

**Global Trade Policies and Sustainability in India's Fashion Industry:
Challenges and Opportunities**

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DECLARATION

I hereby affirm that the dissertation I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the purpose of obtaining the Master of Business Administration is the outcome of my own independent research, except where explicitly indicated and appropriately acknowledged through references. Additionally, I confirm that this work has not been presented for any other academic qualification.

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Abstract

This research examines the influence of international trade policies on sustainability practices in India's fashion industry, focusing on the complex interplay between global trade regulations and sustainable fashion practices. Through a quantitative survey of stakeholders including manufacturers, suppliers, retailers, and policymakers, the study investigates current sustainability trends, implementation challenges, and potential policy optimizations. The findings reveal significant correlations between trade policy awareness and sustainability implementation effectiveness, while identifying high compliance costs and technological barriers as key challenges. The research demonstrates that stakeholder collaboration and institutional pressures play crucial roles in driving sustainability adoption, though their effectiveness varies across different industry segments. Analysis indicates that financial incentives and simplified regulatory frameworks could enhance sustainability implementation, particularly when combined with structured training programs and knowledge transfer mechanisms. The study contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical application by providing evidence-based recommendations for policy optimization while highlighting the importance of integrated approaches to sustainability implementation in emerging markets. These findings have important implications for policymakers and industry stakeholders seeking to enhance sustainable practices within global trade frameworks.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	10
1.1 Background of the Study	10
1.2 Research Problem.....	10
1.3 Research Aim and Objectives	11
1.3.1 Research Aim	11
1.3.2 Research Objectives	11
1.4 . Research Questions	12
1.5 Hypothesis.....	12
1.6 Search Methodology	13
1.7 Research Significance	14
1.8 Research Structure.....	14
1.9 Conceptual Framework	15
1.9.1. Independent Variable.....	15
1.9.2. Dependent Variable	15
1.9.3. Mediator.....	15
1.10 Theoretical Framework	16
1.10.1. Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory	16
Chapter 2: Literature Review	18
2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review	18
2.2 Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts	18
2.2.1. International trade policies	18
2.2.2. Sustainability practices in the fashion industry	19
2.3. Key Themes from the Literature	19
2.3.1. Introduction	19
2.3.2. Overview of Sustainability in the Indian Fashion Industry.....	20

2.3.2.1. Evolution and Significance of Sustainability Practices	20
2.3.2.2. Impact of International Trade Policies on Sustainability Trends	21
2.3.2.3. Influence of International Trade Regulations	21
2.3.2.4. Current Sustainability Trends	22
2.3.3 Challenges in Sustainability Implementation and Trade Policy Alignment	22
2.3.3.1. Regulatory Compliance and Resource Constraints	22
2.3.3.2. Institutional Pressures and Stakeholder Influences	23
2.3.3.3. Supply Chain Management Complexities	23
2.3.3.4. Integration and Implementation Barriers.....	24
2.3.3.5. Future Considerations and Adaptation Strategies	24
2.4.4 Policy Frameworks and Recommendations for Sustainable Compliance.....	25
2.4.4.1. Current Policy Framework Analysis	25
2.4.4.2. Evidence-Based Policy Recommendations	26
2.4.4.3. Implementation Strategy Recommendations.....	27
2.4.4.4. Future Policy Directions	28
2.5 Methodological Issues in the Literature	28
2.6 Comparative Analysis of Studies	29
2.7 Limitations of Existing Research	29
2.8 Theoretical and Practical Implications	30
2.9 Synthesis of Literature	30
2.10 Conclusion.....	31
Chapter 3: Research Methodology.....	32
3.1 Introduction	32
3.2 Research Philosophy	32
3.3 Research Approach	34
3.4 Methodological Choice	35
3.5 Research Strategy.....	37

