The Impression of Sustainable Fashion in Customers' Mind

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Abstract: *The research dives into customer perceptions of sustainable fashion and how it is impacting their decision to possibly make a purchase. With the currently evolving trends and increasing consciousness about our environment, people have started opting into more eco - friendly options in their daily life choices. Some of the options are clear but some need to be given more awareness to be implemented. Fashion has been something of that sort where people do not really look into much eco - friendly options and is ready for go for anything that gets them their "look" which delves into confidence and status that are some of the many things fashion provides them. The study has been an intersection of fashion and sustainability. The literature review shows the importance to eco - friendly materials embedded into fashion, technological innovations into the industry and a little about fair working conditions. The methodology involved a Likert Scale questionnaire consisting of 150 respondents who used different fashion brands. Results showed us a neutral overall sentiment level which signals an opportunity for marketers to explore better and create more awareness to drive customers into a purchase. Social media was a crucial response we received in terms of respondents agreeing how online media has helped them in creating more awareness about the sustainability in the fashion industry. This also gave a signal to marketers on more efficient communication strategies and how long term continuous improvements are necessary for a long term impact. They can get the most out of these findings to engage with the customers probably online and to shape an efficient sustainable fashion industry.*

Keywords: sustainable; fashion; eco - friendly; social media; awareness

1. Introduction

In today's world of such vibrant levels of fashion everywhere, it is important to know of a concept called "Sustainable Fashion" which is thinking about the effects of the fashion or where style meets conscience. Our choices make a big difference to the environment and hence it has to be taken into a deep understanding. Now that even the awareness of the environment is getting to better heights, this idea of seeing fashion with sustainability is complementary. And so is in the fashion industry developing just like the more environment conscious we are becoming. If we have to define what sustainable fashion means it would be to minimize eco footprint in the production of our clothes and the quantity we consume of it. We need to make this decision by being extra responsible and embrace more sustainable practices. This matters as fashion industry seems to be blamed before for its immense contribution in degrading the environment. It can be through throwaway culture it brought with it or the labor practices that were illegal and unfair. The concept of sustainable fashion represents the voice for fighting all such issues that are existent. They address things like bringing up more responsible customers.

Some of the prime aspects they follow are;
- They implement only eco - friendly materials in their production and considers the impact to the environment in every stage, also supporting the circular economy concept
- The working conditions in production units are looked into to see that no unfair practices take place, fighting for the social rights of workers
- This concept uses innovative technologies in the production process to reduce harmful effects of otherwise to the eco system
- The main element of this sustainability in fashion is the customer awareness and this is important as the choices they make in would impact the environment and hence this helps them to make informed decisions.

Fashion is not just about what we wear and it is about how it shapes the world around us.

2. Review of Literature

1) (Amira Mukendi, 2020) - They analyze the good social causes that can be supported through sustainable fashion. The paper is in favor of encouraging this in a positive light with fashion in mind.
2) (Eunsuk Hur, 2019) - This paper wanted to know how designers look at fashion in sustainable image. They also explored the challenges of the industry and how they implement sustainability through different ways.
3) (Fine, 2019) - This study analyzes all the alternative trends in the industry being fashion and how they have been contributing to the idea of fashion harmless to the environment.
4) (Fung Yi Tam, 2023) - They expand the options towards achieving sustainability in fashion and the future of it. The covid effects are also discussed as they changes some of the options and modified it. They also tell how these alternatives have to be reviewed frequently.
5) (Hannah L. Neumann, 2021) - Positive intentions of environmental sustainability is thoroughly explained and so is the fashion industry. Additionally they also see how the relation between how customers trust and the effectiveness of the product delivery.
6) (Ikram, 2022) - A model that supports innovation in technological advances in the industry is framed. They see as to reduce the overall resource use and how it can help assist the motive of fashion sustainability.

7) (Iris Mohr, 2022) - The history of the sustainable fashion is explained and also certain theories that can be used in the coming years. The study has shown some of the trends that had come newly because of the generation Z.

8) (Jenna Jacobson, 2021) - This research talks about a specific strategy used by businesses in the industry being the influencers. They form an important part in convincing customers taking up more sustainable products. This being a tactic.

9) (Julia Adamkiewicz, 2022) - This paper starts off discussing the harmful effects that fashion has brought to the ecosystem. The entire idea of clothes and the development of styles in it without considering the impacts. They talk about the danger of this continuing.

10) (Kyung Hoon Kim, 2020) - This study combines the social media and the sustainability and talks about their relation. They also promote the idea of marketing fashion as a great option to step into sustainable alternatives.

11) (Laura Grazzini, 2020) - They converse about the relation between the idea of sustainability in fashion and how customers decide to purchase. The factors that would make customers turn to sustainable solutions.

12) (Patrizia Gazzola, 2020) - The normal standard of business models are redefined to form an innovative and more effective one. Trends introduced by the current generation has been very applicable to the innovations happening now. Since youth are the main customers in fashion, their interests are taken mainly.

