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## Study on availability of eco-apparels in Ludhiana city

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### Abstract

Due to the ever-increasing demands of consumers and mass production of fashion at comparatively very low prices, eco-practices have become an issue of major concern among manufacturers and consumers. The study was undertaken to explore the availability of eco apparels in Ludhiana city in both online and brick and mortar retail outlets. A questionnaire was developed to collect response of the retailers and the details of online retailer's websites were collected by browsing through the websites of retail stores. Fifteen retail stores were selected for the purpose of study from five retail malls and the same number of online retailers was selected for the purpose of study. It was seen that Eco-apparels were easily available in Ludhiana city but only in select outlets. It was found that 80 per cent of the firms complete their designing within the factory while 20 per cent of the firms outsource designing function. Around 90 per cent of the firms undertake pricing and supply chain management within the premises own whereas marketing and manufacturing activities are done in house by approximately 70 per cent of the firms, while rest of the firms outsourced these operations. The study revealed that new styles were being introduced for the customers at regular intervals and availability for female wear was comparatively more than the menswear and kids wear in eco apparel category. It was seen that mainly sustainable viscose, recycled fibres, organic natural fibres were used for the manufacturing of Eco-apparel.

**Keywords:** Fashion, eco apparels, sustainability, retail outlets

### Introduction

India is a global manufacturing hub of textile and apparel products and the products have an ever-increasing requirement in the domestic market with growing support from the export market. The status of India as a major player in textiles is mainly due to the advantages it holds in the manufacturing of value-added fabrics and apparel products. The fashion industry is a complex supply chain as it starts with staple yarn or fiber and then follows the process of weaving, cutting and sewing into clothing. This is basically known as apparel production and is now undertaken by almost all the countries, in one or the other manner, for their domestic consumption. However, there are certain countries that have become the hub of apparel manufacturing and are exporting to meet the apparel demand of other countries (Rowan 2014) [1].

Due to the ever-increasing demands of consumers, the mass production of fashion at comparatively very low prices, and with reach across the globe, eco-practices have become an issue of major concern among brands and consumers. Just like any other industry, textile industry is also a highly polluting industry and the adverse effects to the environment by rampant production of fast fashion apparel need to be tackled in a proactive manner (Stanton 2019) [2]. Each step of garment manufacturing is a threat to natural resources and the earth. For instance, cotton is a crop that requires excessive water for growing purposes, and to make one cotton T-shirt, approximately 20,000 litres of water is required, which is one of the major natural resource. Different types of chemicals and finishes are being used during the process of conversion of fibre from raw material to garments. It is obvious that some of the manufactured garments are not sold. When these garments or unstitched fabrics become outdated and rejected by the consumer, they occupy landfills which again lead to pollution (Joy and Pena 2017) [3].

Nowadays, the manufacturers are increasingly becoming aware of the impact of garment manufacturing on the globe, therefore many fashion brands are promoting eco-apparel products. This trend, if adopted properly, will definitely bring a huge change as the consumers have faith in particular brands which will promote the acceptance of sustainable garments in a

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faster and easier manner. In the life cycle of sustainable garments, the price factor is very important. As the process of manufacturing consumes more time, the prices will definitely hike. It is the duty of the government to go hand in hand with manufacturers to overcome this problem by providing subsidies and by promoting or selling eco-apparel products (Dabral 2019)<sup>[4]</sup>.

**Methodology**

The present investigation was undertaken to explore the availability of eco-apparels. The locale of the present study was Ludhiana city. Various eco-apparel brands having their brick-and-mortar retail outlets in Ludhiana city and online retailers catering to eco-apparel were selected to collect the data for the availability of eco-apparels. Fifteen brick-and-mortar eco-apparel retail stores and the same number of retail websites were selected for the purpose of the study. A questionnaire was developed to collect response of the retailers and the details of online retailer’s websites were collected by browsing through the websites of retail stores. The response of the retailers was analysed with the help of appropriate tools such as frequency, percentage and weighted means score.