3.6 Time Horizon	38
3.7 Data Collection Methods.....	38
3.7.1. Survey Instrument.....	38
3.8 Questionnaire Design and Justification.....	38
3.8.1. Purpose of the Survey.....	38
3.8.2 Alignment with Research Questions, Objectives and Hypotheses.....	39
3.8.3 Questionnaire Structure and Distribution	41
3.9 Validity and Reliability	41
3.10 Data Analysis Methods	41
3.10.1 Quantitative Analysis	41
3.11 Ethical Considerations.....	41
3.12 Questionnaire: Influence of International Trade Policies on Sustainability in the Indian Fashion Industry	42
3.13 Questionnaire Analysis	43
3.14 Purpose of Analysis:	43
Chapter 4: Analysis of Survey Results.	48
4.1 Introduction:.....	48
4.2 Analysis of the Survey through SPSS:.....	49
Chapter 5: Discussion/Conclusions/Recommendations	72
5.1 Introduction	72
5.2 Discussion of Key Findings	72
5.2.1 Trade Policy Awareness and Implementation	72
5.2.2 Cost Barriers and Financial Incentives.....	73
5.2.3 Stakeholder Collaboration and Policy Development.....	74
5.2.4 Experience and Understanding	74
5.2.5 Market Forces and Regulatory Pressure	75
5.2.6 Training and Development Needs	76

5.3 Conclusions	77
5.4 Recommendations	79
5.5 Limitations of the Study	80
5.6 Contribution to Knowledge	82
References:.....	84
APPENDICES	88
Appendix:1 Information Sheet:.....	88
Appendix:2 Questionnaire:	90
Appendix 3: GANNT CHART:	94

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1.1Saunders et al.'s Research Onion</i>	32
<i>Figure 2.International trade policies encourage the adoption of sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry.</i>	49
<i>Figure 3.Government trade policies are effective in promoting sustainability initiatives within the fashion sector</i>	50
<i>Figure 4.There is sufficient awareness of sustainability-related trade regulations among stakeholders in the Indian fashion industry.</i>	52
<i>Figure 5.Trade agreements incentivize manufacturers to adopt environmentally friendly practices</i>	53
<i>Figure 6.The international trade policies currently in place are adequately aligned with the goals of promoting sustainability.</i>	55
<i>Figure 7.High compliance costs are a significant barrier to adopting sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry.</i>	56
<i>Figure 8.Lack of technological resources and infrastructure limits the adoption of sustainable practices</i>	58
<i>Figure 9.Government incentives are important enablers for sustainable practices in the fashion industry</i>	59
<i>Figure 10.Collaboration with stakeholders such as NGOs and suppliers helps overcome challenges to implementing sustainability</i>	61
<i>Figure 11.Market demand for sustainable products is an effective enabler for promoting sustainability initiatives</i>	62
<i>Figure 12.Trade policies need to provide more financial incentives to promote sustainable production practices</i>	64

<i>Figure 13. Simplifying trade regulations would make it easier for companies to adopt sustainability initiatives.....</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Figure 14. Industry associations should collaborate with policymakers to make trade policies more conducive to sustainability.</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>Figure 15. Training programs on international trade regulations are needed to help industry participants understand how to comply with sustainability requirements.....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Figure 16. Policymakers should consult with industry stakeholders when designing trade policies that affect sustainability.</i>	<i>70</i>

List of tables

<i>Table 1 Search Strings and Databases.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Table 2. Purpose of Analysis</i>	<i>44</i>

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The Indian fashion sector has had transformative shifts in recent decades, driven by evolving international trade policies and mounting pressures for sustainability (Khurana, 2022). The intersection of global trade regulations and sustainable fashion practices presents both opportunities and challenges for Indian manufacturers and retailers, especially in the post-COVID environment (Debnath et al., 2023). The fashion industry's environmental impact has become increasingly critical, with significant implications for resource consumption and waste generation (Gazzola et al., 2020). This has intensified the need for more responsible supply chain operations and sustainable practices throughout the production process (Pal et al., 2019

The sector has experienced transformative shifts driven by evolving international trade policies and mounting pressures for sustainability (Vishwakarma et al., 2024). In the post-COVID context, these dynamics have created both challenges and opportunities for Indian manufacturers and retailers to adopt sustainable practices that align with global standards (Khurana, 2022). International trade policies increasingly influence how Indian fashion businesses integrate sustainable practices (Todeschini et al., 2017). Recent research highlights that effective sustainable supply chain management meets evolving international trade requirements while aligning with sustainability goals (Pal & Gander, 2018).

