

Brand vs. Trend: The Economics of Apparel Consumption among Urban Youth.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the fashion consumption behaviour of youth in Bengaluru (ages 18–30), specifically investigating the balance between long-term brand loyalty and fast-changing fashion trends. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive research design, primary data was gathered from 150 respondents via structured surveys.

The findings indicate a balanced consumer mindset, with 50.7% of respondents valuing established brands and trendy styles equally. Despite the high visibility of trends, affordability (3.87/5) and brand image (3.43/5) emerged as the primary drivers of purchase decisions. A significant 82.7% of participants expressed a preference for long-term durability over temporary fashion, signalling a shift toward more conscious and rational buying habits.

While Instagram (38%) is the dominant platform for fashion discovery, final choices are governed more by personal style and price sensitivity than direct peer pressure. Ultimately, Bengaluru's youth are evolving into mindful consumers who prioritize value and quality over impulsive trend-chasing.

Keywords:

Youth Fashion, Brand Consciousness, Consumer Behaviour, Fashion Trends, Social Media Influence, Brand Loyalty, Sustainable Fashion, Gen Z, Urban India, Affordability

INTRODUCTION

Fashion has transitioned from a basic utility into a sophisticated language of identity and socio-economic signalling. In the high-growth urban environment of Bengaluru, young consumers navigate a marketplace where globalized digital trends intersect with local financial realities. This study analyses how this demographic manages the "Sustainability Paradox"—the conflict between the instant gratification of fast fashion and the rational requirement for long-term durability. The Indian apparel market, projected to reach USD 139.5 billion by 2030, is shifting from unorganized local trade to organized retail. This transition is driven by rising disposable incomes and a heightened awareness of global brand standards.

INDIAN FASHION & APPAREL MARKET ANALYSIS

The Indian apparel industry is undergoing a structural transition from unorganized, localized trade to highly organized, branded retail. This shift is driven by a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of approximately 11%, with the market projected to expand from USD 106.9 billion in 2023 to USD 139.5 billion by 2030.

The sector's expansion is underpinned by three primary economic catalysts:

- **Rising Disposable Income:** Increased household earnings have shifted consumption patterns from essential goods to discretionary lifestyle products.
- **Urbanization and Labour Market Demands:** Rapid urbanization in metropolitan hubs like Bengaluru has altered clothing requirements, as work culture and social exposure demand more varied and professional wardrobes.
- **Digital Market Penetration:** Social-media and e-commerce platforms have lowered "search costs" for consumers, allowing for rapid trend discovery and increased global fashion awareness.

Despite this growth, the market remains characterized by strong value-orientation. Consumers are increasingly balancing price sensitivity with a demand for product durability, signalling a move toward more rational and sustainable consumption models. This industrial context provides the necessary background for understanding the specific consumption heuristics of Bengaluru's youth, who navigate this evolving landscape through a lens of affordability and quality assurance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Year	Title	Author(s)	Aims	Findings	Research Gap	Industry	Paper Type
2024	Gen Z Rewrites Fashion: A Study of Gen Z Consumer Preferences and Drivers in the Fashion Industry in India	Badal Dewani and Yuvika Nagaych	To understand Gen Z consumers' fashion preferences and the key factors influencing their purchasing decisions in the Indian fashion industry.	1. Comfort is the top purchase driver 2. Gen Z is highly price-sensitive 3. Sustainability matters 4. Social media influences buying	Age Limitation: They restricted their study to Gen Z. They missed Millennials (26-30 years), who have different spending power. Loyalty Metric: They did not specifically measure the trade-off between "Brand Loyalty" and "Trends".	Fashion and Apparel Industry in India	Survey-based quantitative research
2024	Influencing Generation Y Students' Clothing Brand Awareness : A Gender Perspective	Heleneze-Tiané Lues	To investigate whether differences exist in the factors influencing clothing brand awareness among Generation Y male and female students	For male students, product, store image, and advertising significantly influence brand awareness. For female students, price and advertising are significant influencers. Advertising is a common influential factor for both genders. The study highlights the importance of tailoring marketing strategies based on gender to enhance brand awareness among Generation Y consumers.	Scope Limitation: This study does not focus on Brand Loyalty (repeat purchasing). Missing Factor: It does not account for the influence of rapidly changing social media trends (Reels/Shorts) which often disrupt brand loyalty, a key part of your findings.	Fashion and Apparel Industry	Quantitative Research
2025	Gen Z Fashion Trends: What's Popular in 2025	Analyzify Editorial Team	To explore and highlight the prevailing fashion trends among Generation Z in 2025, focusing on their preferences, influences, and	1. Gen Z favours sustainable, second-hand, and ethical fashion. 2. Trends like Y2K, maximalism, and goth revival are popular. 3. Oversized, streetwear, and professional styles are in demand. 4. Social media strongly influences fashion choices.	Type of Study: This report tells us <i>what</i> they buy, but not why The Paradox: The study overlooks the fact of price sensitivity and product longevity often override the desire for	Fashion and Apparel Industry	Report

