

**AN EVALUATION OF SUSTAINABLE BRANDING  
TECHNIQUES AND APPROACHES IN THE FASHION  
INDUSTRY. HOW HAVE H & M ADAPTED TO THEM?**

**BY**

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*Simrin Subhash Sawant*

## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to discuss different sustainable branding approaches and how they can affect the Fashion Industry. The study has been mainly focused on H&M and their practices. The study has made use of Mixed Research Methodology, that utilises both Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods by focusing on Primary and Secondary data. It has made use of Positivism Philosophy and a Descriptive Approach to find the link between the variables. According to the study, the use of sustainable branding strategies is necessary in the fashion industry to reduce the industry's environmental footprint. It also enhances the brand image of the firm and its reputation and positively influences consumer purchasing behaviour. It also lowers the detrimental environmental impact and provides a way to innovate. Sustainable branding strategies are necessary for firms in the fashion industry. Although efficient, H&M still faces some challenges while implementing their sustainable strategies and the recommendations provided can help the firm achieve their sustainability goals.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

As per the view of Liu *et al.* (2021), one of the largest producers of garbage and pollution on the planet is the fashion industry. Sustainable fashion techniques are in greater demand as people become more conscious of climate change and environmental deterioration (Woodside and Fine, 2019). Sustainable branding strategies and tactics are becoming crucial for fashion firms to draw in and keep customers (Todeschini, Cortimiglia and de Medeiros, 2020). Thorisdottir and Johannsdottir (2020) explored in their study that designing and promoting a socially and ecologically conscious brand is known as sustainable branding. It entails integrating sustainability concepts into the brand's operations, marketing plans, and core values. The goal is to develop a brand that benefits society and the environment while being financially successful (Gazzola *et al.* 2020). One of the most ecologically destructive areas of the worldwide economy is fashion. Water contamination, ozone-depleting substance emanations, microfibre pollution, and vast amounts of trash are entirely brought about by it, as investigated by Yan *et al.* (2020). Synthetic colours, dangerous chemicals, and materials that will not biodegrade are utilised to produce articles of clothing. A culture of superfluity has likewise evolved because of the business' quick development, where the garment is considered a product and disposed of after a brief timeframe (Liu *et al.* 2021). However, there is a way ahead because of sustainable style procedures. Dress, shoes, and extras delivered in a socially and environmentally capable way are alluded to as sustainable fashion (Woodside and Fine, 2019). The utilisation of eco-accommodating materials, waste reduction, the consolation of ethical business practices, and the advancement of durable products are a few instances of this.

According to Ferrell *et al.* (2019), branding is essential to the progress of any business, including the fashion business. In a crowded commercial centre, where rivalry is intense, branding can assist fashion brands in sticking out and making an exceptional brand identity. Providing a brand with a distinctive character is one of branding's critical benefits in fashion. Given the abundance of fashion companies on the market, setting one brand apart is crucial. Customers who can easily recognise and relate to a brand will be more loyal, improving sales. In addition it was also explored by Hsiao *et al.* (2020) that fashion brands like Shein, Zara, Levi's and more also have a satisfying presence and brand identities in the fashion industry with millions of customers being acquainted to it worldwide. In fashion, branding is

fundamental for conveying a brand's goals. Fashion companies may utilise branding to express their commitment to innovation, diversity, and sustainability to consumers. Due to this, customers may benefit from a better understanding of the brand's values and what to anticipate from its products (Brydges, 2021). For instance, Patagonia's strong brand identity effectively conveys its dedication to sustainability and the environment, which has fostered its customers' trust and loyalty (Brydges, 2021).

As of late, sustainable fashion rehearses have acquired fame, and some design organisations have begun utilising sustainable branding techniques. One of the most significant fashion retailers all around the globe, H&M, presented its sustainable line, Conscious, in 2012, as mentioned by Rathore (2022). The organization uses economical materials like reused polyester, natural cotton, and several different sustainable materials in its products. Also, it encourages consumers to contribute their used clothing for recycling and promotes recycling. Several fashion companies have also embraced sustainable branding strategies and methodologies. Among the numerous companies that have included sustainability in their business practices and marketing plans are Levi's, Zara, Shein, and more (Hultberg and Pal, 2021). Yet there are also difficulties with sustainable branding in the fashion sector. The significant expense of eco-friendly materials and manufacturing strategies is one of the key deterrents. More modest organisations might find it challenging to rival greater, all the more notable organisations with the cash to dedicate to sustainable strategic approaches (Jung *et al.* 2020).

Customer education and awareness are needed. Many shoppers must be aware of how their clothes decisions affect the environment and society (Hur and Cassidy, 2019). As a result, businesses must inform their clientele about the value of sustainable fashion methods and the consequences of their decisions. Sustainable branding strategies and tactics are becoming crucial for fashion firms to attract customers (Jung *et al.* 2020). One of the largest producers of trash and pollution on the planet is the fashion industry. By integrating sustainability concepts into the brand's ideals, operations, and marketing strategies, sustainable fashion practices provide a path ahead. The high cost of sustainable materials and the lack of customer knowledge and education are two issues connected to sustainable branding in the fashion industry (Jung *et al.* 2020). Determining how various companies have responded to sustainable branding strategies and procedures in the fashion industry is the goal of this study.

## 1.2 Aims & Objectives

This study evaluates the fashion industry's use of sustainable branding strategies related to H&M and tactics and how various businesses have adapted to them. The following are the research's objectives:

- To recognise and evaluate H&M's sustainable branding strategies and methods used in the fashion industry.
- To investigate the potential and problems related to sustainable branding in the fashion sector with specific examples of H&M.
- To evaluate the degree to which H&M fashion brands have embraced sustainable branding methods and strategies.
- To identify potential solutions to the problems fashion firms are having with sustainable branding.

## 1.3 Research Question

- What are the many sustainable branding strategies that may be applied in the fashion industry?
- What are the opportunities and difficulties of using sustainable branding in the fashion industry?
- What methods and tactics for sustainable branding have H&M fashion firms embraced?
- How successful are the sustainable branding tactics employed by selected fashion company H&M in reaching sustainability objectives?
- What are the best practices and suggestions for fashion companies implementing sustainable branding strategies?

## 1.4 Rationale

The fashion sector is one of the most significant and most critical ventures on the globe Yan *et al.* (2020). In any case, it is likewise one of the most contaminating and socially untrustworthy ventures, with a critical effect on the climate and human rights. As the world turns out to be all the more ecologically cognizant, there is a rising requirement for the fashion business to embrace reasonable practices and approaches, including sustainable branding (Thorisdottir and Johannsdottir, 2019).

This study aims to assess sustainable branding strategies and approaches in the fashion sector and evaluate how various brands have adjusted to them. This evaluation is significant because it will give insights into the procedures and practices that can be utilised by design brands to accomplish sustainability objectives while additionally meeting client needs and expanding productivity.

By recognising the different sustainable branding procedures and approaches utilised in the fashion business, this study will add to the current literature on feasible fashion and branding. It will give an extensive outline of the various systems and procedures that can be utilised by style brands to take on sustainable practices and impart their obligation to sustainability to clients. Also, this study will analyse the difficulties and excellent opportunities related to sustainable branding in the fashion industry. This will assist fashion brands in grasping the limitations of sustainable branding reception and fostering procedures to conquer them. It will likewise feature the advantages of sustainable branding, including enhanced client loyalty and positive brand notoriety, which can assist fashion brands in accomplishing their sustainability objectives and expanding productivity.

Lastly, this study will evaluate how various fashion labels have embraced sustainable branding strategies and practices. This will explain how sustainable branding is now being adopted in the fashion industry and identify the top sustainable branding companies. Also, it will highlight the areas that require development to meet the sector's sustainability objectives.

### 1.5 Research Scope

This study examines how various companies have responded to sustainable branding strategies and tactics in the fashion industry. Only fashion companies that have embraced sustainable branding strategies, including those that have made a public commitment to sustainability and those that have integrated sustainable practices across their supply chains, will be included in the research. The research will use a **mixed-method research methodology** to examine the sustainable branding strategies of various fashion businesses worldwide, including interview and survey methods. Secondary data from reputable sources will also be used, including publications, journals, studies, and more. Instead of evaluating the fashion industry's sustainability as a whole, the study will concentrate on the role that sustainable branding plays in accomplishing sustainability objectives.

## 1.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter included a detailed background of the main research topic: the evaluation of sustainable branding techniques and approaches in the fashion industry and the fashion business's adaptability to it. The aims and objectives of the research were set and the research questions were formulated based on the objectives. In addition, the rationale and scope of the research were also discussed.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Sustainable Branding in the Fashion Industry

Todeschini, Cortimiglia and de Medeiros (2020) explored that since the fashion business's environmental effects have become more apparent in recent years, sustainability has become a significant concern in the industry. Sustainable branding is no longer a trend since customers expect their favourite firms to adopt more eco-friendly and socially conscious business practices (Thorisdottir and Johannsdottir, 2019). It needs a comprehensive strategy beyond just utilising eco-friendly products or minimising trash. The fashion business is one of the most polluting enterprises on the globe. As per the UN Environment Program, the fashion business is answerable for 10% of worldwide carbon emissions and is the second-biggest water user (UNCC, 2018). The business is likewise known for its unfortunate work systems, with numerous specialists in developing nations procuring low wages and working extended periods in perilous circumstances.

As per the view of D'Adamo and Lupi (2021), as buyers become more mindful of the ecological and social effects of the fashion business, they are requesting additional sustainable and moral practices from their top brands. Brands that neglect to fulfil these needs risk losing clients and harming their reputations. On the contrary, brands that embrace sustainable practices can profit from enhanced client faithfulness and positive brand insight as it showcases the image of brand in a positive light and portrays them as environmentally conscious organisations helping reduce the harmful impact on the environment and overall public well-being (Jia *et al.* 2020). Sustainable branding is a comprehensive way to approach branding, considering the natural and social effects of a brand's items and practices. It goes past utilising eco-friendly materials or decreasing waste and incorporates each part of a brand's tasks, from obtaining and manufacturing to promotion and correspondence.

At its centre, sustainable branding is tied in with establishing a positive effect on the climate and society while as yet conveying superior quality items that purchasers love. This includes embracing sustainable practices throughout the inventory network, from utilising environmentally-friendly materials to diminishing waste and carbon emissions and guaranteeing fair work practices and transparent correspondence with purchasers (Hur and Cassidy, 2019). The first step in developing sustainable branding in the fashion industry is

concentrating on eco-friendly production and supply chain techniques. This entails adopting more environmentally friendly production techniques, including zero-waste manufacturing, sustainable sourcing, and circular design. By prioritising sustainability, brands may lessen their carbon footprint and the damaging effects of their operations on the environment.

Sustainable branding in fashion also emphasises social and ethical responsibilities. Brands should concentrate on fair labour standards, ensuring employees in their supply chains receive a fair salary and are always treated with respect (D'Adamo and Lupi, 2021). Also, they must try to eliminate forced labour and child labour in their supply chains (Todeschini, Cortimiglia and de Medeiros, 2020). Brands may gain consumers' confidence and improve their reputation by doing this since consumers are becoming increasingly concerned with social and ethical concerns. Also, creating an open and honest connection with clients is essential for sustainable branding. Brands should be open and honest about their sourcing and manufacturing methods, telling customers where, how, and by whom their products are manufactured. Customers, who are increasingly expecting firms to take responsibility for their influence on the environment and society, may feel more trust and loyalty due to this openness. Creating items built to last rather than being disposable is another aspect of sustainable branding in the fashion industry. This involves designing wearable, multipurpose clothes constructed of premium materials lasting many years. To reduce waste and its adverse environmental effects, brands should encourage customers to repair, reuse, and recycle their items.

## 2.2 The potential opportunities and issues related to sustainable branding in the Fashion sector with H&M

The fashion business is well known for its unethical labour, social practices, and detrimental environmental effects. According to the research by Książak (2017), this paper focuses on the prospects and possible difficulties associated with sustainable branding by using a case study of the international fashion firm H&M. However, the fashion industry has shown a rising interest in sustainable branding. The seven commitments that make up H&M's CSR policy include being ethical and environmentally conscious, decreasing waste, and enhancing communities. Additionally, H&M supports education for kids in Bangladesh and India and offers greater work possibilities as part of its community-building initiatives. According to the report, H&M's CSR initiatives are extensive and integrated into every supply chain step. H&M can minimize the drawbacks of the fast-fashion business strategy.