**Results and Discussion**

**Availability of eco-apparel in brick-and-mortar retail outlets in Ludhiana city**

The retail stores available in Ludhiana city were visited to identify the various categories of apparels sold by them. While collecting the data, it was found that there were many retail stores which were selling the products prepared by the manufacturers who were following the specifications to make their products eco-friendly. The given table demonstrates the availability of eco-apparel products in Ludhiana city. It was seen that eco-apparel products were available only with large scale retailers which were selling products of well-known apparel brands only. Retailers which were selling products of local small-scale manufacturers were not found to be dealing with eco-apparel products. Maximum number of the retailers selling eco-apparel products was located in Silver Arc Mall while the same retail brands were available at other shopping malls also. But for the purpose of study, six stores from Silver Arc Shopping mall and three stores each from the two shopping malls, MBD Neopolis and Westend Mall, Ludhiana were selected. Only two retail stores having eco-apparels available in their product range were selected from Pavilion Mall and only one retail store was selected from Grand Walk Mall.

**Table 1:** Eco-apparel availability at brick-and-mortar retail outlets in Ludhiana city

S. No	Location	Number of Brick-and-Mortar retail outlets
1	Westend Mall, Ludhiana	3
2	Silver Arc Mall, Ludhiana	6
3	MBD Neopolis Mall, Ludhiana	3
4	Pavilion Mall, Ludhiana	2
5	Grand Walk Mall, Ludhiana	1

(n=15)

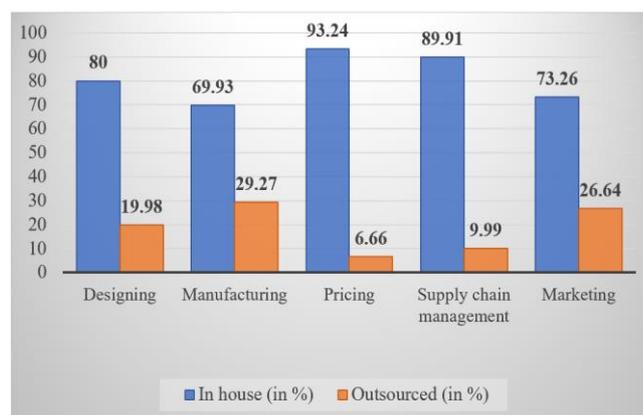
**Availability of Eco-apparels with online retailers**

Technological advancements have made virtual shopping possible and has enabled retailers to sell their products even without having a physical outlet. With a global market value of \$759.5 billion in 2021, apparel, accessories, and footwear

are the number one e-commerce sector in the world. Over the next five years, online fashion’s 7.18% compounded annual growth rate will put the industry at approx. USD 1.0 trillion. In present times, online shopping has become part and parcel of everyone’s life. The consumer is conscious about the choices available and so they prefer to browse through various e-commerce sites for comparison of price, discounts available and quality before making an actual purchase. In the eco-apparel segment also, many online retailers were supplying the products and the fifteen retailers for the purpose of the study were selected on the basis of their popularity among the customers of the city.

**Location of activities undertaken by manufacturers**

The data revealed that most of the manufacturers complete the various processes required to be performed for manufacturing apparel within the premises of the factory while some manufacturers were outsourcing some operations for manufacturing purpose. It was found that 80 per cent of the firms complete their designing within the house while 20 per cent of the firms hire or search from outside for the designing purpose. Around 90 per cent of the firms undertake pricing and supply chain management within the premises whereas marketing and manufacturing activities are done in house by approximately 70 per cent of the firms, while rest of the firms outsourced these operations.



**Fig 1:** Activities undertaken/outsourced by the firm

**Classification of eco-apparels available in Ludhiana city**

The data given in the figure depicts the classification of eco-apparels available in Ludhiana city. It was found that the casual eco-apparels were available for women and girls in all the stores while only a few stores dealt in eco-apparels for infants. As far as the fashionable eco-apparels were concerned, around 43.33% of the stores cater to fashionable women’s wear while no store caters to men’s, boys and infants fashionable wear. Similarly, formal eco-apparels were available for women accounting for 40% while there was no scope for men, boys and infants. Around 56.67% of leisure eco-apparels were available for women whereas 26.67% of the leisurewear was available for men.