			shopping behaviours.	5. Statement accessories and aesthetic-driven looks (e.g., Dark Academia, Cottage core) are rising.	sustainability during the actual purchase decision.		
2023	Evolving Fashion Trends and Choices of Indian Youth: Family Approval and Disapproval	Parul Gill, Poonam Malik, Nisha Arya, Neelam Yadav	1. To understand current fashion trends among Indian youth. 2. To identify factors influencing their choices. 3. To analyse the role of family approval or disapproval.	1. Youth embrace trends like fusion wear, athleisure, streetwear, sustainable and ethnic fashion. 2. social media, cinema, and e-commerce drive their choices. 3. Family still plays a key role in approving/disapproving fashion decisions	Cultural vs. Economic: This study doesn't focus on economic constraints (Price/Durability) and individual choice, which is more relevant in a cosmopolitan city like Bengaluru.	Indian Fashion and Apparel Industry	Qualitative research
2023	Clothing Trends Among the Indian Youth	Ruchi Mital and Neha Singh	1. To understand the fashion trends of Indian youth 2. To examine factors influencing the fashion choices made by Indian youth	1. Youth are embracing global trends for casual wear while retaining ethnic influence in formal wear 2. Social media and influencers play a key role 3. E-commerce and fast fashion make style accessible and affordable	Methodology: It lacks the quantitative segmentation (percentages of Brand Loyal vs. Trend Seekers). Depth: It generalizes "Indian Youth," didn't focus on urban demographic	Indian Fashion and Apparel Industry	Qualitative research
2020	Fashioning Identity – A Study from Urban India	Usha Narasimhan (National Institute of Fashion Technology)	1.To explore how urban Indian youth use fashion as a means of identity creation and expression 2. To examine how social, cultural, and personal factors influence fashion behaviour among young	1.Fashion is a tool for both personal identity and collective belonging 2. Respondents associate fashion with self-confidence, comfort, and social perception 3. Urban Indian women use fashion to challenge traditional gender norms and cultural expectations 4. Fashion behaviour reflects negotiations between individuality and social norms.	Time Context: This study doesn't capture post pandemic drastically shift towards smart spending on fashion and durability aspect on buying. Focus: It ignores the financial vs loyalty aspect (Price vs. Brand).	Indian Fashion and Lifestyle (Urban Youth Segment)	Qualitative, interpretive research based on semi-structured interviews