1.2 Research Problem

The research problem is based on the ability of the Indian fashion industry to navigate evolving global trade policies and institutional internal forces to implement sustainability focused practices in the supply chain. Despite the growing emphasis on sustainability in global fashion

markets, there is limited research examining how international trade policies specifically influence the adoption of sustainable practices in the Indian fashion industry (Pal & Gander 2018). While studies have explored either trade policies or sustainability the interconnection requires further investigation (Shirvanimoghaddam et al. 2020). Recent developments in digital transformation and sustainability (Debnath et al. 2023) indicate significant gaps in understanding the relationship between international trade requirements and the implementation of sustainable practices in emerging markets like India.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

1.3.1 Research Aim

This research aims to critically analyse how international trade policies influence the adoption and implementation of sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry. The study specifically focuses on understanding the complex interplay between international trade regulations and sustainable fashion practices in India's evolving market context (Park-Poaps, Bari & Sarker 2020). The study specifically focuses on understanding the complex interplay between international trade regulations and sustainable fashion practices in India's evolving market context (Vishwakarma et al., 2024).

1.3.2 Research Objectives

To identify current sustainability trends in the Indian fashion industry emerging in response to international trade policies. This objective aligns to the research by Kuman et al 2019 and (Gazzola et al., 2020). international trade policies affecting the Indian fashion industry's sustainability initiatives

To analyse the key challenges aligned to sustainability initiatives with international trade regulations (Parida et al., 2019). This aligns to calls for further research by Niinimäki et al.

2020, and Vishwakarma et al. 2024. existing sustainability practices in the Indian fashion sector (Jyoti et al. 2024)

To propose recommendations for policy makers and industry stakeholders to enhance sustainable compliance within the industry under global trade frameworks. This aligns with calls for further research by Todeschini, Callegaro-de-Menezes, and Ghezzi (2017)

1.4 . Research Questions

What are the current sustainability trends in the Indian fashion industry influenced by international trade policies (Kumar et al. 2019;Pal et al., 2019)?

What challenges do Indian fashion businesses encounter in implementing sustainability practices that fulfill international trade requirements? (Gazzola et al., 2020)

What challenges do Indian fashion businesses encounter in implementing sustainability practices that fulfill international trade requirements (Niinimäki et al. 2020)

How can trade policies be optimized to enhance sustainability adoption.

1.5 Hypothesis

H1: Increasing international trade regulation stringency is positively associated with the adoption of enhanced sustainability practices in the Indian fashion sector

H2: Firms operating under stronger institutional pressures experience more pronounced challenges in achieving sustainable compliance within the global trade context (Vishwakarma et al. 2024).

H3: Policy recommendations informed by empirical evidence lead to more effective and lasting sustainability outcomes in the Indian fashion industry's response to global trade policies (2023).

1.6 Search Methodology

Table 1 Search Strings and Databases

Database	Search Strings
Scopus	"International trade" AND "sustainability" AND "fashion industry" AND "India"
Web of Science	"Trade policy" AND "sustainable fashion" AND "India"
Science Direct	"Sustainable practices" AND "Indian fashion industry" AND "trade"
JSTOR	"Fashion sustainability" AND "international trade" AND "India"
Google Scholar	"Indian fashion industry" AND "sustainability" AND "trade policy"

This table presents a systematic approach to searching academic literature about sustainability, international trade, and the fashion industry in India. It uses five major academic databases (Scopus, Web of Science, Science Direct, JSTOR, and Google Scholar) with carefully crafted search strings. Each string combines key terms using AND operators to find relevant papers. The variations in search terminology across databases help capture different ways researchers

might describe these concepts, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the academic literature on sustainable practices in India's fashion sector.

1.7 Research Significance

This research addresses a critical gap in understanding how international trade policies influence sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry (Casadei, Casadei & Iammarino 2021). The findings will contribute to both academic literature and practical implementation strategies for industry stakeholders (Pal & Gander, 2018).. Furthermore, this study will provide valuable insights into post-pandemic sustainability strategies (Atif & Dhorajiwala 2024) and circular economy implementation in the fashion sector (Pushpa & Yashpal 2024; Khurana, 2022).

This research addresses a critical gap in understanding how international trade policies influence sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry (Casadei, Casadei & Iammarino 2021). The findings will contribute to both academic literature and practical implementation strategies for industry stakeholders (Pal & Gander, 2018).. Furthermore, this study will provide valuable insights into post-pandemic sustainability strategies (Atif & Dhorajiwala 2024) and circular economy implementation in the fashion sector (Pushpa & Yashpal 2024; Khurana, 2022).

1.8 Research Structure

This dissertation comprises five chapters:

- Chapter 1: Introduction and Research Framework
- Chapter 2: Literature Review
- Chapter 3: Research Methodology
- Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis
- Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

1.9 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the relationships between international trade policies, sustainable supply chain management, and the adoption and implementation of sustainability practices within the Indian fashion industry. (Pal, Shen & Sandberg, 2019; Parida, Sjödin & Reim, 2019).