**Table 2:** Classification of eco-apparels

Classification	Casual		Fashion		Formal		Leisure	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Men	23	76.67	0	0	0	0	8	26.67
Women	30	100	13	43.33	12	40	17	56.67
Girls	30	100	11	36.67	8	26.67	13	43.33
Boys	18	60	0	0	0	0	0	0
Infants	7	23.33	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Eco-apparel categories available in Ludhiana city**

Apparel is a category of product that is greatly affected by personal likes and dislikes. Every consumer has their own preferences which make him prefer to purchase a particular category of clothing. Some consumers prefer buying western wear whereas others prefer to buy traditional wear. Retailers keep trying on a continuous basis to sell garments as per the demands and preferences of consumers. As fashion is considered a highly polluting industry, hence many manufacturers are trying hard to decrease the negative environmental impact of their products and create sustainable apparel through eco-apparel. The manufacturers are making efforts to produce all categories of eco-apparel products for men, women, and kidswear.

**Table 3:** Eco-apparel categories

(n=30\*)

Categories	Brick-and-Mortar Retail Stores (n=15) f (%)	Online Retail Stores (n=15) f (%)
<b>Women's wear</b>		
Bottom wear	11(73.33)	9(60.00)
Jackets and coats	4(26.60)	5(33.33)
One-piece dresses	7(46.66)	13(86.66)
Top wear	13(86.66)	13(86.66)
<b>Men's wear</b>		
Bottom Wear	8(53.33)	8(53.33)
Jackets and coats	10(66.66)	4(26.66)
Top wear	10(66.66)	3(20.00)
Kids wear	1(6.66)	1(6.66)

**Note:** Figures in parenthesis represent percentages  
\*Multiple response

The data in Table 3 depicts the categories of eco-apparel available in Ludhiana city. For the women's wear segment, around 87 percent of brick-and-Mortar and online retail stores dealt with top wear which includes shirts and tops. Almost 87 percent of the online retail stores kept one-piece dresses while in brick-and-Mortar retail stores, one-piece dresses were available with only 47 percent of the stores. Bottom wear including jeans, skirts, trousers, etc. were kept for sale by 73 percent of the brick-and-mortar retail stores and 60 percent of the online retail stores.

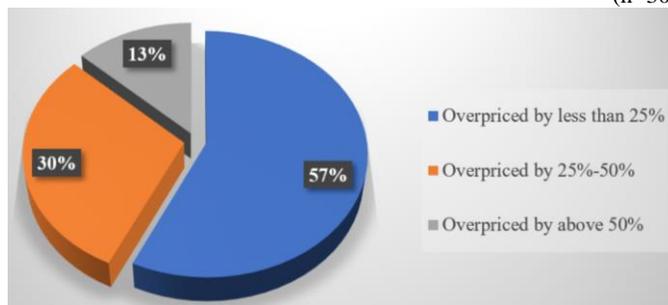
For men's wear segment, around 66.66 percent of the brick-and-mortar stores dealt in jackets and coats. and top wear which included shirts and t-shirts whereas around 26.66 percent and 20 percent of the online retail stores deal in jackets and coats and top wear, respectively. Around 53.33 percent of both brick-and-mortar and online retail stores catered to bottom wear which included jeans, trousers and track pants.

Availability of eco-apparels for kids was found to be very less as in the kids wear category, only 7 percent each of the brick-and-mortar retail stores and the same percentage of online retail stores catered to various categories of kids wear which included jumpsuits, jackets, jeans, trousers, tops, shirts, etc.

**Price variation in eco-apparels**

Price has a significant effect on consumer buying behaviour. It is believed that if the price varies, in comparison with the products from competitors, it causes terrible changes in sales. If the products are under-priced in comparison to other products with similar properties, it causes a major spike in sales. Contrarily, if the products are overpriced, the response can be disappointing.

