception and Purchase Behavior toward Organic Apparel: An Analytical Perspective

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Abstract: Indian consumers are engaging in organic apparels as the awareness about the sustainable and organic consumption is increasing worldwide. This research paper analyses the adoption pattern, motives and perceptions of sustainable clothing. This research analyze social and behavioral drivers that have impact on intentions of consumers for organic apparel. Based on the Theory of planned behavior (TBP), an augmented frame work produced to find the influence of subjective norms, social influence, perceived behavioral control and eco-label credibility. An analytical approach was adopted and statistical analysis of 250 urban respondent tells that all the four drivers have significant impact on purchase intention and eco-label credibility emerged as one of the highest impact factors. This study give gist to the policymakers and marketers to motivate consumers to opt sustainable buying, provide more awareness.

Keywords: Organic apparel, social influence, eco-label credibility, subjective norms, consumer perception, perceived behavioral control, sustainable fashion.

INTRODUCTION

The rising environmental deterioration has increased responsibility and there is steep shift in every industry. Industries are focusing on more sustainable methods of operations and production. Fashion industry occupies larger share than many industries and responsible for negative impact on society and environment as the imprudent use of water, chemicals, in reaction to these concerned issues, Fashion industry concerns and opting sustainable methods. Organic clothing is one of those course of actions, accelerate sustainability, environmental friendly comes under the sustainable fashion. Environmental friendly cloths have procure remarkable recognition. Organic clothing, manufactured from the fabric produced in sustainable and ethical ways, no use of pesticides, chemicals. These fabric (hemp, jute, cotton, bamboo) are grown in organic way and provides safe working conditions to labors and employees as well as healthy lifestyle to society. In India consumers are being concerned towards environment and sustainability and having rich heritage of textile people are indulging in buying environmental friendly apparels still traditional fashion products enjoys more market share as of organic one.

India is producing ample amount of cotton as well as organic cotton and is one of there largest producer of organic cotton has chances to increase the market share of responsible purchasing of cloths but with this some problems are there to cater such as less awareness, limited market, and higher price.

This research analysis how subjective norms, social influence, perceived behavior control and eco-label credibility influence the purchase behavior of consumers while buying environmentally responsible cloths. This study consider the following question.

1. How much does social influence impact consumers' purchase behavior for organic clothing?
2. How does subjective norms influence consumers' intention of sustainable and organic apparel?
3. What is the affect of eco-label credibility on consumers' willingness to buy organic apparel?
4. What is the impact of perceived behavioural control on consumers' purchase behavior?
5. How these derives (social influence, subjective norms, eco-label credibility, or perceived behavioral control) related purchase intention?

The study aims to provide important gist to encourage environmental friendly apparel buying by providing strengthening consumer trust, eco-label transparency, and improving accessibility. This study contributes to both academic understanding and practical implementation of sustainable consumer behavior in India's evolving fashion industry.

1.1 Objectives

- To analyze the impact of **social influence** on purchase intention toward organic apparel.
- To find the impact of **subjective norms** on consumers' decision-making for organic apparel.

- To analyze the impact of **eco-label credibility** in structure consumer trust and carving purchase behavior.
- To assess the effect of **perceived behavioral control** on willingness of consumer for sustainable buying of cloths.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The increasing environmental confront and the surge on global stress on sustainability have lay path to a great change in the textile as well as fashion industry. The idea of organic apparel has appear as a reaction to the damaging environmental outcome of traditional fabric production, which includes number of things such wastage of water, chemical pollution and unethical labour practices. Researchers and scholars have analyze various key components the trust, perception, purchase behavior, attitude, and behavioural consumer intention toward sustainable fashion and organic apparel.

Sustainable Fashion and organic clothing

As per Hustvedt and Dickson (2009), organic clothing is apparel produced from fabric processed under the conditions responsible to environment and society that is no use of chemicals, pesticides, or genetically modified seeds. The environmentally responsible fashion movement combines ethical, environmental, and economic features of clothing manufacturing, production, distribution and consumption. Joergens (2006) explains that organic apparel depicts ecological spirit as well social and moral responsibility toward society and environment.

Fletcher (2014) emphasize that environmentally concern fashion consist of the whole lifecycle of product from the cultivation to post purchase disposal.

Consumer Perception and awareness

Awareness of consumer plays a vital role in opting of sustainable clothing. Researches done by Connell (2010) and Niinimäki (2011) explained that conscious buying is more prevalent among the consumers having higher environmental awareness. fast fashion is responsible for environmental harm and this awareness has led to change in preference of consumers for buying eco-friendly clothing. In developing countries like India awareness levels is not that much higher as in developed countries and so as with its market, consumer are less aware as compare to developed market. Gupta and Hodges (2012) explained in their study that purchasing behaviour of Indians are not consistent because of less product knowledge and accessibility but show positive inclination toward environmental concerns.