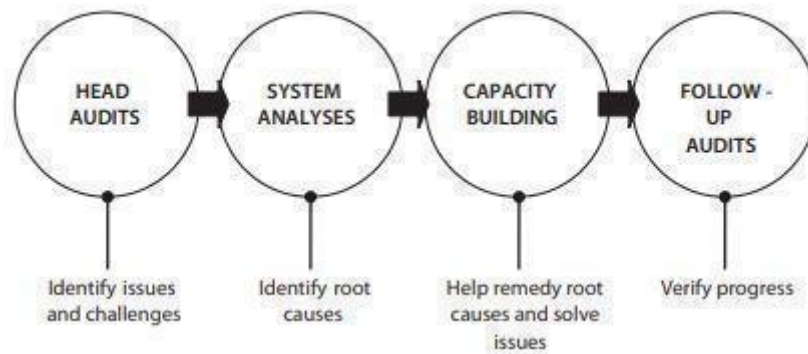


Figure 1: Activities by H&M towards the suppliers

Source: Książak (2017)

Another paper by Feng and Ngai (2020), This study looks at the challenges and possible benefits of sustainable branding in the fashion industry, using H&M as an example. According to the survey, the fashion sector increasingly uses thorough CSR reporting, especially in response to stakeholder demands. Although there has been increased reporting on human rights, inclusive growth, training, and environmentally friendly resource utilisation, labour and environmental concerns remain heavily covered. However, the study also discovered a change in environmental reporting from reactive to proactive. The results cannot be generalised because of the limited sample size, and more study is required to learn how stakeholders to CSR communication and the efficacy of sustainability reporting.

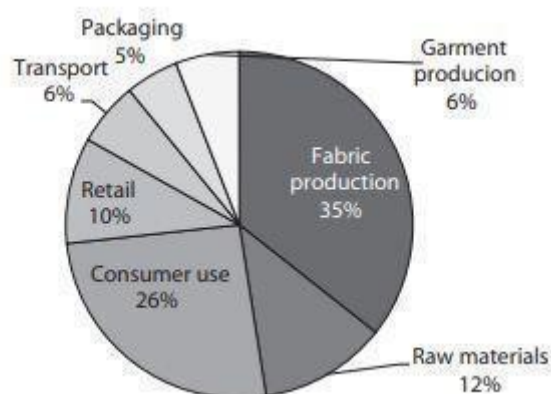


Figure 2: Climatic impact over the value chain in H&M

Source: Książak (2017)

According to the research by Asif and Asif (2020), businesses that prioritise sustainability are seen as being more sincere and reliable regarding their CSR efforts connected to the environment. With a focus on H&M specifically, this study explores the benefits and possible barriers associated with sustainable branding in the fashion industry. The study's goal is to learn more about how fast fashion businesses and brands that place a higher priority on sustainability are seen by consumers and how it affects their purchase decisions. Customers are more inclined to buy clothes from these ecologically friendly businesses than from typical fast fashion firms. The report also makes clear that if greenwashing is shown to be occurring at a company, customers would respond more adversely towards it.

In the word of Brydges *et al.* (2020), H&M has reacted to these shifts by extending its selection of sustainable apparel and investing in online platforms. However, sustainable branding faces obstacles, such as customer scepticism and greenwashing. Because H&M has previously been accused of "**Greenwashing**," it is essential for sustainable branding initiatives to be transparent and accountable.

According to Javed *et al.* (2020), Sustainable methods and placement techniques, rapid fashion and the pressure to manufacture low-cost goods are still problems for fashion stores like H&M. This study identifies possible opportunities and problems connected to sustainable branding in the fashion industry. The findings of the research paper also suggest that consumers are willing to pay more for ethically and ecologically responsible products. By implementing recycling programmes and employing eco-friendly materials in its goods, H&M has already started down the path to sustainability. H&M and other fashion companies should thus concentrate more on promoting the work in these areas to strengthen sustainable marketing and appeal to environmentally sensitive consumers.

According to the research by Yang *et al.* (2017), The fashion industry is paying more attention to sustainability as customers have become more conscious of economic, social, and environmental sustainability in recent days. H&M is an example of a business that has adopted sustainable retailing practices through its return policy program, enabling customers to return any used garment items to H&M stores for a 15% off voucher in exchange. For retailers of clothing, especially medium-sized companies, it's critical to create successful and sustainable e-retailing strategies. Comparative case investigations and qualitative case analyses are two approaches papers have looked at for creating sustainable fashion e-retailing. Retailers can

affect sustainability across the supply chain and serve as a bridge between producers and customers.

Similarly, in another research conducted by Alexa *et al.* (2021), while green marketing and sustainable branding are viable ways to achieve a competitive edge, they may also be employed as greenwashing methods. However, H&M's environmental initiatives, such as its usage of recycled materials and its ***Loop in-store Recycling System***, have come under fire for being nebulous and insufficiently transparent. Even though the corporation has set goals to utilise materials that are more environmentally friendly, its reliance on natural resources and the lack of transparency around its manufacturing procedures cast doubt on the validity of its sustainability promises to address the possible challenges associated with sustainable branding, there is a need for greater openness and responsibility in the fashion industry's sustainability initiatives.

Another research by Wren (2022), accounting for half of the clothing sector's 2.1 billion metric tonnes of GHG emissions with fast fashion, the industry has a huge negative influence on the environment. Some fast fashion companies, including H&M, have started Sustainable Supply-Chain Administration (SSCM) programmes in response. However, present tactics are insufficient, and by 2030, the trajectory of fast fashion will continue to cause irreversible environmental harm. This paper examines Everlane, a self-described ethical company, and compares its SSCM strategy to H&M's. According to the report, both companies' SSCM plans have flaws, including a failure to involve stakeholders upstream and downstream, a lack of transparency, and a lack of significant commitment to carbon reduction and energy infrastructure.

| Scope   | 2016   | 2017   | 2018   | 2019   |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Total Scope 1 CO <sub>2</sub> e emissions, including renewables (tonnes)*     | 10,376 | 12,484 | 11,818 | 13,380 |
| Total Scope 2 CO <sub>2</sub> e emissions, including renewables (tonnes)*     | 70,165 | 51,206 | 45,160 | 48,082 |
| Total Scope 1 & 2 CO <sub>2</sub> e emissions, including renewables (tonnes)* | 80,541 | 63,690 | 56,978 | 61,462 |

Figure 3: H&M companies CO<sub>2</sub> emission in a sustainable report of 2019

Source: Wren, (2022)

According to Paulsson and Ursing (2021), people consider using recycled materials as the most environmentally friendly advertising. With its *Conscious Collection*, H&M has already started to use recycled materials in its items. The study employs a quantitative research methodology to examine how customers perceive and are influenced by fast fashion manufacturers' sustainable marketing methods. However, the report also draws attention to possible problems with sustainable brandings, such as greenwashing and customer scepticism. The results indicate that sustainable marketing tactics can influence customer behaviour positively, but they must be executed wisely and openly.

Pal, (2017), highlights some of these best practices, such as the brand's efforts to gather used clothing and promote sustainability, and adds to our understanding of the way service delivery can play an important part in encouraging sustainability in the low resource utilisation and responsible textile-fashion industry. The report emphasises the necessity for detailed research to examine the connection between servitization and increased responsibility for various PSS types and the kinds of obligations they address. The practical ramifications of H&M include finding new kinds of servitization to expand accountability and prove viability beyond monetary metrics. The research results emphasise the trade-offs between physical processes and digitization, as well as between strengthening core skills or collaborating with others. These strategies, which include enhancing awareness, encouraging consumption, and encouraging product ownership, are said to be driven by distinctive features.

### 2.3 The best practices and strategies employed by selected Fashion Company H&M in reaching sustainability objectives

The launch of internet shopping and H&M's development into foreign markets in the late 1990s marked the beginning of the company's road towards sustainability. The business has since put into practice several programmes and plans to solve environmental and social problems. According to the paper by Nguyen, (2018), the best practices and strategies employed by H&M, such as their dedication to the initial programme of ZDHC, design of products, management of chemicals, interaction with consumers, and transparency, show how proactive they are in pursuing their sustainability goals and integrating principles of sustainability into their business practises. Along with chemical management, H&M views product design as a critical component of its sustainability approach. Some offer distinct labels for more ecologically friendly items created from sustainable resources or produced using methods that have a reduced impact on the environment, like Conscious. H&M is committed to comprehending the long-term sustainability of its products through design to production and performs Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) to evaluate the environmental effect of various materials and procedures.

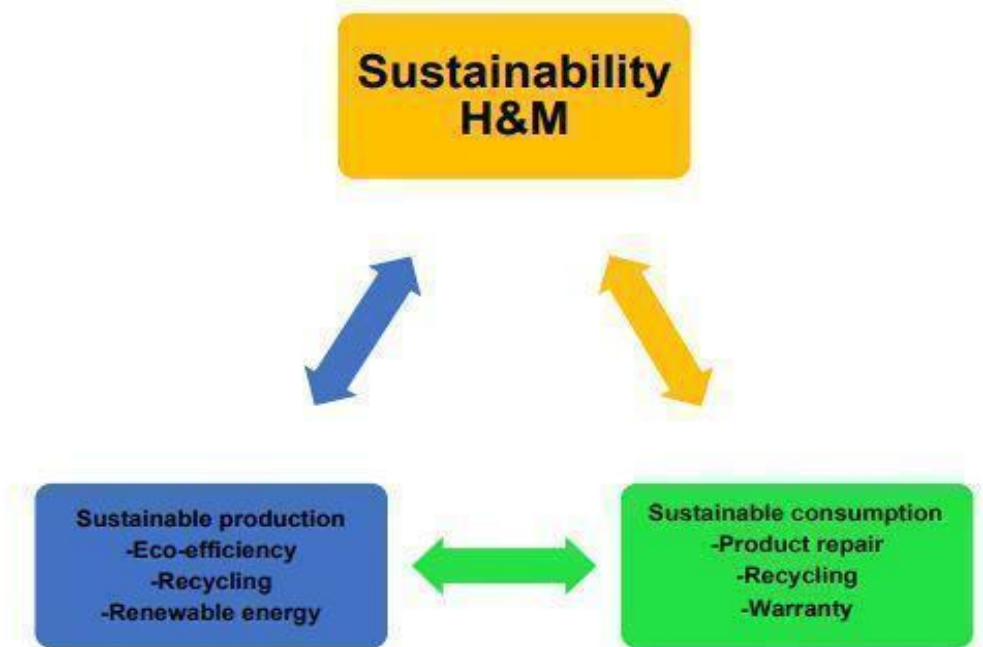


Figure 4: H&M sustainability

Source: Bojonca, (2019)

On the other hand, H&M's most effective methods and approaches used by H&M in its pursuit of sustainability include circularity, openness, teamwork, and minimising environmental impact. The research study by Bojonca (2019) evaluates sustainability and emphasises the need for an entirely novel approach that considers economic, social, and environmental variables. Nevertheless, the corporation confronts several restrictions and difficulties, such as those related to the size of its operations and the complex nature of its worldwide supply chain. Discussion is had on the difficulties the textile sector has in making strides towards sustainability, including issues with water use, energy use, chemical use, disposal of waste, and working conditions. Following that, a case study of H&M is provided, using details taken from secondary sources, including the organization's website and environmental reports. However, H&M's initiatives in the direction of sustainability show a dedication to tackling the detrimental effects of quick fashion and promoting constructive shifts in the fashion sector.



Figure 5: Sustainability Dimensions

Source: Bojonca, (2019)

Another study by Costantini and Costantini (2022) found that the material on sustainability was much more challenging to see than usual standards, which made it more difficult for customers to comprehend and interact with the content. The dedication of H&M to the concept of circularity to be 100% cycle and climate positive is one of their core initiatives. They have started recycling initiatives, such as the "Closing the Loop" initiative, which offers discounts to consumers who send in used clothing for recycling. H&M has set goals to utilise more

recycled materials in its manufacturing and employs sustainable materials, including organically grown cotton and recycled polyester.