(n=30)



**Fig 2:** Overpricing of eco-apparels in brick-and-mortar stores in Ludhiana

Since the last two decades, the environmental issues are the most discussed matters in various summits and conferences. The end result is increased awareness of buying environment friendly products popularly known as 'Eco-friendly Products'. The research in eco-friendly products has gained tremendous attention in recent years. But the major cause of concern for majority consumers is the price of the eco-friendly products. It has been observed that the eco-friendly products are highly priced when compared with non-eco-friendly products. Customers, though attracted towards these products don't get converted as the money factor is crucial (Barge *et al.* 2014) [7].

The Fig. 2 depicts the information about response received from retailers regarding price variations in eco-apparel as compared to similar products in non-eco-apparel category. All the respondents from brick-and-mortar retail stores believed that the eco-apparel were overpriced because the eco-apparel were manufactured from organic raw material and recycled material or by following stringent measures for preparation of sustainable apparels. Around 57 percent of the retailers believed that the eco-apparel were overpriced by 25 per cent. In contrast, 30 percent of the retailers believed that the prices were more than 25.50 per cent. It was found that only 13 percent of the retailers had the perception that the eco-apparels were overpriced by more than 50 percent.

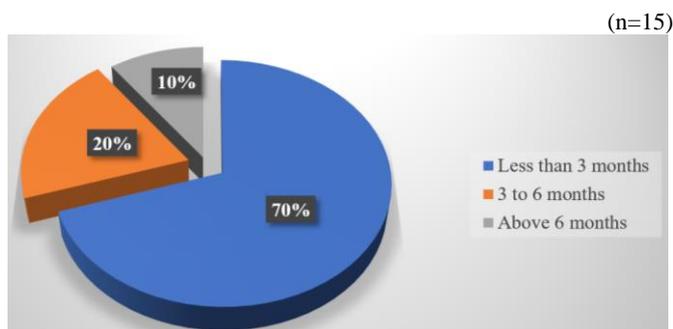
The data was collected for under-pricing of eco-apparel also. It was found that there were no respondents from retail stores who believed that the price for the eco-apparels was less in comparison to similar products manufactured in non-eco-apparel category.

Consumer buying decisions could be influenced by marketing methods that call attention to the company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) standards and sustainability policies, which could lead to a more favourable view in the long run. Because consumers who buy fast fashion labels do not focus on sustainability or companies' CSR norms and efforts, Jung and Jin (2016) [8] argues that when price and quality go hand in hand, it's "more tied to the product itself rather than sustainability in the marketing promotions." To draw attention to CSR standards and sustainability policies, the researchers suggested that fast fashion businesses could "put more effort into boosting perceived pricing value" in terms of "quality in their production and partnership with recognised designers."

**Frequency of introducing new styles of eco-apparels by retailers**

The demands of the consumers are increasing with each passing day. Therefore, retailers make their best efforts to introduce new styles periodically in the market so that continuous sales can be generated. The retailers keep on making changes in the product depth on a continuous basis so

that the customer footfall can be converted into sales for the retailers.



**Fig 3:** Frequency of introducing new styles of eco-apparel by retail stores

The data regarding the frequency of introducing new styles of eco-apparels was collected from the brick-and-mortar retail stores only because it was hard to collect details from all the online retail stores about the frequency of introducing a new range of eco-apparels. It is evident from the Fig 3 that 70 percent of the retailers believed in changing styles in the store very frequently and hence introduced new styles of eco-apparel in their stores within 3 months while only 20 percent of physical retail stores were found to be introducing a new range of eco-apparel in their stores in the time period of 3-6 months. The remaining 10 percent of the retail stores were taking more than 6 months to change the product assortment and introduce new styles in the store as these stores were found to be dealing with majorly classic items which are not affected by the change in trends and fashion very often. There was not even a single retailer which took a time span of one year or more to introduce new styles in the retail stores.

### Conclusion

- Eco-apparels were easily available in Ludhiana city but only in select outlets.
- New styles are being introduced at regular intervals.
- Availability for female wear was more than the male wear.
- Mainly sustainable viscose, recycled fibres, organic natural fibres were used for the manufacturing of Eco-apparel.

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