			urban Indian women.				
2023	A Study on Gradual Increase in Youth Awareness towards Sustainable Fashion and Ecological Consciousness of Purchase Behaviour	Nidhi Kalia and Ramandee p Kaur	1. To assess the awareness and attitude of youth (aged 18–26) towards sustainable fashion. 2. To identify key factors influencing fast fashion trends and examine their ecological consciousness. 3. To evaluate how frequently youth engage in sustainable behaviours like reusing, recycling, or donating clothes.	1. About 50% of youth know what sustainable fashion means (e.g., recycled materials). 2. Style and trends are the top priority when buying clothes — not sustainability. 3. 58% avoid second-hand clothes, mainly due to hygiene concerns and social image. 4. Social media pressure fuels fast fashion and discourages outfit repetition. 5. Over 54% prefer donating old clothes, showing some environmental responsibility. 6. Only a small number reuse or recycle their clothes creatively.	The "Value-Action" Gap: While they found trends prioritize sustainability, but missed the concept of Durability.	Fashion & Apparel	Research Paper
2014	Fashion awareness and peer pressure among adolescents	Srishti Maurya and Shruti Sharma	1. To expand understanding of fashion by examining the relationship between personal characteristics and fashion. 2. To study adolescent interest towards fashion. 3. To find out the attitudes and perception of fashion among adolescents.	Female adolescents exhibit higher fashion consciousness, trend awareness, and shopping frequency than males. While male adolescents are more susceptible to peer pressure, overall fashion adoption is heavily dictated by socio-economic status and disposable income. Information is primarily gathered through a mix of traditional media (movies, TV) and digital platforms. Ultimately, fashion is perceived as a broad tool for social emulation and acceptance,	Doesn't focus on social media outreach like Instagram/Influencer boom. The change in media landscape isn't captured in this study.	Fashion industry	Research Paper

				encompassing a lifestyle rather than just apparel.			
2025	The Influence of Social Media on Gen Z's Fashion Discovery in India: Trends, Personalisation, and Consumer Engagement	Nitu Sharma and Taniya Agarwal	1. To examine the impact of social media on fashion discovery among Gen Z in India. 2. To analyse the effect of personalization on Gen Z's brand loyalty toward Indian fashion brands	Social media serves as the primary engine for fashion discovery among Indian Gen Z, accounting for 76.3% of the variation in how trends are identified. While platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest are essential for active trend research, long-term brand loyalty is specifically driven by personalization. Consumers demonstrate a significantly higher inclination toward Indian fashion labels when provided with tailored, personalized experiences.	Discovery vs. Purchase: They focus on where youth find fashion (Online). But didn't cover actual drivers of buying fashion products like price, quality, social media influence etc.	Fashion industry,	Research Paper
2024	Study on Motives Underlying the Buying of Fast Fashion in India Despite Associated Sustainability Issues	Sushil Kumar Bishnoi and Ramratan Guru	To identify the motivational factors driving Indian consumers to purchase fast fashion products despite knowing the associated sustainability issues.	The primary motive for fast fashion consumption is the "Creation of Self-Identity". Consumers consistently prioritize style and affordability over environmental considerations during the purchase process. Conversely, "Showing Dominance" or social status is identified as the least influential factor driving acquisition	The "Durability" Paradox: This study focuses on why youth buy trends. They did not explore this specific conflict between mindset (wanting durability) and action (buying fast fashion).	Fashion and Apparel Industry (Fast Fashion)	Quantitative Research (Survey & Laddering Technique)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the preference between long-term brand loyalty and short-term fashion trends among youth in Bengaluru during apparel purchases.
2. To find how factors like price, brand image, and influencer advice (online media and personal interactions) drive fashion buying decisions among youth.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This descriptive study employs both quantitative and descriptive approaches to analyse youth fashion preferences and brand consciousness. The research aims to identify the factors influencing fashion choices, levels of brand awareness, and patterns of brand loyalty among young consumers.

Design: Quantitative descriptive study of 150 urban youth (18–30) in Bengaluru.

Sampling: Stratified random sampling across retail hubs (malls/brand outlets) to ensure socio-economic diversity.

Metrics: Used Likert scales to measure variables: Price Elasticity (Affordability), Quality Signalling (Brand Image), and Social Externalities (Peer Influence).

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Demography Analysis

1. Age Analysis:

Age	Count	Percentage
18-22	37	24.67%
23-26	94	62.67%
27-30	19	12.67%
Total	150	100%

Table No 1- Age Analysis

The majority of respondents (62.67%) belong to the 23–26 age group, followed by 24.67% in the 18–22 category and 12.67% in the 27–30 group, highlighting that the study is predominantly represented by young adults in their early to mid-twenties.

2. Gender

Gender	Count	Percentage
Male	79	52.67%
Female	71	47.33%
Total	150	100%

Table No 2- Gender Distribution

The survey captured a balanced gender distribution of 52.7% male and 47.3% female, representing a demographic that is transitioning into financial independence.