1.9.1. Independent Variable

International trade policies serve as the independent variable, encompassing regulations and agreements that govern international trade, such as tariffs, trade agreements, import/export restrictions, and sustainability mandates. (Casadei, Casadei & Iammarino, 2021; Vishwakarma et al., 2024).

1.9.2. Dependent Variable

These policies influence the dependent variable, which is the extent to which Indian fashion businesses integrate environmentally and socially responsible practices into their operations, including the use of sustainable materials, waste reduction strategies, ethical labor practices, and carbon footprint minimization. (Gazzola et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2021).

1.9.3. Mediator

Sustainable supply chain management performs as a mediator in this framework, representing the strategies and practices aimed at ensuring the supply chain is environmentally sustainable and socially responsible (Pal et al., 2019). This mediator explains how international trade policies impact the adoption of sustainability practices by facilitating practices like supplier sustainability audits, green logistics, and circular economy initiatives (Debnath et al., 2023). Additionally, institutional pressures function as a moderator, affecting the strength and

direction of the relationship between international trade policies and sustainability practices (Broccardo et al., 2023). These pressures stem from regulatory bodies, industry standards, consumer expectations, and societal norms, influencing businesses to comply with sustainability standards through government regulations, industry certifications, consumer demand for sustainable products, and NGO activism. (Todeschini et al., 2017).

1.10 Theoretical Framework

1.10.1. Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory.

The theoretical framework is grounded in Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory. (Parida, Sjödin & Reim, 2019). Institutional Theory posits that organizational behaviour is shaped by the norms, rules, and expectations of the institutional environment, emphasizing legitimacy, isomorphism, and coercive pressures. pressures (Biloslavo et al., 2020). This theory explains how Indian fashion businesses adopt sustainability practices to gain legitimacy and comply with international trade norms, often mimicking industry leaders or adhering to regulatory standards to remain competitive. (Pal & Gander, 2018). Coercive forces, such as international trade policies, compel businesses to integrate sustainability into their operations. Stakeholder Theory complements this by highlighting the importance of considering the interests and influences of all stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, regulators, and the community (Todeschini et al., 2017). This theory underscores how institutional pressures from stakeholders can moderate the relationship between trade policies and sustainability practices. (Khan et al., 2021). Effective sustainable supply chain management involves engaging various stakeholders to meet sustainability goals, ensuring that businesses respond to stakeholder expectations by aligning their practices with sustainability standards influenced by trade policies. (Pal, Shen & Sandberg, 2019).

The conceptual model illustrates both direct and mediated relationships (Parida, Sjödin & Reim, 2019). Directly, international trade policies influence the adoption and implementation of sustainability practices (Vishwakarma et al., 2024). Mediated by sustainable supply chain management, trade policies indirectly enhance sustainability practices through improved supply chain strategies (Debnath et al., 2023). Furthermore, institutional pressures moderate the direct relationship, strengthening or weakening the impact of trade policies on sustainability adoption based on the level of external pressures (Broccardo et al., 2023).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

The literature review is organized to critically analyse the interplay between global trade policies and sustainability in India's fashion industry, aligning with the research aim, objectives, and questions by examining existing challenges, identifying opportunities, and contextualizing the industry within the global and local policy frameworks

In India, the relationship between international trade policies and sustainability practices in the fashion industry represents a complex and evolving narrative, particularly in rapidly developing markets ((Casadei, Casadei & Iammarino 2021, p.262). The post-pandemic landscape has dramatically reshaped how the Indian fashion and textile sector approaches sustainability within the global trade framework (Khurana 2022). This review synthesizes existing knowledge about how trade policies influence sustainability adoption in India's fashion industry, examining both theoretical foundations and empirical evidence through a critical lens. The Indian fashion sector's journey toward sustainability has been significantly influenced by global trade dynamics and policy frameworks (Vishwakarma et al., 2024; Khurana, 2022; Pal et al., 2019). As an example, recent developments in Bangladesh's clothing manufacturing sector offer valuable insights into how emerging economies navigate technology adoption within global free trade environments (Park-Poaps, Bari & Sarker 2020). These experiences parallel India's challenges and opportunities in implementing sustainable practices while maintaining competitiveness in the global market.