Drivers affecting Purchase Behaviour

Many researches have investigated the determinate which influence the purchase of organic clothing. Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) analysed that ethical intention are sometimes override by habitual patterns of buying and social norms. Kim and Kim (2013) inspects perceived quality, environmental concern, brand trust as important components of purchase behaviour. Harris and Freeman (2018) explained about engagement of young and educated urban generation with high income levels is more for conscious purchasing. Thøgersen et al. (2015) focused on importance of certifications and eco-labeling that build trust among the consumer whereas price sensitivity is one of the main barriers to opt for organic clothing. Young et al. (2010) analyzed that consumers do give value to ethical and sustainable items but high price, availability, and convenience also have great influence on purchasing behaviour.

Sustainable Market Development in India

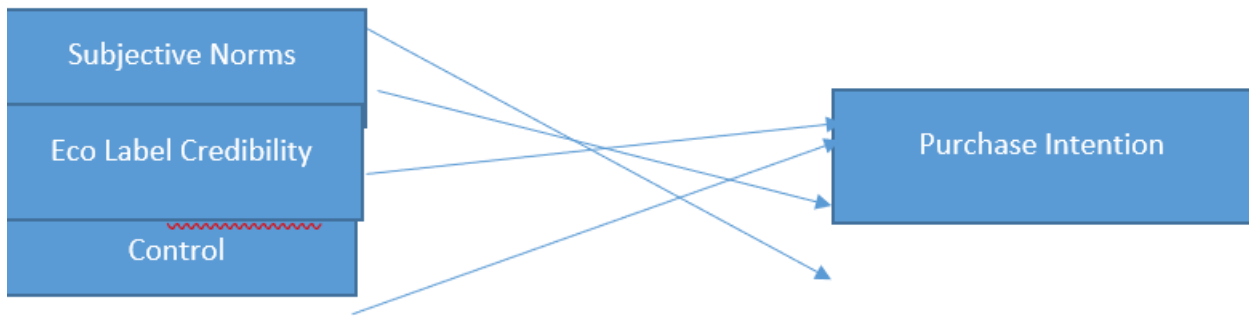
As awareness about environmental concern and globalization is growing, demand of sustainable and organic clothing is also regularly going upwards in the Indian market. Sharma and Narang (2020) found that sustainable lifestyle is more liked by millennial in India irrespective of actual buying which as impact of brand recognition and affordability.

As per Kaur and Bansal (2021) Indian consumers can connect with organic clothing for its quality and responsible production process but unconvinced for reliability of eco certifications. In Indian market textile industry has a key role to transit traditional market practices to sustainable one.

Theoretical Frameworks

Sustainable and responsible purchasing behavior is explained by some of behavioural theories. The TPB (Theory of Planned Behaviour) (Ajzen, 1991) has been broadly accessed to discribe about the components such as subjective norms ,attitude and perceived behavioural control and their impact on purchasing behavior and decision making of consumer. Perceived availability and social influence has positive impact towards buying sustainable apparel in reference with India. The Value-Belief-Norm Theory (Stern, 2000) explained the importance personal values and moral obligation to encourage sustainable activities. In studies frameworks give important foresight into different factors such as the motivational and psychological factors which provide a structure to behavior of consumer toward organic clothing.

Research model



Research Gaps

So many research has been done to understand the consumer behavior and their responsible buying behavior for organic clothing globally whereas limited studies are there focusing on Indian sustainable consumption pattern and determinates responsible for sustainable purchase behavior. Some of prevailed study focuses attitudes and awareness levels and some of them are for organic food and cosmetic products. Lots of the drivers are untouched to examine or has less studies. Drivers and their influences such as demographic factors, cultural norms, and market infrastructure in India are less explored.

So, there is a clear requirement for researches that explore the connection between purchase behavior of Indians and environmental concern and consumer perception. This study try to fill that gap by providing information about factors impacting organic purchase behavior. This study explores the factors subjective norms, eco label credibility, social influence and perceived behavioural control which influence consumer buying behavior for organic clothing and will give gist to marketers, policy makers and manufactures to foster organic apparel market.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study choose to take up an explanatory and analytical research design to explore the influence of psychological and social factors on purchase intention of Indian consumers' for organic apparel. The framework of this study is based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), the research design aims to empirically test the relationships among social influence, subjective norms, eco-label credibility, perceived behavioural control, and purchase intention.

Research Approach

A quantitative approach was adopted, allowing for statistical analysis of the relationships among the identified constructs. This approach gives visible vision into the independent variables of consumer purchase intention for organic apparel.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

This research convenience sampling is used to gather response of 250 consumers. Data is gathered from urban areas of Noida, Delhi, Lucknow, Kanpur. Where people are more habitual and concerned of sustainable fashion.