According to the research paper by Rana. and Tajuddin (2021), the firm also strongly emphasises the fair treatment of all participants in the cotton value chain, including farmers and workers, through guidelines for fair pricing material purchases as well as labour welfare and safety. According to H&M's material procurement rules, recyclable, biodegradable, and sustainable materials are given priority, and organic and sustainable standards are guaranteed by third-party certifications. The analysis discovered that terms like "environmentally friendly" and "eco-friendly fabric" were closely connected with H&M, demonstrating the company's commitment to sustainability that will create a significant space in the sustainable fashion for future market. The brand was also linked to words like "campaign," "recycling box," and "reuse," denoting its attempts to gather used clothing and promote sustainability through advertising. Design practices used by H&M show a high degree of sustainability, including using 3D visualisation to cut down on sample loops and material use and using robotics in design prototypes.

On the other hand, research by Islam *et al.* (2021) found, There is an opportunity for development to attain simpler readability and successfully convey sustainability to customers, even if some businesses fared better than others. Research analysing consumer brand connections with sustainable fashion indicated that H&M, a fast fashion business, has used a variety of best practices and tactics to meet its sustainability goals. The COS Repurposed Cotton Project is a prime example of circular design activities carried out as a flawless obligation, with clear sustainability objectives, a defined organisation, and tactics. By 2040, the firm hopes to use full-scale circularity to achieve net carbon neutrality throughout its value chain.



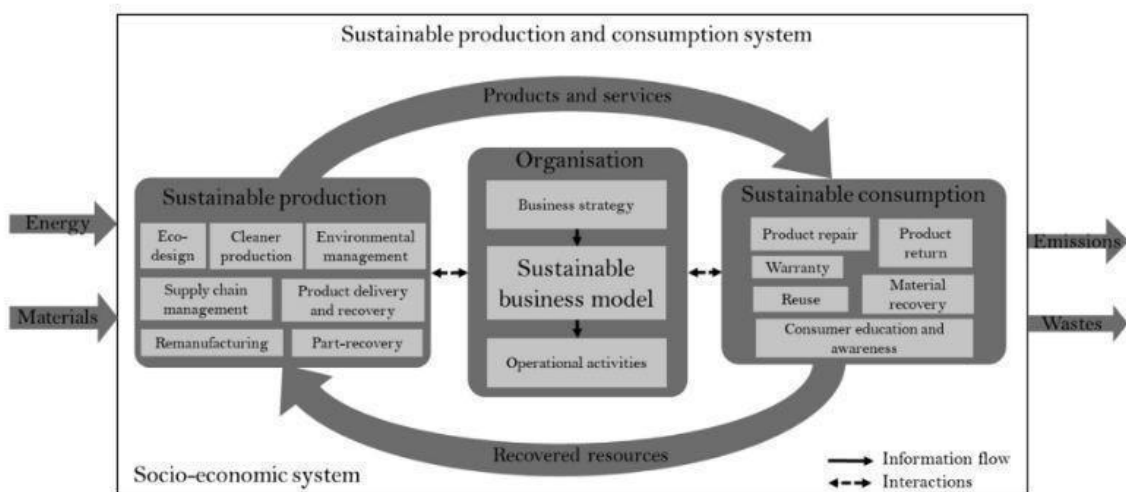


Figure 6: The role of the sustainability business model

Source: Singh *et al.* (2019)

In another paper by Frei *et al.* (2020), H&M has taken action to reduce the environmental effect of the garment business by following CE principles. Despite these obstacles, H&M has taken steps to advance CE, including raising customer awareness of the ethical and environmental issues raised rapidly. This study by Hugo *et al.* (2021), based on a thorough examination of the literature, identifies the practices, challenges, and drivers affecting the implementation of CE ideas in the fashion business. By identifying investment possibilities and challenges to overcome in achieving CE goals, H&M's activities support academic research and innovative business models in the fashion industry that pursue sustainability.

As per the view of Sicoliet *al.* (2019), H&M has made a lot of progress in areas like buying organic cotton, conserving water, and including customers in the closure of the material loop. Although H&M's open supply chains and manufacturing prices have drawn criticism, its actions and pledges show its attempts to improve its sustainability and social responsibility. H&M, a well-known fast-fashion company headquartered in Sweden's capital, has adopted several best practices and techniques to meet its sustainability goals. H&M has created an environmentally conscious fashion supply network through its adoption of sustainable materials and commitment to sustainability standards. Due to its dedication to sustainability and environmental principles, the firm has been recognised as one of the world's top 50 "green" companies.



As per the view of Dabijaet *al.* (2018), The business received more criticism after it was discovered that it had thrown away unsold clothing in 2010 rather than donating or recycling it. Questions have been raised about H&M's corporate ethics and environmental plans, indicating potential areas for improvement. In addition, skin cancer advocacy groups criticised H&M for using too many photos of sunbathing models. The results show that H&M has carefully developed a reputation as an ethical clothing company through several projects and marketing strategies.

Another study conducted by Kim and Oh (2020), stated that the approach used by H&M to assess sustainability performance takes into account factors including perfect duty, explicit objectives for achieving financial, ecological, and social sustainability, and a clearly defined structure and business strategy. H&M was also associated with "*New Fibre*" connotations, emphasising its attempts to create eco-friendly materials. A review of centrality metrics, including degree, betweenness, and proximity centrality, was done in the study to determine the relative weights of various keywords within the network of brand connections. Circularity, climate-friendly clothes design, justice, and the capacity to strike a balance are the core tenets of H&M's sustainability strategy. These tenets address the three sustainability pillars.

## 2.4 Conceptual Framework



Figure 7: Conceptual framework

Source: Self-made

## 2.5 Literature Gap

There is research on H&M's sustainability branding practices. However, there needs to be more literature detailing how effectively these techniques work in reaching sustainability objectives and the obstacles and factors affecting their implementation (Singh *et al.* 2019). Further research is required regarding how H&M, along with other fashion companies, communicate sustainability to their customers, besides how easy it is to comprehend.

## 2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter overall examines the research papers on H&M's sustainable marketing approaches and practices, focusing on its initiatives in circular economy, product design, material sourcing, and fair treatment of players in the cotton value chain. Additionally, it talks about H&M's difficulties, including the intricate nature of the world's supply chain, the need for better customer reading comprehension, and the necessity to communicate sustainability.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter on research methodology provides a general overview of the study's approach used in this study to assess sustainable branding tactics in the fashion sector, with a particular emphasis on H&M as the case study. This paragraph highlights the investigation's relevance in adding to the body of knowledge on environmentally friendly clothing and branding, along with the research aims and questions. A summary of the study's philosophy, design, methodology, strategy, and technique used for data collecting, result and analysis section for study conclusion based on the methodology part provided in this chapter.

### 3.2 Research Method

To assess the sustainable branding tactics used by fashion firms, including H&M, this study will use *mixed methods, both Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methodology*, that involves gathering and analysing numerical data. A few fashion brands have embraced sustainable branding techniques structured for surveys and interviews. The data has been statistically analysed to find trends and patterns to evaluate the efficacy of sustainable branding initiatives in the fashion sector. Positivism, which is consistent with the study's objectives and methodology, has served as the foundation for this study's research methodology (Hanzer, 2022). *Positivism* strongly emphasises the research methods by using descriptive methods to obtain empirical data and offer objective conclusions, which are suited for gathering qualitative information strategies like interviews and surveys used in this study. The research is described in traits and will analyse and evaluate the state of green branding strategies in the fashion sector from a descriptive viewpoint while collecting data, focusing on H&M (Güemes-Castorena and Ruiz-Monroy, 2020). The study has carefully organised and carried out the data-gathering procedure while ensuring the data acquired is solid and dependable and that the outcomes are accurate and pertinent to the study's goals and objectives.

### 3.3 Research Philosophy

A researcher's perspective, presumptions, and guiding principles when performing a study are influenced by the research philosophy, which is the fundamental belief system or methodology. It affects the researcher's decision on study methodology, design, and procedures for gathering and analysing data. The researcher's viewpoint on truth, knowledge, and reality is shaped by

the study's philosophy, which also impacts the study's overall strategy and methodology. **Positivism** is useful for this investigation because it fits with the study's goals and methods. The overall goal of the study is to examine how fashion brands, including H&M, are using sustainable branding tactics and techniques in the supply chain (Rathore, 2022). Positivism strongly emphasises applying scientific procedures to acquire empirical data and provide unbiased conclusions, which is appropriate for the qualitative information-gathering techniques like surveys and interviews that will be employed in this study. To analyse and assess sustainable branding practices in the fashion sector, the research will depend on qualitative and quantitative data collected through surveys and interviews and secondary data from reliable sources. Positivism supports the objective of answering the issues that fashion companies encounter with sustainable branding (Gholami, 2022). The study can offer evidence-based suggestions for enhancing sustainable branding practices in the industry by objectively assessing the extent to which H&M and other fashion firms have used sustainable branding techniques and strategies.

### 3.4 Research Design

The study has used **Primary and Secondary Sources to collect** details on the fashion industry's sustainable branding strategies. Structured surveys and interviews with fashion companies, such as H&M, that have adopted sustainable branding strategies will be used to gather primary data. These surveys and interviews will be carefully planned to guarantee the validity and reliability of the data gathered. Considering H&M as a particular company, this study will analyse and assess the state of environmentally friendly branding tactics in the fashion sector from a **Descriptive Perspective** (Tulangow and Kusumawardani, 2021). The study has been used as secondary as well as primary data sources to collect details on the sustainable branding strategies used by the fashion industry. Structured surveys and interviews with fashion firms that have adopted sustainable branding strategies have been used to gather primary data. Reputable sources such as **Research Journals, Research Papers from Google Scholar and Reports from the Company** have been used to gather secondary data. The study design has been meticulously prepared and carried out to guarantee that the data gathered is solid and trustworthy and that the results are accurate and pertinent to the research aims and objectives of the paper.

### 3.5 Data Collection

As it allows researchers to compile appropriate and precise information to address their research questions, data collection is a crucial step within the research process. It enables them to thoroughly analyse their research goals and look at many angles on their subject. The information gathered can open up new lines of investigation, give evidence-based arguments for or against ideas, and improve decision-making (Hanzer, 2022). The study's mixed methodological approach made it possible to collect and analyse data that was both quantitative and qualitative, and the deductive research strategy guaranteed an objective evaluation of the sustainability branding strategies employed by fashion firms, including H&M. To ensure the correctness, reliability, and accuracy of the data obtained for this study, the data gathering techniques were carefully designed and carried out. A complete analysis of sustainable branding tactics in the fashion sector was made possible via surveys, interviews, and secondary data from reliable sources (Mradet *al.* 2020). Interviews and Surveys were employed to acquire primary information on sustainable branding techniques in the fashion sector for this study. In addition to *the Five Interviews with H&M employees, 50 individuals employed in the fashion sector* were given surveys. The research ideology, positivism, impacted how surveys and interviews were used to gather data. In addition to the primary data, the investigation also gathered secondary data on sustainable branding techniques employed in the fashion sector from reliable sources such as *Academic Journals, Papers through Google Scholar, and Company Reports*. The investigation approach was a mixed method that involved collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative information, and the research design was meticulously organised to ensure the truthfulness and dependability of the data acquired.