2.2 Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

2.2.1. International trade policies

Understanding the relationship between trade policies and sustainability practices requires clear conceptualization of key terms and their interconnections. International trade policies

encompass a complex web of regulations, agreements, and standards that govern cross-border commerce in the fashion industry. These include tariff structures, non-tariff barriers, and bilateral and multilateral trade agreements that directly impact sustainability implementation (Casadei, Casadei & Iammarino, 2021; Park-Poaps, Bari & Sarker, 2020; Vishwakarma et al., 2024).

2.2.2. Sustainability practices in the fashion industry

Recent research by Park and Kim (2023) defines sustainability practices in the fashion industry context as integrated approaches encompassing environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic viability. These practices include sustainable supply chain management, eco-friendly material selection, waste reduction initiatives, and ethical labor practices. The Indian fashion industry, characterized by the diverse manufacturing base and rich textile heritage, presents a unique context for examining the implementation of these practices within international trade frameworks.

2.3. Key Themes from the Literature

2.3.1. Introduction

The Indian fashion industry has undergone a significant transformation in its approach to sustainability, particularly in response to evolving international trade policies (Vishwakarma et al., 2024). This review systematically examines the current landscape of sustainability practices, their relationship with trade policies, and theoretical frameworks that explain these interactions, directly addressing the research objectives and aligning with the questionnaire structure.

2.3.2. Overview of Sustainability in the Indian Fashion Industry

The evolution of sustainability practices in India's fashion sector reflects both global trends and local adaptations (Khurana, 2022). Recent research indicates that the industry has moved beyond basic compliance towards more strategic integration of sustainable practices throughout the value chain (Gazzola et al., 2020). The post-pandemic environment has particularly accelerated this transformation, with businesses recognizing the need for more resilient and sustainable operations (Debnath et al., 2023; Khurana, 2022). The significance of these practices in the current market landscape is evidenced by their increasing integration into core business strategies, reflecting both regulatory requirements and market demands (Todeschini et al., 2017).

2.3.2.1. Evolution and Significance of Sustainability Practices

The Indian fashion sector has undergone a fundamental transformation in its approach to sustainability over the last decade, shifting from basic compliance to strategic integration of sustainable practices (Vishwakarma et al., 2024; Khurana, 2022). This evolution has been particularly marked in the post-pandemic era, where businesses have had to reconsider their operational frameworks and sustainability commitments in response to global challenges (Debnath et al., 2023). The sector has witnessed significant developments in sustainable supply chain management, with companies increasingly adopting circular economy principles and innovative waste reduction strategies (Pal et al., 2019; Gazzola et al., 2020). Digital transformation has played a crucial role in this evolution, enabling better tracking and implementation of sustainability initiatives across the value chain (Ardito et al., 2018; Bertola & Teunissen, 2018). The significance of these practices has grown exponentially, as they now represent not just environmental consciousness but also competitive advantage in the global market (Khan et al., 2021; Todeschini et al., 2017).

2.3.2.2. Impact of International Trade Policies on Sustainability Trends

Trade policies have emerged as crucial drivers of sustainability adoption in the Indian fashion industry (Casadei, Casadei & Iammarino, 2021). These policies influence sustainability practices through multiple mechanisms, including tariff structures, non-tariff barriers, and bilateral agreements (Park-Poaps, Bari & Sarker, 2020). Research demonstrates that international trade regulations have particularly impacted three key areas: supply chain restructuring, technology adoption, and sustainability standards implementation (Ardito et al., 2018; Bertola & Teunissen, 2018).

2.3.2.3. Influence of International Trade Regulations

International trade regulations and agreements have emerged as primary drivers of sustainability adoption in the Indian fashion industry, creating both opportunities and challenges for businesses (Casadei, Casadei & Iammarino, 2021; Park-Poaps, Bari & Sarker, 2020). These regulations have particularly influenced three key areas: supply chain restructuring, technology adoption, and sustainability standards implementation (Broccardo et al., 2023; Parida, Sjödin & Reim, 2019). Trade agreements have facilitated the transfer of sustainable technologies and best practices, while also setting stringent requirements for environmental compliance and social responsibility (Vishwakarma et al., 2024; Pal & Gander, 2018). The impact of these regulations extends beyond mere compliance, often catalyzing innovation and strategic transformation in sustainable practices, particularly in areas such as waste management and resource efficiency (Khan et al., 2021; Gazzola et al., 2020). These regulatory frameworks have also influenced how Indian fashion businesses approach international partnerships and market access, with sustainability compliance becoming a key determinant of global market participation (Todeschini et al., 2017; Debnath et al., 2023).