Objective-Based Analysis:

1. Recency of Buying Fashion Items:

Recency of Buying	Counts	Percentage
Once in 2-3 months	64	42.67%
Twice a Year	49	32.67%
Once in a month	19	12.67%
Rarely	18	12.00%
Total	150	100%

Table No 3- Buying Frequency

Apparel procurement is characterized by intentionality rather than impulsiveness. The largest segment 42.7% shops once every 2–3 months, while seasonal or occasion-based purchasing accounts for 32.7%. High-frequency monthly buyers represent only 12.7% of the sample.

2. Brand vs Trend Analysis

Parameters	Count	Percentage
Branded Items	44	29.33%
Trendy styles (even if unbranded)	30	20.00%
Both Equally	76	50.67%
Total	150	100%

Table No 4- Consumer preference over Brands or Trends

The consumer base exhibits significant flexibility, balancing quality assurance with aesthetic relevance. A majority 50.7% of respondents value branded and trendy items equally, suggesting a "smart shopping" mindset where utility is derived from both reliability and current styles. Approximately 29.3% maintain strict brand loyalty, viewing established labels as signals of social status and quality. Conversely, 20% of youth prioritize unbranded, trendy styles, reflecting a shift toward affordability and individual experimentation.

3. Consumer Orientation—Utility vs. Perishable Trends

Long Term Use vs Short Term Use	Count	Percentage
Long term use	124	82.67%
Short term use	26	17.33%
Total	150	100%

Table No 5- Brand vs Trend Analysis

The analysis shows that 82.7% of respondents prefer long-term usability, indicating a focus on practicality and durability in fashion choices. Only 17.3% prioritize current trends, reflecting a smaller group drawn to fast-changing styles and experimentation. Overall, youth lean toward sustainable and timeless fashion over short-lived trends.

4. Comparative Evaluation of Purchase Drivers (5 most influential, 1 least influential):

Influencers	1 (counts)	2 (counts)	3 (counts)	4 (Counts)	5 (counts)
Brand Image	2	18	59	57	14
Affordability	1	5	39	72	33
Trends/ Fashion Appeal	5	21	63	52	9
Peer Opinion	14	49	53	23	11
Social Media Buzz	15	54	56	17	8

Table No - 6

Parameters	Average Rating (out of 5)
Brand Image	3.43
Affordability	3.87
Trends/ Fashion Appeal	3.26
Peer Opinion	2.79
Social Media Buzz	2.66

Table No 7- Comparing Purchas Drivers

Purchase decisions are governed by a clear hierarchy of economic and social determinants: Affordability (3.87/5) is the primary driver, confirming that budget constraints dictate final transactions. Brand Image (3.43/5) ranks second as a key indicator of quality and reliability. While Aesthetic Trends (3.26/5) maintain moderate influence, Social Media Buzz (2.66/5) and Peer Opinion (2.79/5) have the lowest impact. This suggests that urban youth prioritize personal utility and value over external validation or digital hype.

5. Digital Discovery Channels — Primary Platforms for Fashion Discovery:

Options	Percentage
Instagram	38%
Pinterest	10%
Instagram + Youtube	9%
Facebook	7%
Others	10%
Non-users	26%
Total	100%

Table No 8- Social Media Influence over fashion discovery

Digital discovery is primarily driven by Instagram (38%), highlighting its role as the dominant visual and influencer-driven platform for fashion inspiration. While Pinterest (10%) and YouTube (9%) provide secondary creative and video-based utility, Facebook (7%) shows a significantly declining influence among this demographic. Notably, 26% of respondents are non-users of fashion-related social media, indicating that over one-fourth of urban youth still prioritize offline exploration or personal judgment over digital inputs.

6. Colour Preferences

Parameters	Percentage
Black	20%
White	15%
Blue Variants	15%

Table No 9- Colour Preferences

Consumer preferences are anchored in "classic utility," with Black (20%), White (15%), and Blue variants (15%) serving as the primary colour choices. These neutral, adaptable tones offer high versatility for multiple occasions. However, 50% of respondents opted for a wide range of other colours, reflecting a significant appetite for individuality and fashion experimentation among urban youth.