### 3.6 Research Strategy

The researchers have been able to contrast H&M's sustainable branding strategies with industry best practices due to the research strategy. This has made it possible to evaluate H&M's methods critically in the context of the larger industry, highlighting their advantages and disadvantages and providing important guidance for other fashion firms looking to apply sustainable branding strategies. The research has been to review and assess H&M's strategies using mixed methods for 50 respondents and five interviews carried out for the survey and interview analysis to evaluate the awareness of sustainable branding and contrast them with other industry best practices. The use of case studies has given detailed insights regarding H&M's sustainable branding practices by asking 12 questions relevant to the topic while taken

for the survey of diverse and inclusive demographic individuals, which can later be analyzed and discussed to examine the effect on sustainability goals, as well as useful lessons for H&M other clothing businesses looking to apply sustainable branding strategies. A case study-based research methodology has been used for this project, focusing on H&M as a well-known fashion business that has achieved major advancements in sustainable branding (Nerurkar, 2019). Using *the Interview and Survey Technique* has several benefits, one of which is the opportunity to get in-depth knowledge about a particular company's sustainable branding practices. The research may thoroughly examine the collected data on H&M's sustainable branding strategies, methods, and impact on sustainability goals by concentrating on sustainability initiatives for the results and discussion part.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis remains a key component of this study's evaluation of the success of sustainable branding strategies in the fashion sector, particularly at H&M. It has examined the information gathered from interviews, polls, and secondary sources to look for patterns, trends, and connections between sustainable branding practices and their effects on sustainability objectives.

The survey results have been analysed using quantitative data methods such as descriptive statistics, diagrams and modelling. Adopting these tools has made it easier to identify patterns and trends in the data, including the fashion industry's most popular sustainable branding strategies and how well these strategies perform in reaching sustainability objectives (Creighton *et al.* 2022). On the other hand, the interview data have been analysed using qualitative methods for data analysis, including analysis of content and thematic analysis. These methods have made it easier to spot repeating themes and trends in the findings, such as what the experts in the fashion industry perceive about sustainable branding strategies and the difficulties they encounter in putting them into practice (Bae and Jeon 2022). With a thorough grasp of sustainable branding methods in the fashion industry, the research has been able to contrast and evaluate the results from the primary data with the results of current literature in the discussion and analysis section. Using graphs, charts, and tables to highlight the trends based on the data that has been expressed in a style that is simple to comprehend and analyse the impression of this H&M brand over the various age groups of individuals. The visual

representations provided have made it simpler for individuals to understand the content and make inferences from the facts given.

### 3.8 Research Approach

This study has used a ***Deductive Approach*** to its research, starting with current ideas and research on sustainable design in the clothing sector and testing with practical information gathered through surveys, interviews, and secondary sources to unbiasedly analyse the sustainable branding methods used by fashion brands, including H&M, the study will adopt ***both Qualitative and Quantitative Research of Mixed Methodology***. The discussions and surveys have a clear context by integrating surveys and interviews into the deductive strategy and current research and theory on sustainable design in the fashion sector. It has been made sure that the inquiries posed during surveys and interviews are pertinent, narrowly focused, and created to collect information that can be utilised to evaluate the study hypotheses (Garcia-Torres *et al.* 2017). The objective and quantifiable information on sustainable branding methods utilised by fashion brands, including H&M, will be made available via this study's quantitative research technique. Using the deductive method, it has been possible to evaluate the findings and provide actual data that will either confirm or disprove existing opinions and conceptions about sustainable design in the fashion sector (de Aguiar Hugo *et al.* 2021). In doing so, the paper has collected quantitative data from organised interviews and surveys, which it can then quantitatively analyse to produce empirical evidence.

### 3.9 Ethical Consideration

This research study has considered ethical considerations because the paper guarantees that the study is carried out with respect for people's rights, confidentiality, and dignity. Fair, courteous, and attentive treatment of the subjects is required in both the planning and execution of research projects. Informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and protection from damage are only a few of the concerns that fall under the ethics category.

In each research endeavour, consent that is informed is a crucial ethical factor (Mickelsson *et al.* 2023). The research goal, any possible hazards or benefits, and participants' ability to discontinue at any time must all be made clear to participants. The ability to ask concerns and obtain clear responses must be provided to participants. Privacy and confidentiality are also very important ethical factors in research. Personal data and information belonging to participants must always be safeguarded and kept private (Alrando and Mirzanti, 2023). The

data gathered from participants must be anonymised so that individual participants cannot be identified from the information obtained. Another crucial ethical factor is safeguarding participants from risk. The precautions have been taken to reduce any possible physical and psychological damage to participants during the survey and interviews. Additionally, it has ensured that individuals are not at risk of causing damage due to participating in the study.

### 3.10 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, the section on the research approach has offered an in-depth review of the methodology adopted in the fashion sector, with a specific focus on H&M. The rationale behind the selection of mixed approaches as the method of investigation, positivism as the theoretical framework for research, case study-based study design as the strategy for the study, as well as a combination of both quantitative and qualitative studies as the method for the study, has been outlined in detail. The methods used to obtain the data, such as structured interviews, questionnaires, and secondary sources of information, have been well thought through in the result and findings sections. The study examined H&M's sustainable branding practices and how it affected sustainability goals using a case study technique, offering insights for other fashion companies considering implementing sustainable branding strategies in the conclusion part.



## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS & FINDINGS

### 4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter presents the survey's analysis and interview results on H&M's sustainability branding concepts. While the interviews centred on sustainable branding approaches, the challenges came across during implementation, as well as H&M's efforts regarding transparent and sincere sustainable advertising, the survey addressed the 50 responses to the survey and five interviews of this chapter to analysis provided by respondents from a variety of age groups and genders. According to the results, consumers between the ages of 25 and 35 are increasingly engaged in sustaining H&M, and younger people are becoming more knowledgeable about sustainability. Only a tiny percentage of participants were men and others, with women making up the majority. The diagrams also showed that a sizable portion of participants knew about sustainable branding techniques in the fashion business, suggesting that the clothing industry has grown more conscious of sustainability. Based on the interview results about H&M's sustainable branding strategy, the company has incorporated sustainable rebranding principles throughout its marketing and communication activities. The firm has implemented sustainable branding initiatives for its manufacturing and supply chain, including employing sustainable materials and cutting waste. H&M sets itself apart from other businesses by emphasising openness and using eco-friendly products.

### 4.2 Survey Analysis

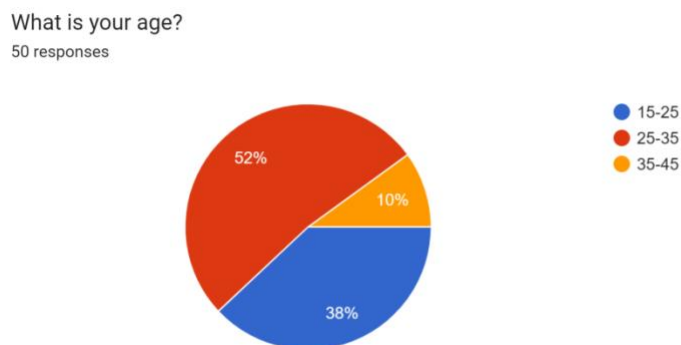


Figure 8: What is your age?

More than half of the participants, or 52% of the sample population, are believed to be in the 25–35 age range based on the evaluation of the data. This might mean that people in this age range are far more likely to be interested based on the survey or that these individuals are more inclined to get involved with market trends of the fashion industry that influenced them. The fact that 38% of the participant population, or a large number of the participants, are between the ages of 15 and 25, is also interesting. This can suggest that younger people are becoming more interested in the subject, which is encouraging for the future development of the business. Lastly, just 10% of participants, or those between the ages of 35 and 45, make up the sample population. This might mean that people in this age range are less passionate about branded fashion.

What is your gender?

50 responses

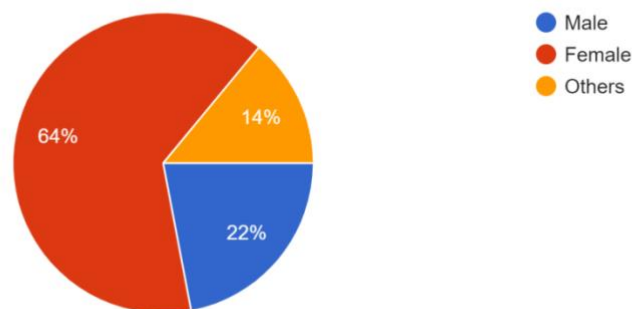


Figure 9: What is your gender?

According to the findings, only 22% of respondents categorised themselves as male, 64% as female, and 14% as other. This suggests that women constitute almost all of the study's participants, with a small proportion of men and other individuals. It is crucial to understand that this study's results can be influenced by women because there were more female participants. The fashion business, which has historically been linked to women's apparel and would consequently draw a greater proportion of female players, may also cause this. The presence of people who identify as "other" emphasises the importance of diversity and inclusion in research studies. It may utilise this data to ensure that the samples they collect are varied and include people of every sexual identity, which can help them give a more accurate depiction of the community of the fashion study.

Have you heard of the fashion industry's sustainable branding?

50 responses

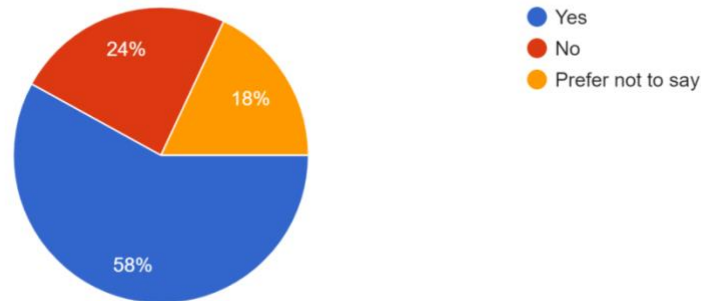


Figure 10: Have you heard of the fashion industry's sustainable branding?

According to the data, 58% of those surveyed said they were aware of sustainable branding in the fashion sector, 24% were not, and 18% would prefer not to comment. This shows that many respondents were familiar with sustainable branding strategies used in the fashion sector. This is a positive discovery since it indicates that the fashion industry is becoming more aware of and interested in sustainability. It also shows that people working in the fashion business are becoming more aware of the value of sustainable branding strategies and how they affect the environment. However, it is significant that almost one-quarter of those surveyed had never heard about environmentally friendly branding strategies, indicating that more work needs to be done to increase awareness and educate those working in the sector about the significance of sustainability. In general, this data may be utilized by experts in the industry to create more efficient communication plans and educational initiatives to support sustainable branding practices in the fashion sector.

Do you think it's important for fashion businesses to brand sustainably?

50 responses

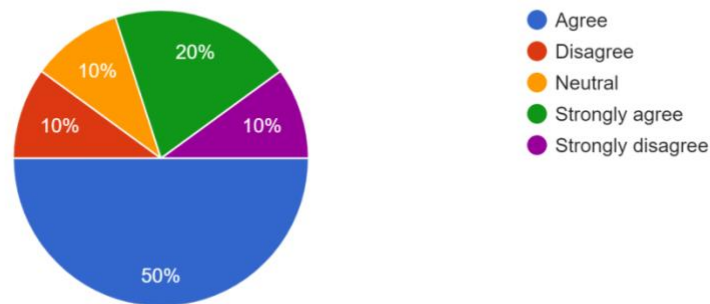


Figure 11: Do you think it's important for fashion businesses to brand sustainably?

According to the findings, 50% of those surveyed agreed that it is critical for fashion enterprises to brand responsibly, while just 10% dissented and 10% were undecided. Furthermore, 20% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, while 10% strongly disagreed. This demonstrates that the vast majority of respondents understand the value of sustainable marketing in the fashion sector. It is encouraging to see that a sizable percentage of those surveyed completely concurred with the statement, showing a dedication to sustainable branding strategies. The existence of a substantial number of disagreeing or indifferent answers, on the other hand, implies that more has to be taken to inform those working in the sector about the advantages of sustainable branding practices. To promote sustainability branding practices in the fashion business and win over more people to sustainable fashion practices, this information may be utilized to create new ways of communication strategies and awareness campaigns that are more successful.

Do you know what H&M is doing to promote sustainable branding?

50 responses

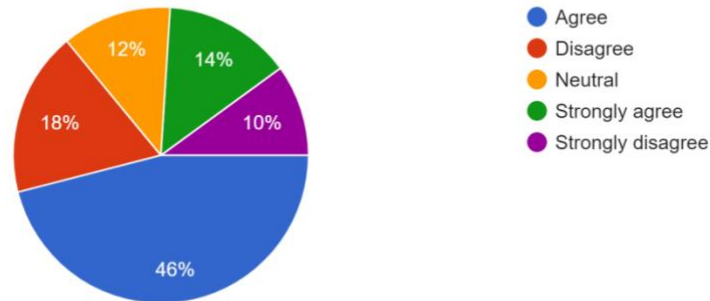


Figure 12: Do you know what H&M is doing to promote sustainable branding?