Data Collection Method

A structured questionnaire is used to collect data and analysis, measure the factors (independent variables and dependent variable) of the study .This questionnaire consist of two sections: Demographic questions (age, gender, education, income, and occupation) and Measurement scales for each construct using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Each construct was measured using multiple validated items adapted from prior literature:

- **Social Influence** – items assessing peer and media impact on purchase intention.
- **Subjective Norms** – items assessing perceived social belief and subjective norms.
- **Eco-label Credibility** – items assessing trust in certification, labeling, and brand authenticity.
- **Perceived Behavioral Control** – items assessing perception on buying organic clothing by ease or difficulty.
- **Purchase Intention** – items measuring the likelihood of buying organic apparel in the future.

Data Sources

- **Primary Data:** A structured questionnaire is distributed through online and offline and data is gathered.
- **Secondary Data:** It is obtained from research papers, academic journals, government reports, and publications related to sustainable fashion.

Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses have been formulated based on objectives and question.

- H1:** Social influence has a significant positive impact on consumer's purchase intention toward organic clothing.
- H2:** Subjective norms have a significant positive impact on consumer's purchase intention toward organic clothing.
- H3:** Eco-label credibility has a significant positive impact on consumer's purchase intention toward organic apparel.
- H4:** Perceived behavioral control has a significant positive impact on consumer's purchase intention toward organic apparel.

Tools and Techniques for Data Analysis

The collected data were coded and analyzed using **SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)**. The following statistical techniques were employed:

1. **Descriptive Statistics** – to summarize demographic characteristics and mean responses.
2. **Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)** – to test internal consistency of measurement scales.
3. **Correlation Analysis** – to determine the strength and direction of relationships between variables.
4. **Multiple Regression Analysis** – to test hypotheses and measure the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable (purchase intention).

Type	Variable	Description
Independent Variables	Social Influence	Influence of peers, family, and social media on buying decisions
	Subjective Norms	Perceived social pressure to engage in sustainable purchasing
	Eco-label Credibility	Trust in certification labels and environmental claims
	Perceived Behavioural Control	Consumers' perceived ease of purchasing organic apparel
Dependent Variable	Purchase Intention	Likelihood of buying organic apparel

Ethical consideration

There was voluntary participation of all the respondents, personal information was not collected and responses would not be revealed. Data used for research only and Academic integrity is maintained by this study.

Limitations of Methodology

Convenience sampling was done which was limited to urban consumers and may not be generalized to the whole population of India. Future researches can engage to larger, diverse random sampling to enhance external validity.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total valid collected responses were 250 and their demographic characteristics of the participants are summed up below:

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n=250)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	110	44.0
	Female	140	56.0
Age (years)	18–25	85	34.0
	26–35	90	36.0
	36–45	50	20.0
	Above 45	25	10.0
Education	Undergraduate	70	28.0
	Postgraduate	120	48.0
	Others	60	24.0
Monthly Income (INR)	Below 25,000	60	24.0
	25,001–50,000	85	34.0
	50,001–75,000	65	26.0
	Above 75,000	40	16.0

Interpretation:

There were 250 participants in which most of them female were (56%), age falls between 26–35 years (36%), and 48% were postgraduates. From the above table it is indicated by demographic profile that the majority of consumers belong to a young, educated, and sustainable conscious urban population segment.

Reliability Analysis

To assess the internal consistency of the scales in the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha was used.

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Social Influence	4	0.842
Subjective Norms	4	0.813
Eco-label Credibility	4	0.868
Perceived Behavioural Control	4	0.831
Purchase Intention	4	0.879

Interpretation:

for every constructs Cronbach's alpha values are above **0.8**, which means strong internal consistency and reliability of the items.

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Social Influence	3.89	0.78	Moderate to high influence from peers and social media
Subjective Norms	3.72	0.83	Consumers feel some social pressure to adopt sustainable clothing
Eco-label Credibility	4.05	0.74	High trust in certified eco-labels and brands
Perceived Behavioural Control	3.81	0.71	Consumers perceive ease in purchasing organic apparel
Purchase Intention	4.12	0.69	Strong likelihood of buying organic apparel in the near future

Interpretation:

Consumers show favorable **leaning** toward organic clothing. Data showed people are having trust in eco labeled certificates, awareness level and acceptance is also growing.

Correlation Analysis

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Social Influence	1				
2. Subjective Norms	0.622*	1			
3. Eco-label Credibility	0.531*	0.518*	1		
4. Perceived Behavioural Control	0.498*	0.465*	0.556*	1	
5. Purchase Intention	0.614*	0.587*	0.671*	0.598*	1

Note: $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed)

Interpretation: Purchase intention is correlated with all independent variables such as social influence, subjective norms, eco-label credibility and perceived behavioral control with positively and significantly. Eco-label credibility indicates the **strongest correlation** ($r = 0.671$), shows that trust in labeling as certification has vital role in influencing buying decision.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

Independent Variables: Perceived Behavioral control, Social Influence, Eco-label Credibility, and Subjective Norms.