7. Most preferred brands

Brand Name	Counts	Percentage
Zudio	17	11.33%
H&M	11	7.33%
Zara	17	11.33%

Peter England	10	6.67%
Allen Solly	8	5.33%
Max fashion	7	4.67%
Westside	7	4.67%
Libas	4	2.67%
Turtle	4	2.67%
Roadstar	3	2.00%
Louis Phillipe	5	3.33%
Nike	3	2.00%
NA	12	8.00%
Others Brands	42	28.00%
Total	150	100%

Table No 10- Most Preferred Brands

The analysis reveals that Zudio and Zara are the two most prominent brands among respondents, each capturing 11.33% of total mentions. This indicates strong brand recall and popularity across both affordable and premium segments. H&M (7.33%) and Peter England (6.67%) follow, reflecting a balanced mix of international fashion appeal and traditional formal wear preference.

FINDINGS

Objective 1: Brand Loyalty vs. Short-Term Fashion Trends

- **Balanced Consumer Strategy:** A significant majority (50.7%) of respondents demonstrate a "smart shopping" mindset by valuing branded items and trendy styles equally, indicating that youth are not rigidly loyal to a single category. (*Table No 4*)
- **The Durability Heuristic:** Despite the high visibility of fast-changing trends, 82.7% of the cohort prioritizes long-term usability over temporary fashion, treating apparel as a durable asset rather than a seasonal commodity. (*Table No 5*)
- **Intentional Consumption Patterns:** Fashion acquisition is largely a planned activity, with 42.7% of youth shopping once every 2–3 months and 32.7% shopping seasonally, contradicting the notion of impulsive, trend-driven buying habits. (*Table No – 3*)
- **Brand Loyalty Threshold:** Approximately 29.3% of respondents maintain strict brand attachment, utilizing established labels as quality signals and status markers. (*Table No- 4*)

Objective 2: Influence of Price, Brand Image and Influencers' impact on Buying Decisions

- **Primary Driver - Affordability:** Price sensitivity is the most critical determinant of purchase, receiving the highest average rating of 3.87/5, confirming that consumption is strictly governed by budget constraints. (*Table No -7*)
- **Secondary Driver - Brand Image:** Reputation serves as a vital indicator of reliability, ranking second with a score of 3.43/5 in influencing the final transaction. (*Table No- 7*)
- **Visual Discovery via Instagram:** While 38% of respondents use Instagram as their primary platform for fashion inspiration, digital "buzz" remains a discovery tool rather than a final decision-maker. (*Table No- 8*)

- Limited External Pressure: Peer opinion (2.79/5) and social media influence (2.66/5) were the lowest-rated factors, suggesting that while these platforms drive awareness, final choices are dictated by personal utility and financial realities. (Table No- 7)
- Market Concentration: Preferred brands are bifurcated between value-conscious and premium segments, with Zudio (11.33%) and Zara (11.33%) leading in brand recall and market penetration. (Table No- 10)

CONCLUSION: The Rise of the Mindful Consumer

The research indicates that Bengaluru's youth are not impulsive trend-chasers, but rational economic actors who balance style with utilitarian value. They have mastered "smart fashion," navigating the marketplace with a focus on three core pillars:

- Value-Driven Flexibility: Blind brand loyalty is declining as 50.7% of consumers now balance branded reliability with unbranded trend relevance. They prioritize the functional fit of an item over the prestige of a logo. (Table No- 4)
- The Durability Shift: Contradicting the "throwaway culture" of fast fashion, 82.7% of respondents prioritize long-term usability. Apparel is increasingly viewed as a long-term investment rather than a seasonal commodity. (Table No- 5)
- Economic Independence: Purchase decisions are strictly governed by affordability and personal judgment rather than external social media "buzz" or peer pressure. (Table No-7)

Summary: Ultimately, this demographic is evolving into a segment of mindful consumers. They seek global aesthetic standards but remain grounded by local financial realities, choosing products that offer the best intersection of quality, durability, and price.

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