According to the survey's findings, 46% of participants said they were aware of H&M's efforts to promote sustainable positioning, while 14% strongly concurred, 18% disagreed and 12% were indifferent, and an additional 10% strongly disapproved. This suggests that most respondents are at least somewhat aware of H&M's sustainability branding initiatives, but there is still a sizable percentage of people who need to learn or are trying to figure out what The clothing retailer is doing in this area. The high proportion of agreement is a promising sign since it shows that H&M's initiatives to advance sustainable branding are getting attention and acceptance. The existence of a sizable proportion of disagreeing or indifferent respondents, on the other hand, implies that more needs to be done to raise awareness of H&M's sustainable branding practises to raise knowledge and comprehension of H&M's sustainable branding practises, this information may be utilised to create communication strategies and educational initiatives that are more successful. This will ultimately increase support for and acceptance of sustainable fashion practices.

Have you bought H&M goods especially as a result of their efforts to promote sustainable branding?

50 responses

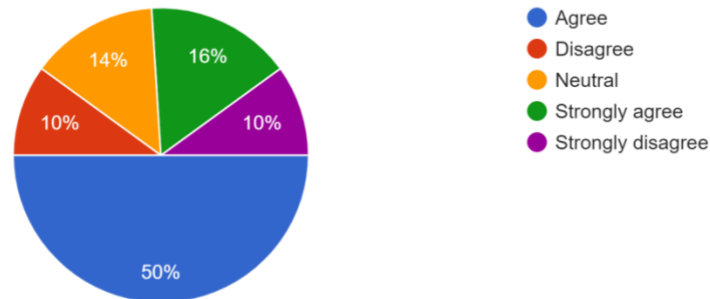


Figure 13: Have you bought H&M goods especially as a result of their efforts to promote sustainable branding?

Following the survey's findings, 50% of respondents said they had purchased H&M products due to the business's attempts to promote responsible publicity, whereas 16% strongly agreed and 10% completely disagreed, and 14% were indifferent, and an additional 10% strongly disagreed. This shows that a sizable portion of respondents were favourably impacted by H&M's initiatives to advance sustainable branding strategies, which led to their purchase of H&M products. The high number of those who agreed is encouraging since it shows that some customers have taken notice of H&M's sustainable branding strategies. However, a sizable proportion of neutral or disagreeing respondents suggests that more work needs to be accomplished to promote the advantages of green fashion and promote greater adoption by consumers of the new fashion trends.

Do you believe H&M's efforts to promote sustainable branding have a beneficial effect on their brand's reputation and image?

50 responses

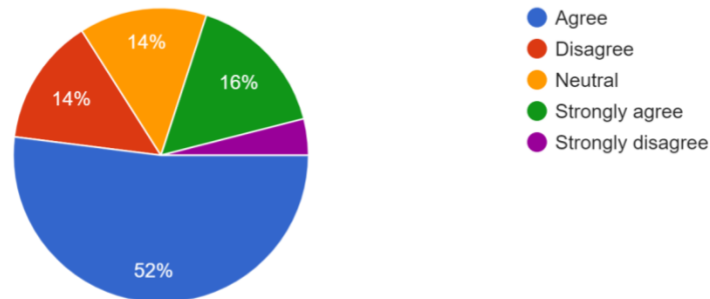


Figure 14: Do you believe H&M's efforts to promote sustainable branding have a beneficial effects on their brand's reputation and image?

The current survey result shows that 52% of the participants agreed that H&M's action toward promoting sustainable branding has influenced their reputation and image. However, only 16% of the participants strongly agreed with the fact. On the other hand, 14% disagreed with the question, whereas 14% voted for neutral efforts. Therefore the survey result shows that 66% of participants agreed that H&M's efforts toward sustainable branding become fruitful to their business reputation and images. Thus their buying decisions are favoured by the reputation and image of the organisation. However, 28% of the participants either need to notice H&M's efforts regarding their sustainable branding or they find that consumers' buying behaviour is not influenced by the organisation's effort. Therefore, it can be assumed from the findings that H&M need to be more creative and strategic while giving effort into sustainable branding. Additionally, the need to increase consumer awareness regarding sustainable branding and encourage people to consider it while buying products.

Do you believe that H&M has successfully implemented sustainable branding strategies into their business operations?

50 responses

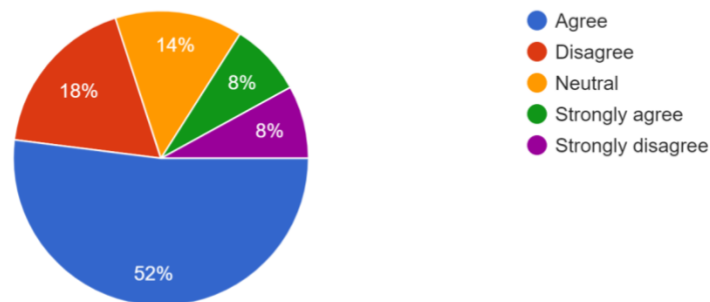


Figure 15: Do you believe that H&M has successfully implemented sustainable branding strategies into their business operations?

The survey result suggested that 52% of the respondents agreed with the question and believes that H&M has effectively implanted a sustainable branding strategy in their business operations. Whereas 18% of the respondents completely disagreed with the fact and 18% voted neutral. Considering these two percentages it can be assumed that H&M's sustainable branding strategy may not reach the consumers and does not provide any benefits regarding the purchasing decision. However, 52% per cent vote on the positive side, showing that half of the participants are aware of the strategy and think that consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced by the strategy. Nevertheless, receiving half results can not be considered highly beneficial or effective. Thus the organisation needs to focus on consumer engagement and identify the specific requirement of the consumers. These can eventually benefit the organisation and help them to add new factors to their existing strategy, eventually benefiting the business operations.



Is H&M a fashion industry leader in sustainable branding?

50 responses

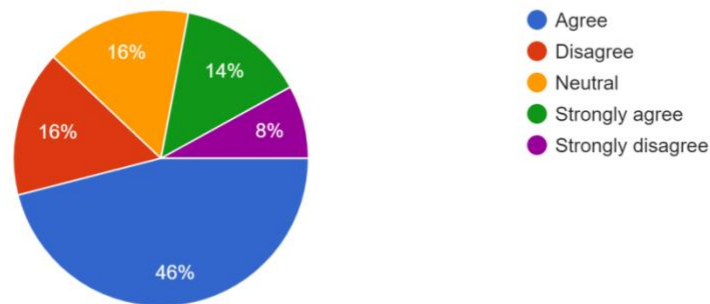


Figure 16: Is H&M a fashion industry leader is sustainable branding?

Sustainable branding considers focusing on environmental, economic and social issues in the environment where the business is operating. Multinational brands like H&M need to consider global issues to become leaders in sustainable branding. The report suggested that 46% of fashion employees agreed that H&M is a leader in sustainable branding. Whereas 32% of the participants either do not agree with the fact or vote for neutral. This result suggested that H&M's strategy toward becoming a sustainable brand could be more beneficial. Additionally, it also suggested that to become a leader in the domain, H&M needs to address global issues more effectively and change their operation strategy regarding the matter. However, 14% of the respondent strongly agreed that the organisation is a role model in the industry yet there is a need of renovation. Therefore effectively addressing the issues and showcasing the responsive strategy in front of the fashion employees and consumers will benefit the organisation and give it the desired result.

Do you mind spending more on clothing from firms that place a higher value on sustainability?  
50 responses

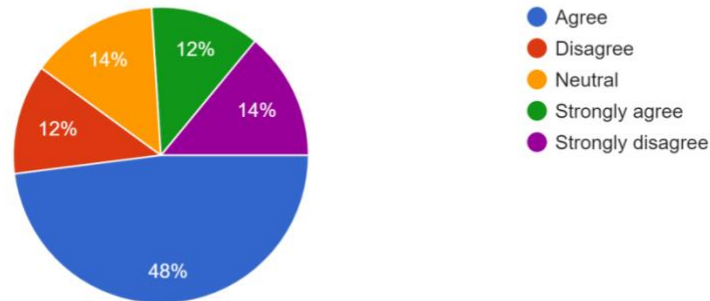


Figure 17: Do you mind spending more on clothing from firms that place a higher value on sustainability?

This question transformed the fashion employees into consumers and reflected their customers' perspectives. It suggested that 48% of the participants agreed they were eager to spend more money on clothing. However, only 12% of the participants strongly agreed to spend their money on clothing, whereas 12% completely disagreed and 14% strongly disagreed. It suggested that though people value sustainable branding when purchasing, sustainable branding strategies have a moderate effect. On the other hand, it also indicates that consumers purchasing behaviours do not only depend on sustainable branding; instead, there are other values that consumers consider when purchasing clothes. It is not only the sustainable branding strategy that allows H&M to receive competitive advantages but also its business objectives that aim to provide high-quality products at lower prices. Therefore along with other issues, consumers require a brand that can offer them the best product at a reasonable price and does not force them to spend more money on clothes.

Do you think sustainable branding can promote improvement in the fashion sector?

50 responses

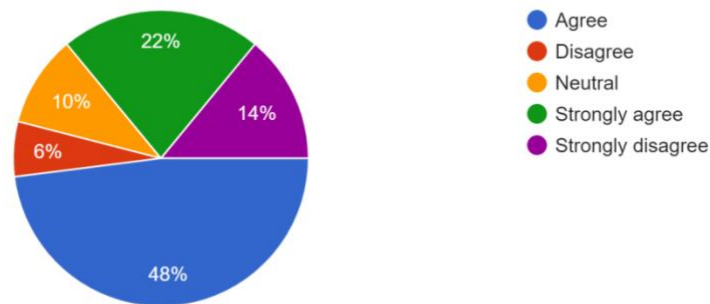


Figure 18: Do you think sustainable branding can promote improvement in the fashion sector?

The fashion sector is a constantly changing industry that can instantly change its behaviour based on new market trends. Almost every organisation once faced difficulties to cope with the market trend and meet consumers' requirements. The survey suggests that a maximum number of fashion employees who have participated believe that sustainable branding can improve the quality of the fashion sector. 48% of participants agreed that sustainable branding can improve the industry, whereas 22% strongly agreed with the question. It showcased that people in the fashion industry are aware of the sustainable branding strategy and consider it while choosing a brand or purchasing the product. However, in total 20% of participants disagreed with the question, and 10% remained neutral on the matter. In total, 30% of participants either do not recognise the effectiveness of sustainable branding or do not believe in its ability to change the sector. Therefore, the results indicate that if H&M wants to receive advantages from their sustainable branding strategy, they need to increase awareness. Additionally, they will have to adopt a specific strategy that can benefit every stakeholder of the respected business.

Would you like to see more H&M and other clothing retailers use sustainable branding strategies?

50 responses

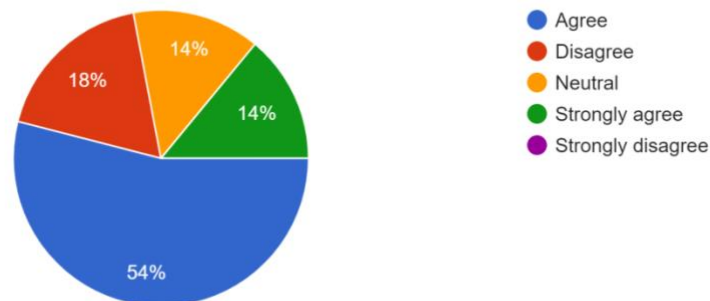


Figure 19: Would you like to see more H&M and other clothing retailers use sustainable branding strategies?