Predictor	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
Social Influence	0.214	3.68	0.000	Significant positive effect
Subjective Norms	0.187	3.24	0.001	Significant positive effect
Eco-label Credibility	0.312	5.56	0.000	Strongest positive predictor
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.198	3.02	0.003	Significant positive effect
R² = 0.64	F = 52.4	p < 0.001		

Interpretation:

It is indicated by above table, prognostic power is good enough as percentage of variance is 64% for purchase intention. The **most influential factor is eco-label credibility** after that **social influence, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms are in a series.** This shows, consumers having trust in eco-label are opting for more organic apparel.

Hypotheses Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Social Influence significantly affects Purchase Intention	Accepted
H2	Subjective Norms significantly affect Purchase Intention	Accepted
H3	Eco-label Credibility significantly affects Purchase Intention	Accepted
H4	Perceived Behavioral Control significantly affects Purchase Intention	Accepted

The results verifies that purchase intention is influenced by **social and psychological components. Indian consumers are positively influenced by these deterrents while purchasing organic.** Subjective norms and social influence have great influence and indicate that social acceptance and peer endorsement propel organic buying pattern and eco-label credibility affected by transparent labeling and certification. Accessibility, affordability and availability are key points for perceived behavioral control.

Findings

1. Eco-label Credibility-As per findings eco-label credibility significantly influence purchase intention ($\beta = 0.312, p < 0.001$). This means consumer’s trust in certified labels and environmental claims, and brand authenticity is vital to shape their purchase intention for organic clothing.

Interpretation: when Indian consumers find authentic labeling and certification they are more influenced to buy organic apparel. Consumer trust for concerned and sustainable buying can be increased by third party certification and clear labeling.

2. Social Influence-The findings suggests social influence significantly influence purchase intention. ($\beta = 0.214, p < 0.001$) family, peers and social media, word of mouth unitedly affect purchase intention to have organic clothing.

Interpretation: Social validation is one of determinants which influence the buying intention for organic apparel, **social media, peer advocacy, and influencer marketing should be given importance** to promote buying of sustainable clothing.

3. Subjective Norms- As per findings subjective norms influence significantly to the purchase intention of organic clothing. ($\beta = 0.187, p = 0.001$)

Faith that eco-friendly consumption is necessary for the society and ethically concerned influence buying behavior for organic clothing.

Interpretation: Consumers buy organic clothing for their own satisfaction and acceptance of society for responsible and concerned values.

4. Perceived Behavioral Control -

Findings suggests Perceived behavioral significantly influence purchase intention for organic clothing. ($\beta = 0.198, p = 0.003$)

Accessibility, affordability and availability are key points for perceived behavioral control and consumer opt for

organic apparel purchasing.

Interpretation: consumers can make sustainable decision for buying cloth when affordability, accessibility is improved. Marketers should take care of price and easily available products offline and online both.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This research is built on the TPB (Theory of Planned Behavior) and inspects the influence of psychological and social factors which are subjective norms, social influence, perceived behavioral control and eco-label credibility on purchase intention of consumers for organic clothing. After collecting and analyzing data from 250 consumers it is interpreted above factors significantly influence purchase intention.

Eco-label credibility is most influential factors which emphasis transparency, trust and authenticity have impact on making decision for opting sustainable fashion choices. Subjective norms and Social involved in influencing purchase intention, specifying that social and peer approval, and cultural acceptance significantly stimulate for making choice of sustainable apparel. Perceived behavioral control shows, affordability, accessibility persuade more consumers to buy eco-friendly apparel.

All- inclusive as per the results applicability of TPB is valid in to know consumer’s sustainable behavior for apparel market. The research contributes to theoretical as well as practical knowledge by focusing the interaction of trust, social dynamics, and behavioral control in giving shape to buying decision for eco-conscious apparel.

Recommendations

Strengthen Eco-label Transparency and Authenticity- Verified eco-labels, clear and credible information on organic apparels should be ensured by retailers, marketers and sustainable fashions organization.

Leverage Social Influence and Digital Platforms- To promote organic brands as fashionable choice and socially admirable, companies should opt for community based marketing, celebrity endorsement.

Reinforce Social Norms through Awareness Campaigns- Awareness programs as well as consciously buying campaigns should be organized by public and private stakeholders to establish organic clothing as a socially responsible brand.

4. Improve Accessibility and Affordability – Availability of organic apparel online as well as stores with wider range of options, easy payment options are some key factor in which work should be done by marketers.

5. Encourage Government and Policy Support- Some rules and regulation can be imposed against misleading eco-label claims, Tax benefits and incentives for organic cloth production can be given by the government. This can enhance fair competition, trust of consumers and stakeholders.

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