13) (Pradhan, 2019) - Several brands are analyzed for how they make decisions in the industry being so competitive is what the paper discusses.

14) (Stella Claxton, 2020) - They study the fashion industry design in a whole in terms of figuring out the sustainability aspects and being able to embed that into this. Also, they discuss how businesses in this industry use various strategies to do this

15) (Thomas, 2019) - They talk about a different version of defining the industry, further discussing about the cultures in it. Analysis of the culture is done and exploration of how industries coordinating between each other.

3. Methodology

The study aims to know how customers feel about the concept of implementing sustainable fashion in their purchases. This would help companies that utilize only fair and organic means of clothes production keep in mind and improve on the same. For this we prepare a questionnaire to ask the general public as to how they look at fashion in a sustainable way or not.

The Null and the Alternate Hypothesis can be formulated as follows;
H_0 - Customers know well about how sustainable fashion brands exist and they influence them into a purchase
H_1 - Customers do not know much about sustainable fashion and do not think they influence them into a purchase

The questionnaire to be asked to the customers is depicted below;

Customer Questions
Sustainable fashion(designed,manufactured and distributed in eco-friendly ways) is an important consideration when making my clothing purchases
I believe that sustainable fashion is more expensive than non-sustainable options
I am confident in my ability to identify truly sustainable fashion brands like Liva
I am more likely to purchase from a brand that actively communicates its commitment to sustainability.
I believe that sustainable fashion brands are transparent about their production processes and materials.
Social media plays a significant role in shaping my perception of sustainable fashion.
I often discover new sustainable fashion brands through online marketing efforts.
I find sustainable fashion options that align with my style preferences.
Sustainable fashion brands need to improve their communication to better educate customers about their sustainability efforts.
I will recommend a sustainable fashion brand to friends or family

The below table shows how the questionnaire would be answered and it is showcased in a Likert Scale (5 point). The extremes being Strongly Disagree and Strongly Agree. This scale is important for us to segregate their responses for a meaningful interpretation

Survey Scale;1=Strongly Disagree,2=Disagree, 3=Neutral,4=Agree,5=Strongly Agree				
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

4. Analysis

The customers of different brands were asked the questions and they were 150 in number. The selection of customers were to get diverse opinions of people who would shop from different brands. They were not entitled to just one brand and in this case a fashion brand. As shown in the methodology, the answers were collected in the Likert Scale format to analyze and interpret them in an understandable way. This analysis was performed only to comprehend how customers of different brands look at the idea of fashion brands using eco - friendly methods of producing and selling. Also, we wanted to know how they perceive fashion brands in general in their life in the light of sustainability and in turn how their preference of a purchase might be affected. From a marketer's point of view, they can benefit by knowing what factors do customers look at and base their decision on in terms of making a purchase.

5. Results

Question 1	Numerical Value	Customer Responses	Total
SD	1	0	0
D	2	18	36
N	3	67	201
A	4	45	180
SA	5	20	100
	Number of Customers	150	517
	517/ 150= 3.44		
Question 2	Numerical Value	Customer Responses	Total
SD	1	2	2
D	2	22	44
N	3	60	180
A	4	59	236
SA	5	7	35
	Number of Customers	150	497
	497/ 150= 3.31		
Question 3	Numerical Value	Customer Responses	Total
SD	1	11	11
D	2	0	0
N	3	63	189
A	4	51	204
SA	5	25	125
	Number of Customers	150	529
	463/ 150= 3.08		
Question 4	Numerical Value	Customer Responses	Total
SD	1	2	2
D	2	33	66
N	3	85	255
A	4	10	40
SA	5	20	100
	Number of Customers	150	463
	463/ 150= 3.08		
Question 5	Numerical Value	Customer Responses	Total
SD	1	0	0
D	2	0	0
N	3	98	294
A	4	51	204
SA	5	1	5
	Number of Customers	150	503
	503/ 150= 3.35		
Question 6	Numerical Value	Customer Responses	Total
SD	1	1	0
D	2	2	4
N	3	19	57

A	4	89	356
SA	5	40	200
	Number of Customers	150	617
	617/ 150= 4.11		
Question 7	Numerical Value	Customer Responses	Total
SD	1	1	1
D	2	2	4
N	3	15	45
A	4	95	380
SA	5	37	185
	Number of Customers	150	615
	615/ 150= 4.1		
Question 8	Numerical Value	Customer Responses	Total
SD	1	1	1
D	2	6	12
N	3	66	198
A	4	70	280
SA	5	8	40
	Number of Customers	150	531
	531/ 150= 3.54		
Question 9	Numerical Value	Customer Responses	Total
SD	1	3	1
D	2	20	82
N	3	61	258
A	4	37	76
SA	5	29	15
	Number of Customers	150	432
	519/ 150= 3.46		
Question 10	Numerical Value	Customer Responses	Total
SD	1	1	0
D	2	41	2
N	3	86	267
A	4	19	240
SA	5	3	0
	Number of Customers	150	509
	432/ 150= 2.88		
Question 11	Numerical Value	Customer Responses	Total
SD	1	0	0
D	2	1	2
N	3	89	267
A	4	60	240
SA	5	0	0
	Number of Customers	150	509
	509/ 150= 3.39		

The above tables have gone through the 5 point Likert Scale analysis to get different scores in each of the questions that were asked to the customers. Each of these scores were necessary to interpret what the customers feel about the fashion brands implementing sustainability in their production and selling processes.