The following result shows that 54% of the participants and 14% strongly agreed that they want fashion brands to use sustainable branding strategies. It indicates the fashion employees trust that sustainable branding strategies are necessary for the fashion industry. Therefore the result indicates that the issues raised due to the fashion industry need to be addressed as early as possible to reduce consumer retention. On the other hand, 18% of the participants disagreed, whereas 14% remained neutral about the fact. It suggested that either these participants believe that some other factors are more important for business organisations or they are not fully aware of the concept. In such a case, H&M and other fashion brands must increase awareness regarding sustainable branding and showcase the benefits that can serve better to the industry.

#### 4.3 Interview Analysis (theme based on five questions)

##### ***Sustainable Branding in H&M's Marketing and Communication Initiatives***

According to the participants, the organisation uses a few specific strategies to promote awareness regarding sustainable branding in which marketing and communication are used as a tool to collaborate with the stakeholders. The interview result suggested that the firm only sells eco-friendly materials and encourages consumers and manufacturing companies to recycle the garments. In order to promote the ideas, the organisation uses advertising campaigns. These include the brands' participation in promoting the collection and consumption of eco-friendly materials. Another participant stated that the brand collaborates with other stakeholders to promote sustainable fashion and maintain transparency in the supply

chain. The firm also communicates with stakeholders including the consumers to deliver their messages to them and promote sustainability. Therefore, the answers from the participants carried out one common aspect: using effective communication methods to raise awareness among the stakeholders and consumers. Therefore, it is one of the key factors in H&M's sustainable branding strategy, including collaboration with consumers and other stakeholders. The brand has aimed to reduce the generation of fashion waste as early as possible. Additionally, the sustainability report of H&M suggested that the organisation constantly makes efforts to minimise the environmental impact by making chemical-free clothes that are not harmful to people. The organisation promotes awareness by sharing its conscious messages with the stakeholders and consumers.

### ***Sustainable Branding Strategies in H&M's Manufacturing and Supply Chain***

One of the key strategies of H&M regarding their production and supply chain is that they collaborate with cloth manufacturing firms in Asia and Europe. The interview results suggested that H&M only conduct business with firms that share the same value as the organisation. Additionally, the organisation closely co-operates with the supply chain to examine if they share the same value as H&M. On the other hand, the interview also revealed that the organisation shares both risks and rewards to achieve and maintain sustainability regarding the business. This specific quote suggested that the firm ensures the growth of other business organisations that collaborate with the brand and takes responsibility to help them to achieve growth. This particular sustainable strategy not only increases the brand image of the firm but also increases its popularity in the supply chain and encourages organisations to collaborate with it. Thus the strategy makes the organisation transparent and helped it to achieve competitive advantages. However, the answers of the participants have not disclosed the level of transparency that the organisation followed in the supply chain. It is highly essential in the context as maintaining transparency reduces the conflict between the firm and helped it to achieve sustainability in the supply chain. Besides it also helps the collaborating firms to stay satisfied while conducting their business with the organisations.

### ***Challenges and Solutions in Implementing Sustainable Branding Strategies in the Fashion Industry: A case study for H&M***

Implementing sustainable branding strategy is extremely hard especially when the organisation depends on the supply chain and other stakeholders. Application of the strategy requires the coherence of every stakeholder and makes them believe a particular ideology. Therefore, adopting new strategy forces organisations to face several challenges including making everyone share the same goal which is creating environmentally friendly fashion. The process of making environmentally friendly fashion encourages the organisation to adopt new innovations like recycling clothes, reducing the use of water, reducing the waste generated, producing eco-friendly products etc. Therefore, the organisation faces difficulties to make everyone work together. However, with the aim of not compromising on the main objectives the organisation introduces new innovations and invests in R&D to identify an alternative method for making clothes and share the knowledge with the stakeholders and increases their knowledge in the subject. Additionally, with the help of different collaboration methods, the organisation facilitates sustainable branding strategies. However, in the context of sustainable branding strategy, the role of the consumer is extremely influential. The consumer is the one who decides if the innovation and the developed product is acceptable or not. The organisation uses several techniques to communicate with the consumers and increase environmentally friendly clothing awareness among them. Therefore, the interview result indicates that the organisation has given every required effort to implement sustainable branding in the business operation and encourage others to collaborate with the new method of fast fashion.

### ***Comparative Analysis of Sustainable Marketing Strategies in H&M and other clothing Retailers***

The fashion industry often faces the crisis of inability to distinguish itself from others. To present their uniqueness different brands use different strategies. H&M in the process mostly emphasized circular fashion, which reduces waste generation. The entire global fashion industry is put under pressure to reduce the waste generation that affects the earth and the people. To practice CSR and reduce its waste generation the organisation used a specific innovation and increase awareness among the stakeholders and consumers. Additionally, the interview results suggested that H&M is very particular about maintaining transparency. Therefore, the organisation published their carbon emission related data on the official website

and provide open access to everyone including the consumers. Therefore, by using this particular strategy the organisation showcased their transparency and differentiate itself from other brands. These two specific strategies not only showcased the organisation's sense of responsibility toward the globe but also their eagerness to create a better future by its reducing carbon footprint. Additionally, this particular CSR practice method directly creates a responsible brand image for the organisation in front of the consumers and other stakeholders and help them to achieve competitive advantages in the crowded atmosphere of fast fashion.

### ***Ensuring Authenticity and Transparency in H&M's Sustainable Branding Strategies***

According to the Interviews of the employees of H&M, the firm has taken numerous steps for making sure that their sustainable branding strategies are genuine and transparent. They have stated that H&M has launched one of its most important strategies and decided to go all in with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. This acted as the foundation of their sustainability efforts. The corporation has, for instance, focused on providing 100 per cent sustainable material for circular fashion and is adamant about recycling and waste reduction.

For making sure that its Branding strategies are transparent, the firm publishes its annual sustainability reports that cover its objectives and its progress. The report is then objectively verified by a auditor which provides support to its claims of sustainability. The firm has also implemented a system where the consumers can rate the sustainability of the product with insights on the environmental impacts on each product so that they can make informed purchasing decisions. For making sure that the firm's goods follow high sustainability standards, the firm has made use of sustainability certifications, like Better Cotton Initiative. Also, the Conscious Collection Program of the firm makes sure that the clothes they sell are made of eco-friendly materials and are sourced in an ethical manner.

## **4.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the findings of the study of sustainable branding strategies and approaches in the fashion Industry with a focus on how well has H&M adopted these strategies. The study revealed that today most people are aware of sustainability and the practices that the fashion industry follows in order to stay sustainable. According to both the survey and the interview that has been carried out, H&M is known to be the industry leader when it comes to

sustainability. They are efficient in following sustainable practices which has improved their brand name and popularity among the customers.



## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter will reflect on the findings as well as their implications. This chapter will interpret the findings of the study and explain the reason for its relevance. It will assist in finding the links between the hypotheses in the findings. This chapter aims to critically examine the findings and interpret them with respect to the literature of review provided and come up with conclusions that will add more knowledge to the study issue as a whole. It will also assist in finding the areas of development and different research perspectives to provide recommendations that can be practised. This chapter is divided into various sections, all linking to the major topics under consideration in the findings chapter to interpret them and find the link between the original objective and the findings. It will conclude by reviewing the overall contribution of the study so that a future perspective is carved out of the current research.

### 5.2 Impact of Age and Gender on the Fashion Industry and Sustainable Branding Practices

Both factors, age and gender can have a significant impact on the fashion industry and can also influence sustainable branding practices. Since time immemorial, the fashion industry has focused on providing businesses to the younger generations, thus, proving the findings that the youth market is a major driver of the fashion industry (Valaei, and Nikhashemi, 2017). According to the findings of the study as well, 38 per cent of individuals of the newer generations and 52 per cent of individuals of the middle generation are more inclined towards following the fashion industry when compared to the older generation. Thus, all the sustainable branding tactics, for example, using social media platforms to promote sustainable branding practices, are all directed towards attracting the younger generations.

Similarly, gender also plays a huge role in the fashion industry as they are the primary consumers of the sector. According to the survey as well, it was 64 per cent of females are more driven towards the industry compared to males, who contribute 22 per cent only. The firms should focus on sustainable branding tactics consistent with the beliefs and values, like supporting ethical labour practices and employing eco-friendly clothing when targeting women as the main industry (Gazzola *et al.* 2020).

But the firm should not be gender or age directed and should focus on all generations and gender since the market trends are constantly evolving and today everyone is conscious about wearing nice clothes and looking presentable.

### 5.3 Importance of Sustainable Branding in the Fashion Industry

With the changing times, consumers are growing more and more conscious about the environment as well as the social consequences of their shopping behaviour which has made sustainable branding practices even more significant in the fashion industry. Sustainable branding is a technique in which the firm promotes and conveys its enthusiasm towards sustainability and ethical standards. According to the survey, 50% of individuals believed sustainable branding is necessary for the fashion industry, and 20% strongly believed. These practices play an essential role concerning a lot of contexts. Some of them are -

***Demand of the Consumer-*** Today, consumers understand what is at stake and why it is important to follow sustainable practices. This thought process of the consumers is very widely reflected in their purchasing behaviours. Today, millennials are no longer afraid to spend more on environmentally friendly items. This behaviour is not just observed in the millennials. Instead, it is being shown by all the generations. Today, people of all demographics and ages are deeply concerned about the environmental and social effects of their buying (Hur and Cassidy, 2019). For such rising consumer demand for ethical and sustainable products, companies are now using sustainable branding strategies to distinguish themselves in the market and attract consumers.

***Impact on the Environment-*** The fashion sector is famous for being one of the world's most polluting industries and accounts for most global carbon emissions (Pal and Gander, 2018). The industry makes use of the most amount of water as well as other natural resources. This has raised a requirement for companies to follow sustainable branding techniques to mitigate the detrimental impact of the firms in the fashion industry. The firms that practice sustainable branding take responsibility for the environmental impact their firms suffer so that they can follow measures to decrease waste generation, save resources and prevent and control pollution.

***Societal Impact-*** The fashion Industry can have a substantial social influence. It can influence the people who work in the sector and the place where it operates. When a firm starts using

sustainable branding practices, it can establish a good social impact by helping local communities, fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion, and empowering employees by providing them with fair and equitable compensation and a positive working niche.

***Innovation-*** For finding environmentally and socially responsible practices, the firms explore a lot of new materials and practices. Such exploration often leads to processes and products that have never been carried out and are novel. This leads to innovation. When the firm follows sustainable branding practices, it stimulates innovation in the fashion industry (Todeschini *et al.* 2017). When a firm prioritises sustainability in this constantly changing industry and market trends, it can stay ahead of the curve and compete head-on with other firms.

***Reduced Waste Generation-*** Sustainable branding is very necessary for the fashion industry as it helps decrease waste generation. For the longest time in history, the fashion industry has been known for its detrimental environmental impact. Industrial operations like textile production, dyeing, printing, and final assembly processes create significant waste and pollution. When the firm uses sustainable branding, it makes sure that the firm is focused on the environmental, social as well as ethical responsibilities of the corporation. To achieve this, the firms make use of sustainable resources that helps them to reduce waste and reduce the carbon footprint of the entire supply chain (Khandual and Pradhan, 2019). The firms can encourage consumers to make more informed decisions when they buy their clothes by making use of sustainable branding. This encouragement can reduce the inclination of customers towards fast fashion, which in turn can assist in reducing waste generation by the industry and decrease the environmental impact of textile manufacturing.

***Fair Wages and a Healthy Work Environment-*** Sustainable branding strategies in the fashion industry do not just include waste reduction or lowering the industry's impact on the environment. Still, it also means promoting fair wages for the employees and a healthy working environment for them. The working conditions for textile employees in developing countries are long, with very little compensation. Sometimes, they must work in a hazardous environment with unpleasant working conditions. When fashion firms are dedicated to sustainable branding, they are also inclined to follow CSR, which firmly states practising ethical activities, which can involve providing fair salaries and safe working conditions for the workers where the rights of the workers are protected. Such companies can urge their suppliers and other partners in the supply chain to use fair labour practices (Brewer, 2019). This will

contribute to the development of an ethical sector that benefits the employees, environment, and society in general.