2.3.2.4. Current Sustainability Trends

The adoption of eco-friendly materials has become increasingly prevalent, driven by both regulatory requirements and market demands (Gazzola et al., 2020). Waste reduction strategies have evolved significantly, incorporating circular economy principles and innovative recycling approaches (Khan et al., 2021). Research indicates that ethical labor practices have gained prominence, particularly in response to international trade requirements and stakeholder expectations (Pal & Gander, 2018). Carbon footprint minimization efforts have become more sophisticated, often leveraging digital technologies and advanced analytics for better monitoring and control (Broccardo et al., 2023).

2.3.3 Challenges in Sustainability Implementation and Trade Policy Alignment

The Indian fashion industry faces significant challenges in aligning sustainability initiatives with international trade regulations, requiring careful examination of multiple interconnected factors affecting implementation success (Vishwakarma et al., 2024). Research indicates that organizations encounter various obstacles when attempting to integrate sustainable practices within evolving trade frameworks, particularly in the context of resource constraints and operational limitations (Parida, Sjödin & Reim, 2019).

2.3.3.1. Regulatory Compliance and Resource Constraints

Recent studies have identified regulatory compliance as a primary challenge for Indian fashion businesses, particularly regarding the interpretation and implementation of complex international trade requirements (Casadei, Casadei & Iammarino, 2021). Organizations often struggle with limited financial and technological resources, which significantly impacts their ability to implement comprehensive sustainability initiatives (Ardito et al., 2018). Research by Khan et al. (2021) demonstrates that smaller enterprises face disproportionate challenges in

meeting compliance requirements due to resource limitations and operational constraints. The complexity of trade regulations, combined with varying compliance standards across different markets, creates additional barriers for businesses attempting to implement sustainable practices (Gazzola et al., 2020).

2.3.3.2. Institutional Pressures and Stakeholder Influences

The fashion industry operates under multiple institutional pressures that significantly influence sustainability adoption patterns (Biloslavo et al., 2020). External pressures from regulatory bodies, industry standards organizations, and consumer groups create a complex environment that businesses must navigate (Todeschini et al., 2017). Research indicates that these pressures can both facilitate and impede sustainability implementation, depending on how effectively organizations can respond to diverse stakeholder demands (Pal et al., 2019). Studies show that regulatory pressures, while necessary for driving sustainability adoption, can sometimes create implementation challenges, particularly when requirements across different jurisdictions conflict or overlap (Bertola & Teunissen, 2018).

2.3.3.3. Supply Chain Management Complexities

The management of sustainable supply chains presents particular challenges within the context of international trade regulations (Debnath et al., 2023). Research highlights the complexities involved in implementing supplier sustainability audits, establishing green logistics systems, and developing circular economy initiatives while maintaining compliance with trade requirements (Pal & Gander, 2018). Studies indicate that organizations face significant challenges in coordinating sustainability initiatives across global supply chains, particularly when dealing with diverse regulatory frameworks and varying levels of technological capability among supply chain partners (Broccardo et al., 2023).

Recent research identifies several key areas where supply chain management intersects with trade policy challenges such as the implementation of supplier sustainability audits often encounters difficulties due to varying international standards and compliance requirements (Khan et al., 2021). The Green logistics initiatives face challenges related to cross-border transportation regulations and environmental compliance (Vishwakarma et al., 2024) and Circular economy implementation is complicated by trade barriers and varying regulatory interpretations across different markets (Parida, Sjödin & Reim, 2019)

2.3.3.4. Integration and Implementation Barriers

The integration of sustainability practices with existing business operations presents significant challenges, particularly in the context of international trade requirements (Gazzola et al., 2020). Organizations often struggle to balance sustainability initiatives with operational efficiency and cost management (Ardito et al., 2018). Research indicates that the successful implementation of sustainability practices requires significant organizational change and resource allocation, which can be particularly challenging for businesses operating under strict trade regulations (Todeschini et al., 2017).