This analysis is performed by every question basis. The responses were 150 in number out of which many would have given Strongly Disagree/ Disagree/ Neutral/ Agree/ Strongly Agree on question 1 for instance. Finding out how many respondents selected which level of sentiment for each of the questions then calculating the final score is what was performed. The final score in each questions were calculated based on applying the following logics and formulae;

Σ (Numerical value*Number of Customers) =Total Customers responding to each option (level)

Total Customers formulated/Number of Customers in a whole=Final Score

Calculating using the above formulae, we get;

=3.44+3.31+3.52+3.08+3.35+4.11+4.1+3.54+3.46+2.88+3.39

=38.18/11

=3.47~3

Comparing this with the different sentiment levels of a 5 point Likert Scale we can relate it to a "Neutral" level meaning the customers are in a medium understanding of how fashion brands that implement sustainability in their processes can push them into a purchase decision. From a marketers point of view they need to work on a few factors as to attract customers that could lead to their purchasing decision

Some of the factors we could observe that were necessary to conclude the potential purchase decision of customers were the fact that social media has been helping out many brands in fashion with their sustainability efforts and online platforms are a great way to spread awareness even in this domain. The customers do believe that the brands in fashion with sustainability in mind have to improve their way of communicating the same.

6. Discussion

Through the analysis of how consumers answered the questionnaire, we could interpret a few things like how consumers want more awareness and they currently do not have that strong inclination towards the sustainable fashion. This also would mean that brands have to work more on the educating aspect that might influence the customer purchase decisions better. Impact of social media is definitely an influencing factor in the research when we observe the responses of the questionnaire. The customers do find it appealing. Hence brands can find a way to use more online references to entice customers and lead their purchasing decisions to a positive outcome. Online approach also would make it more engaging for them. The responses from the questionnaire also tells that the communication aspect needs to worked on effectively and this is how brands would be able to bridge any and every gap between the customers and themselves. And further, this would be improving the level of trust and understanding customers have. Now, from a marketers perspective, they can have more campaigns that educate customers to increase their awareness of how sustainability is integrated into their production processes (fashion brands). Informing customers how their choices would have an environmental impact could help sway their choices. Social media engagements work very well in our generation where customers would only look at the way brands engage them and assures them into making a purchase. Influencers also play a significant role in spreading awareness even in case of fashion brands. The brands that embed sustainable practices in their production and selling can be more transparent by revealing their production conditions, ethical labor which would attract customers effectively to a great extent. Emphasizing sustainable fashion in brands through online forms can attract eco - friendly customers.

7. Future Research

There are three points we can pin point;

- This research had the sample size of 150 respondents, future scope could be for a more large and diverse sample so that they could represent wider range of customer perspectives.
- The study could also explore different geographic regions for variations in perceptions that could analyze the domain of research better.
- Also, this study focused on the immediate perceptions more. Longitudinal study or a study over a period of time can give better insights on how the long term effects of sustainable fashion awareness is on the customer behavior

8. Conclusion

The study included how customer perceptions are complex regarding their opinions on sustainable fashion and how it may influence their decisions to purchase. The neutral stance that we got to after analyzing the responses suggested that customers have a nuanced understanding and this also in turn showed us an opportunity for marketers to guide them through. The questionnaire helped underscore a pivotal role of social media that customers feel very impactful in raising awareness and this also tells us how fashion brands can navigate through online platforms to convey their efforts in sustainability. Further, the call for better efficient communication by the marketers who want to promote their sustainable fashion options and how transparent they can be in conveying more clarity. The study has clear implications for marketers that they needed to invest more in educating customers through campaigns and use social media to have better communication and engagements with them. By addressing these few aspects fashion brands can not only bring in more customers but also might be able to fulfill their bigger goal being able to foster a sustainable industry and a more responsible one at that. The sentiments of the respondents having a neutral stand becomes a sign for a future possible positive transformation where sustainable fashion plays a crucial role in customer purchase decisions and this would ultimately carve a more effective eco - friendly industry.

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Volume 13 Issue 1, January 2024
Fully Refereed | Open Access | Double Blind Peer Reviewed Journal
www.ijsr.net

Paper ID: SR24119085417   DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.21275/SR24119085417   1178