#### 5.4 H&M's Effort in Promoting Sustainable Branding

H&M is known as the fashion industry's leader and has taken several steps in promoting sustainable branding practices in its operations. Some of them are -

***Following Conscious Collection-*** The firm manufactures its apparel for its conscious collection program by using sustainable organic cotton, recycled polyester, and Tencel lyocell, an all-natural material made of plant cellulose (H&M, 2020). This program also uses environmentally friendly manufacturing processes, like using water-saving technologies and reducing the number of chemicals for production. The company is also focused on establishing a circular fashion program, where the consumers are asked to recycle and send their old clothes to the firm so that they can be converted into new ones without causing much waste generation.

***Publishing Sustainable Reports-*** The firm is highly dedicated to transparency and regularly reports on its sustainable activities and progress towards its goals. The sustainability reports of the firm outline the yearly impact of the firm on the environment and society and marks its progress towards attaining long-term sustainability goals (H&M, 2017). The firm recently listed its tier-1 and tier-2 suppliers to show transparency. The firm is also working towards improving the working conditions of its employees and salaries in its supply chain.

***Collaboration and other Initiatives-*** H&M has focused on collaborating with several organisations to ensure their practices are sustainable and ethical. The firm is a founding member of the Better Cotton Initiative, which aims to cultivate, promote and disperse sustainable cotton worldwide. The firm has also collaborated with Ellen McArthur Foundation's "Make Fashion Circular Program" (H&M, 2020). This program encourages the fashion industry to follow the circular economy, reduce waste generation, and recycle old clothes.

***Sustainable Packaging-*** The firm is committed to reducing its environmental impact and has adopted a strategy to pack their goods in environmentally friendly packaging. The corporation has implemented a campaign to reduce the usage of plastic bags with other alternatives like paper bags and reusable shopping bags.

**Marketing and Communications-** The firm uses its marketing and communication channels to promote its sustainable branding strategies to its educated customers. The firm, very recently, has launched numerous sustainability-focused marketing strategies. For instance, the firm has launched the "Conscious Exclusive" Collection, letting customers know that their raw materials are ethically sourced and the production methods used are sustainable. The firm has sold numerous green dresses that were launched under this program. The firm has also launched its "Let's Close the Loop" campaign, encouraging customers to donate their old clothes to form new ones (H&M, 2023).

**Fair Living Wage Strategy-**H&M has been very inclined towards being able to pay a livable wage to each and every worker that is part of its supply chain. The organisation has launched a fair living wage strategy to achieve its objective. The firm has decided to work with its suppliers and other stakeholders to encourage fair wages for their workers and provide them with better working conditions. This strategy has been founded on the concepts of social negotiations. According to this concept, the firm can negotiate equitable salaries and healthy working conditions with the employees and their representatives (H&M, 2021). To ensure these practices are implemented, H&M collaborates with their suppliers. The firm also participates in industry-wide campaigns to promote fair pay and enhance the working conditions of the employees in the fashion sector. The firm's approach towards the problem reflects its dedication to sustainability as well as ethical business conduct.

**Chemical Restrictions-** H&M is dedicated to reducing the use of harmful chemicals in its products. To implement this practice, the firm has launched a chemical restriction strategy. As a part of this strategy, the firm released a list of restricted substances (RSL), which shows the chemicals prohibited from use while manufacturing goods in the firm (H&M, 2022). The chemicals on the list are based on international laws and standards. The list must be revised regularly based on recent findings and data. Also, the firm continuously conducts relevant tests on its products to verify whether or not they comply with the laws of RSL. The firm has also decided to participate in other programs like Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC) to promote sustainable chemistry more generally. The firm is also known to collaborate with other stakeholders like NGOs and other academic institutions so that they can come front in promoting sustainable chemistry.

## 5.5 Effect of H&M's Sustainable Branding Strategies on Purchasing Behaviour of the Consumers, Brand Reputation and Image and making them the Industry Leader

Numerous sustainable branding practices are followed by H&M, which have been stated in the point above. These strategies have made a significant impact on various elements of the market trends and behaviour of consumers. Some of the effects are stated below -

The consumer demand for sustainable fashion has increased significantly. The firm's initiatives to promote sustainable fashion have boosted a consumer awareness resulting in greater demands for sustainable items. Because of such dedication to sustainability, consumers are now more inclined to pick H&M when compared to other businesses in the fashion industry.

The strategies used by the firm have also improved its brand image as well as customer loyalty. Consumers currently consider the firm as a socially responsible brand that is entirely dedicated to maintaining environmental and social sustainability. Because of the firm's effective practices, the brand's credibility has increased, attracting more consumers to the firm (Grubor and Milovanov, 2017). Also, consumers are more likely to stick with the company when they know that the firm's values fit well with the consumer's beliefs about sustainability. The firm's performance concerning sustainable practices has improved customer loyalty towards the company. These strategies are the reason why H&M is considered to be the market leader in the industry.

The sustainable branding practices that the company follows have helped them attain a competitive edge compared to other industry firms (Laszlo and Zhexembayeva, 2017). Now that the consumers are more inclined to shop from the firm that has the least detrimental impacts on the environment and society, H&M is getting more picked by the consumers because of their value towards being sustainable and ethical. These initiatives have put the firm in a place where it is the most attractive option compared to the other competitors who are not such avid followers of sustainability. These strategies have also made the firm in being innovative. In order to reduce the amount of waste generated during the production of apparel in the fashion industry by following sustainable branding practices, the firm has been able to distinguish itself as an innovator compared to the other businesses in the industry. Such innovations have led the firm to develop creative ideas that will help in using methods that will lower the carbon emission of the firm.

The firm's core dedication to following sustainable branding strategies has led to innovation as well as making the firm stand out from all the other industrial competitors. The firm has been able to achieve these aspects by focusing on making use of eco-friendly materials and manufacturing techniques. As stated, the firm has heavily invested in materials like Tencel and organic cotton. Such initiatives followed by the firm have produced innovative products that would be great to satisfy the expanding desire for sustainable fashion. For instance, the "Let's Close the Loop" line and the "Conscious" Collection include the manufacturing of clothes from recycled materials and sustainable materials and manufacturing techniques, respectively. This has also helped build consumer trust, loyalty, and the company's reputation.

The firm's sustainable branding strategies have also impacted its employee engagement. The firm has been a thorough supporter of ethical business practices throughout the supply chain and has involved many strategies, including training programs, workshops, and sustainability awards for active employee engagement and raising awareness regarding sustainability concerns. These initiatives have given employees a sense of pride and ownership because they have started believing that they are doing more than just selling clothes. When the employees are highly engaged in their work, they are mostly satisfied with it and are highly motivated to perform better. They feel that they are part of an organisation which firmly believes in caring for the environment and the people. Such an emotion towards the firm can assist in improving productivity, creativity, and employee retention rates. It also contributes to enhancing the image of the brand as a whole. When the employees are satisfied with their work, they tend to talk about the firm to friends, families, and other social network. They boast about the firm's sustainable initiatives. This often results in recognition of the brand, enhanced consumer loyalty, and ultimately more revenue generation.

Also, the sustainable branding methods of the firm have helped the environment and society. The firm has considerably decreased its environmental impact. It has improved its employees' working conditions by using various sustainable materials as well as practices, as already mentioned. Their practices have also improved the wages obtained by employees working in the warehouses. Thus, these strategies have helped promote the fashion industry's general sustainability and contributed to H&M's reputation as a socially responsible firm.



## 5.6 Challenges Faced by H&M in Carrying out sustainable branding strategies

Even though the firm is one of the pioneers when it comes to implementing sustainable branding practices, there are challenges that the firm faces daily while carrying out such practices. Some of them are -

**Complex Supply Chain-** The firm has a vast supply chain comprising numerous suppliers, factories, and other logistic partners. With such a nuanced network of people, the firm has faced a huge challenge in maintaining its principles and beliefs concerning sustainability at all levels of the supply chain.

**Cost and Profitability-** The idea of sustainability sounds easy but is very expensive. The branding strategies cost a lot to the company and often take years to pay off. It is challenging for the firm to balance its commitment to stay sustainable and profitable.

**Perception of the Customers-** Since the firm follows a business strategy of fast fashion, the consumers can be sceptical about the firm's dedication towards following sustainable practices. The firm found it very difficult to convince consumers who only partially believed in its sustainable practices.

**Economic Viability-** It can be very difficult for H&M to provide their customers with inexpensive clothes made out of sustainable materials and procedures as these processes are expensive. The firm has incorporated numerous tactics to deal with this issue like making major investments in fresh, environmentally friendly materials as well as production techniques, improving the efficiency of the supply chain, as well as working effectively to reduce the amount of waste that is generated. Even though the firm has used so many strategies to ensure sustainability, they still face many problems in balancing sustainability and profitability.

## 5.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher has efficiently reflected on and interpreted the findings by considering the literature review. It has tried to fill the gap found in the literature and carefully pointed out the sustainable practices that are followed by H&M, the challenges they face while following it, and what makes them stand out compared to all the other businesses in the fashion industry.



## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Chapter Introduction

The primary focus of this research is to assess the significance of Sustainable Branding Techniques and Approaches in the fashion Industry, with a special reference to H&M, which acted as a case study for this research. This research has concentrated on H&M as the primary subject of enquiry. It is focused on understanding the different types of sustainable branding approaches employed by H&M to mitigate the problems faced by the firm and its competitors in the fashion industry. It has also shown the impact of employing such practices concerning consumer purchasing behaviours, the brand's image, the firm's reputation, and how it stands distinguished from all of its competitors. Additionally, the research is sought to offer H&M, as well as other firms in the fashion industry, sustainability practices that could assist the firm in performing better. The conclusion summarises the findings and sheds light on the role of sustainability practices in the fashion industry.

### 6.2 Summary of the Findings

#### *Effect of demography*

As suggested by the findings, both gender and age play a huge impact when the industry under consideration is Fashion Industry. As seen from the survey, women are more inclined towards the fashion industry when compared to men and are highly affected by the kind of tactics used by different firms. Similarly, it has been noticed that young people are more thoughtful regarding how they look and how other people see them. This, in turn, has concluded that the fashion sector mainly targets the people from younger generation. But this is not limited to the given age and sector, as the entire industry is now evolving to include every individual.

#### *Importance of sustainable branding in the fashion industry*

The fashion sector is known to generate a lot of waste, eventually leading to pollution and other detrimental environmental impacts. Today, people are becoming more inclined towards choosing eco-friendly materials that can mitigate the detrimental impacts on the environment. The firm that follows sustainable branding in the industry is more favoured by consumers, leading to increased revenue.

### ***H&M's practices and how it affects consumer purchase behaviour***

H&M has been known to follow a lot of strategies and initiatives that are associated with sustainable branding. They believe in reducing use of chemicals, circular fashion, sustainable packaging, fair living wages, and transparency about their operations. For these reasons, the firm annually publishes its progress reports on its official website so consumers can view them. The firm has also listed its tier-one and tier-two supplier names to ensure transparency.

### ***Sustainable practices affect brand image and reputation.***

People today are very concerned about their impact on the environment, which is very well reflected in their purchasing behaviours. When the company's consumers know that the brands they use constantly utilise sustainable branding practices, they develop a sense of trust in the firm. This development often leads to repeat purchases. Also, when the consumer is satisfied with the practices and the products of the company, they tend to effectively spread the firm's efficacy with word of mouth, promoting the image of the brand as well as the company's reputation.

### ***Sustainable Branding and Improvement in the fashion industry***

When the firm starts to use sustainable branding practices, they tend to understand and help improve its detrimental environmental impact. The fashion industry is the most polluting because that makes use of a lot of natural resources like water and other raw materials. The sustainable practices followed by the firm ensures that the firm is less of a burden to the environment, and their branding practices ensure that their strategies reach to the consumers so that they are more attracted to the firms who follow ethical practices.