2.3.3.5. Future Considerations and Adaptation Strategies

Future considerations and adaptation strategies require a comprehensive approach that balances regulatory demands with operational realities in the Indian fashion industry. Research by Vishwakarma et al. (2024) demonstrates that successful sustainability implementation depends heavily on robust compliance management systems integrated with technological capabilities. The development of these systems must consider both immediate regulatory requirements and long-term sustainability goals, as highlighted by Broccardo et al. (2023) in their analysis of digital transformation impacts on sustainability adoption.

Stakeholder engagement emerges as a crucial element, with Parida, Sjödin and Reim (2019) emphasizing the importance of collaborative approaches in developing effective sustainability strategies. Their research indicates that organizations achieving better sustainability outcomes typically demonstrate strong stakeholder relationships across their value chains. Khan et al. (2021) further support this finding, showing that enhanced stakeholder engagement correlates with improved sustainability implementation.

The implementation of effective change management strategies plays a vital role, as documented by Debnath et al. (2023) in their analysis of supply chain transformations. Their research reveals that organizations successfully navigating sustainability challenges typically employ structured change management approaches. This multifaceted strategy must balance immediate compliance requirements with long-term sustainability objectives, suggesting a need for continuous adaptation and refinement of approaches as both regulatory frameworks and sustainability standards evolve (Todeschini et al., 2017).

2.4.4 Policy Frameworks and Recommendations for Sustainable Compliance

The evolution of sustainable compliance in the Indian fashion industry requires carefully structured policy frameworks that balance international trade requirements with practical implementation capabilities. Research indicates that effective policy measures must address both regulatory standards and industry-specific needs while promoting long-term sustainability goals (Todeschini et al., 2017).

2.4.4.1. Current Policy Framework Analysis

Research demonstrates that existing policy frameworks in the Indian fashion industry have shown varying degrees of effectiveness in promoting sustainable practices. Studies indicate that while current policies have established basic sustainability requirements, significant gaps

remain in addressing implementation challenges and industry-specific needs (Vishwakarma et al., 2024). The effectiveness of existing frameworks has been particularly influenced by the post-pandemic environment, which has highlighted the need for more resilient and adaptable policy structures (Khurana, 2022). Analysis by Parida, Sjödin and Reim (2019) reveals that current policies often lack sufficient integration between trade requirements and sustainability objectives, creating implementation challenges for industry stakeholders.

Recent research has identified several critical aspects of existing policy frameworks that require attention. Studies by Gazzola et al. (2020) highlight the importance of aligning international trade requirements with local implementation capabilities. The research indicates that successful policy frameworks must consider both regulatory compliance needs and practical implementation challenges faced by different industry segments (Khan et al., 2021). Furthermore, analysis shows that effective policies must address the varying capabilities and resources of different industry stakeholders, from large manufacturers to small-scale suppliers (Pal & Gander, 2018).

2.4.4.2.Evidence-Based Policy Recommendations

Research-based evidence suggests several key policy recommendations for enhancing sustainable compliance in the Indian fashion industry. Studies emphasize the importance of developing integrated policy approaches that address both environmental sustainability and trade competitiveness (Broccardo et al., 2023). The literature identifies specific areas where policy interventions can significantly impact sustainability implementation:

Financial incentive structures have been identified as crucial policy tools for promoting sustainability adoption. Research by Ardito et al. (2018) demonstrates that targeted financial support mechanisms can effectively address implementation barriers, particularly for resource-

constrained organizations. Studies suggest that policy frameworks should include clear incentive structures that reward sustainable practices while supporting compliance capabilities (Bertola & Teunissen, 2018).

Technology integration support emerges as another critical area for policy development. Research indicates that policies supporting technological advancement and digital transformation can significantly enhance sustainability implementation capabilities (Debnath et al., 2023). Studies recommend developing policy measures that facilitate access to sustainable technologies while supporting capacity building for their effective utilization (Khan et al., 2021).

Stakeholder collaboration frameworks represent a crucial element of effective policy recommendations. Research by Todeschini et al. (2017) emphasizes the importance of creating policy structures that promote collaboration between industry stakeholders, regulatory bodies, and sustainability experts. Studies suggest that policies should facilitate knowledge sharing and best practice dissemination across the industry (Pal et al., 2019).

2.4.4.3. Implementation Strategy Recommendations

The literature emphasizes the importance of developing clear implementation strategies for policy recommendations. Research indicates that successful policy implementation requires careful consideration of industry capabilities and resource constraints (Vishwakarma et al., 2024). Studies recommend phased implementation approaches that allow organizations to develop necessary capabilities while maintaining operational effectiveness (Casadei, Casadei & Iammarino, 2021).