## **6.3 Linking with Objectives**

H&M has been an industrial leader in sustainable branding in the fashion industry. They have launched various programs: conscious collection, let's close the loop, make fashion circular, fair wages and a healthy working environment. These athletic programs reflect the company's dedication to being environmentally and socially responsible, which efficiently correlates with evaluating H&M's branding strategy. Their focus on these strategies and approaches has attracted numerous customers who do not mind paying more for clothes when they know that the firm is ethical in its practices, which also correlates with the study's objective which talks

about the degree to which H&M has embraced its sustainable branding strategies. Although H&M is a giant that has developed many strategies for sustainable branding, the firm still faces some challenges in implementing these strategies. For instance, the firm has a complex supply chain which has many players in its team. It is difficult for the firm to overview the practices at all the tiers of the organisation. Similarly, sustainable branding is an expensive task that takes much time to pay off. The firm needs help to balance practising sustainability and being profitable; also, the customers are sceptical about their perception of the firm, because their business strategy follows fast fashion.

#### 6.4 Limitations and Future Research

The study has numerous limitations that should be acknowledged. Some of them are –

- The study has been entirely focused on H&M as it is the case study of the research. It would have been very beneficial to broaden the scope of the research by including other firms in the fashion industry so that they could also be evaluated and contrasted based on their sustainable branding approaches. This would have allowed for thoroughly comprehending the current scenario of sustainable branding in the fashion industry.
- The study has made use of interviews and survey, which can be biased depending upon the answers that are provided by the respondents. This would not provide a clear image of the scenario.
- The study has not considered any of the negative or unexpected impacts of sustainable brandings, such as the repercussions faced by the supply chain and the instances of greenwashing. Future studies could look into and find solutions for the potential drawbacks.
- The study has not considered how laws and government policies can encourage sustainable branding in the fashion industry. When businesses know and understand the regulatory landscape, they may be able to execute their strategies more effectively.
- To comprehend the long-term effect of H&M's sustainable branding strategies and the behaviour of the consumers, a study that follows a longitudinal time horizon can be

carried out in the future. This will shed the light on whether or not sustainable branding is a viable strategy for the organisations in the fashion industry.

## 6.5 Recommendations

Some recommendations for the firms in the fashion industry for sustainable branding strategies are -

- **Use of Eco-Friendly Material-** To reduce their environmental footprint, the firms should use sustainable and eco-friendly materials to produce their clothes and other accessories, like organic cotton and bamboo. They can also make use of recyclable products.
- **Reduction of Waste-** As discussed several times, the fashion industry generates waste in metric tonnes; the firms can focus on minimising their waste production by using sustainable techniques like recycling materials and dead stock fabrics.
- **Implementing Ethical Labour Practices-** The working conditions are worse for textile industry employees. Firms can employ ethical labour practices where the employees are treated with respect and dignity, provided with fair compensation, and secure and healthy working conditions, and child labour is prohibited.
- **Transparency-** Firms in the fashion industry can be more transparent with their consumers and provide them with information regarding their supply chain, enabling them to make more informed decisions and motivating businesses to be more responsible for their actions.

For H&M:

- **Reducing the Manufacturing Volumes-** H&M can concentrate on reducing the amount of clothes they manufacture annually and can focus more on making high-quality, long-lasting fashion apparel, which would encourage the consumer to buy less clothes but also buy better quality clothes and avoid greenwashing.

- **Auditing Supply Chain Practices-** The firm is transparent to its consumers regarding the supply chain and has listed the top tiers of suppliers in its official website to show the consumers the efficacy of their transparency. But since, the firm is huge and has many players in its supply chain, there is a chance that the firm can overlook the sustainable practises in their supply chain. For this purpose, the firm should conduct regular audits where the representative regularly reports the head about their practices to going sustainable.

## 6.6 Chapter Summary

The study has assessed sustainable branding methods and strategies that are applied in the fashion industry with a special emphasis on H&M. It has been proved that sustainable branding is essential in fashion industry since it lessens the harmful effect of the industry products on the environment as well as fosters a sense of accountability for following social and ethical practices. It has also discussed the strategies that have been use by H&M. By making use of these strategies, the firm's brand image and reputation has enhanced and the consumer are more inclined towards picking H&M over other fashion firms. Even after all the strategies that the firm follows it still faces many challenges. Because of this, the study has provided recommendation for the firms that work in the fashion industry as well as recommendation that are specific to H&M. By making use of these recommendation as well as the future research prospects, firms can soon reach their sustainability goals and influence the fashion sector for their betterment.

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## APPENDIX

### Interview Questions [five people]

| INTERVIEWER ONE   |
|---|
| <b>Question 1:</b> How have H&M's marketing and communication initiatives integrated sustainable branding principles?   |
| <i>Answer:</i> The firm makes use of eco-friendly materials and promotes the recycling of garments through advertising campaigns.   |
| <b>Question 2:</b> What particular sustainable branding strategies have H&M put in place for its production and supply chain?   |
| <i>Answer:</i> The organisation only works with business partners and suppliers who follow the same ethics regarding economy, society and environment.  |
| <b>Question 3:</b> What obstacles did H&M encounter and how did they overcome them while implementing sustainable branding strategies in the fashion industry?  |
| <i>Answer:</i> The firm faced a lot of competition from the fast-fashion industry and they overcame this challenge by investing in sustainable branding strategies, making individuals aware of the materials used by H&M and how they will help in reducing the carbon footprint of the company when compared to fast fashion. |
| <b>Question 4:</b> What differentiates H&M from other clothing retailers in your perspective in terms of sustainable marketing methods and strategies?  |
| <i>Answer:</i> The firm makes use of circular fashion that reduces waste generation and assists in the collection and recycling of clothes. This has assisted the firm in differentiating itself from the other retailers.  |
| <b>Question 5:</b> How has H&M taken assurance that the sustainable branding strategies are genuine and transparent?  |
| <i>Answer:</i> The sustainable practices followed by H&M are aligned with the UN's Sustainable development goals and the progress towards achieving this goal is published annually. The firm also makes it a point to get third-party certifications to meet environmental and social standards.                               |

## INTERVIEWER TWO

**Question 1:** How have H&M's marketing and communication initiatives integrated sustainable branding principles?

**Answer:** The firm's marketing and communication initiatives promotes conscious collection and consumption, the use of eco-friendly materials, as well as circular fashion by collaborating with sustainable fashion leaders.

**Question 2:** What particular sustainable branding strategies have H&M put in place for its production and supply chain?

**Answer:** The organisation share the risk and rewards with both the supply chain and the business partners to receive great business performance.

**Question 3:** What obstacles did H&M encounter and how did they overcome them while implementing sustainable branding strategies in the fashion industry?

**Answer:** Making everyone realise the requirement for new innovation was extremely difficult. The organisation used new strategies to develop their product and operation as required and encourage stakeholders to share the same value.

**Question 4:** What differentiates H&M from other clothing retailers in your perspective in terms of sustainable marketing methods and strategies?

**Answer:** The firm is very transparent about its carbon footprint and the environmental impact. They annually publish this data on their official website which makes the consumer trust them when compared to other retailers.

**Question 5:** How has H&M taken assurance that the sustainable branding strategies are genuine and transparent?

**Answer:** The fact that the company publishes most of the data on its official website so that it can be seen by not just the employees but also the consumers, the certifications, all of these make sure that the firm follows genuine and transparent branding strategies.



### INTERVIEWER THREE

**Question 1:** How have H&M's marketing and communication initiatives integrated sustainable branding principles?

*Answer:* The firm has integrated sustainable branding principles by interacting with the stakeholders and the community for the promotion of sustainable fashion, ethical sourcing, as well as transparency in the supply chain.

**Question 2:** What sustainable branding strategies have H&M implemented for its production and supply chain?

*Answer:* The organisation instead of manufacturing its products works with suppliers for production and increases business opportunities for both.

**Question 3:** What obstacles did H&M encounter and how did they overcome them while implementing sustainable branding strategies in the fashion industry?

*Answer:* Providing benefits while actively working towards sustainable branding was extremely difficult. Yet we have made it by convincing people to do a little compromise in the initial period.

**Question 4:** What differentiates H&M from other clothing retailers in your perspective in terms of sustainable marketing methods and strategies?

*Answer:* The conscious collection and ethical sourcing strategies of the firm devoted to circular fashion is one of the sustainable marketing strategies that assist the firm in differentiating itself from others.

**Question 5:** How has H&M taken assurance that the sustainable branding strategies are genuine and transparent?

*Answer:* The company has provided almost every piece of information that can assure the transparency of the organisation based on which investors take their decisions and invest in H&M.

#### INTERVIEWER FOUR

**Question 1:** How have H&M's marketing and communication initiatives integrated sustainable branding principles?

*Answer:* The firm is highly focused on providing conscious collection by making use of sustainable materials, as well as maintaining sustainable logistics. The firm has also focused on communicating conscious messages to its customers.

**Question 2:** What particular sustainable branding strategies have H&M put in place for its production and supply chain?

*Answer:* The brand ensures that every supplier follows H&M's CoD, CoE and chemical restrictions which can harm the consumers, employees and society.

**Question 3:** What obstacles did H&M encounter and how did they overcome them while implementing sustainable branding strategies in the fashion industry?

*Answer:* It was hard to make everyone believe that achieving sustainability requires the implication of new innovation. Strict policies, and encouragement to follow the code, ethics and restrictions helped the organisation to implicate sustainable branding strategies.

**Question 4:** What differentiates H&M from other clothing retailers in your perspective in terms of sustainable marketing methods and strategies?

*Answer:* The firm is determined on going carbon neutral and they update their progress on their website towards this goal. Such a marketing strategy makes sure that the customers are regularly updated on the company's progress and builds trust between the organisation and the consumers.

**Question 5:** How has H&M taken assurance that the sustainable branding strategies are genuine and transparent?

*Answer:* The firm annually publishes most of the data of its operations, be it its practices, or the list of its suppliers, and third-party certifications which marks the genuineness and the transparency of the firm's strategies.

### INTERVIEWER FIVE

**Question 1:** How have H&M's marketing and communication initiatives integrated sustainable branding principles?

*Answer:* The firm makes use of circular fashion by asking its consumer to recycle their clothes. They also make use of ethical sourcing of raw materials and maintain sustainable practices in the entire supply chain.

**Question 2:** What particular sustainable branding strategies have H&M put in place for its production and supply chain?

*Answer:* The firm ensures that the suppliers and business partners follow the ethics and policies including the chemical restrictions by closely cooperating with the production firms.

**Question 3:** What obstacles did H&M encounter and how did they overcome them while implementing sustainable branding strategies in the fashion industry?

*Answer:* Making every stakeholder believe in one value and encouraging them to share the same goal is the biggest obstacle for H&M. H&M encourages them to share the same goal and moves in one direction.

**Question 4:** What differentiates H&M from other clothing retailers in your perspective in terms of sustainable marketing methods and strategies?

*Answer:* The firm's adamancy towards circular fashion, reducing its carbon footprint, and waste reduction are some reasons that differentiate H&M from other clothing retailers.

**Question 5:** How has H&M taken assurance that the sustainable branding strategies are genuine and transparent?

*Answer:* The company provide maximum information regarding the business on electronic media and allowed anyone to access them. Additionally, the organisation maintained communication with every stakeholder and answers their queries whenever needed.

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What is your age?

- 15-25
- 25-35
- 35-45

2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Others

3. Have you heard of the fashion industry's sustainable branding?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

4. Do you think it's important for fashion businesses to brand sustainably?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Strongly agree
- Strongly disagree

5. Do you know what H&M is doing to promote sustainable branding?

- Agree
- Disagree

- Neutral
- Strongly agree
- Strongly disagree

6. Have you bought H&M goods especially as a result of their efforts to promote sustainable branding?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Strongly agree
- Strongly disagree

7. Do you believe H&M's efforts to promote sustainable branding have a beneficial effect on their brand's reputation and image?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Strongly agree
- Strongly disagree

8. Do you believe that H&M has successfully implemented sustainable branding strategies into their business operations?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Strongly agree
- Strongly disagree

9. Is H&M a fashion industry leader in sustainable branding?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Strongly agree
- Strongly disagree

10. Do you mind spending more on clothing from firms that place a higher value on sustainability?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Strongly agree
- Strongly disagree

11. Do you think sustainable branding can promote improvement in the fashion sector?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Strongly agree
- Strongly disagree

12. Would you like to see more H&M and other clothing retailers use sustainable branding strategies?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Strongly agree