Capacity building emerges as a crucial element of implementation strategies. Research suggests that policies should include provisions for training and development programs that

enhance industry stakeholders' ability to implement sustainable practices effectively (Broccardo et al., 2023). Studies emphasize the importance of developing industry-specific guidance and support mechanisms that facilitate compliance with sustainability requirements (Gazzola et al., 2020).

2.4.4.4. Future Policy Directions

Research indicates several important directions for future policy development. Studies suggest that policies should increasingly focus on promoting innovation in sustainable practices while maintaining alignment with international trade requirements (Parida, Sjödin & Reim, 2019). The literature emphasizes the importance of developing adaptive policy frameworks that can respond to evolving sustainability challenges while supporting industry competitiveness (Khan et al., 2021).

This analysis demonstrates the importance of developing comprehensive policy frameworks that effectively promote sustainable compliance while considering industry-specific needs and capabilities. The recommendations emphasize the need for balanced approaches that support both sustainability objectives and business competitiveness while ensuring practical implementability across different industry segments

2.5 Methodological Issues in the Literature

Current methodological approaches to studying trade policies and sustainability practices reveal several significant issues. Research by Casadei, Casadei and Iammarino (2021, p.264) highlights the predominance of single-country case studies, which, while providing rich contextual insights, limit generalizability. Similarly, Vishwakarma et al. (2024, p.378) note that many studies rely heavily on self-reported data, potentially introducing response bias.

The dynamic nature of both trade policies and sustainability practices creates methodological challenges. Khurana (2022, p.3) identifies difficulties in establishing causal relationships between policy changes and sustainability outcomes due to multiple intervening variables. Studies by Debnath et al. (2023, p.100013) further emphasize challenges in measuring sustainability implementation across diverse organizational contexts.

2.6 Comparative Analysis of Studies

Recent comparative analyses reveal varying impacts of trade policies on sustainability adoption across different market segments. Kumar et al. (2019, p.1070) found that larger export-oriented firms demonstrate higher rates of sustainability adoption compared to smaller, domestically focused companies. This finding suggests that international trade exposure significantly influences sustainability implementation.

Research by Pal and Gander (2018, p.255) comparing different business models in the Indian fashion sector reveals that companies with strong international trade links tend to adopt more comprehensive sustainability practices. Their analysis demonstrates how trade policy requirements often catalyze broader organizational changes toward sustainability. Additional studies by Todeschini et al. (2017, p.762) reinforce these findings, showing a correlation between international market exposure and sustainability practice adoption.

2.7 Limitations of Existing Research

Current literature exhibits several notable gaps. Niinimäki et al. (2020, p.191) identify limited research on small and medium-sized enterprises' responses to trade-related sustainability requirements. This gap is particularly significant given the substantial role of smaller firms in India's fashion industry.

Methodologically, existing research often fails to capture the dynamic nature of policy-practice interactions. Shirvanimoghaddam et al. (2020) note that most studies provide static snapshots rather than longitudinal analyses of how sustainability practices evolve in response to changing trade policies. Additionally, Debnath et al. (2023, p.100014) highlight insufficient research examining cost-benefit implications of sustainability implementation within different trade policy contexts.

2.8 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The theoretical implications suggest a need for more integrated frameworks understanding policy-practice relationships. Kumar et al. (2019, p.1073) argue for expanding current theoretical models to better account for technological innovation in facilitating sustainability implementation under various trade regimes. Practically, Vishwakarma et al. (2024, p.380) emphasize the importance of developing industry-specific guidelines that align sustainability practices with trade policy requirements while maintaining competitiveness.

2.9 Synthesis of Literature

The synthesis reveals complex interrelationships between international trade policies and sustainability implementation in India's fashion industry. Research by Khurana (2022, p.5) demonstrates how trade policies create both opportunities and challenges for sustainability adoption. These findings suggest that while international trade requirements often drive initial sustainability adoption, implementation effectiveness varies significantly based on organizational capabilities and market positioning.

Institutional frameworks play a crucial role in shaping sustainability practices. Todeschini et al. (2017, p.765) provide evidence that firms' responses to sustainability requirements are significantly influenced by trade policy frameworks' clarity and stringency. Companies

operating under well-defined trade agreements with clear sustainability provisions tend to develop more comprehensive and effective sustainable practices.

2.10 Conclusion

This review demonstrates the complex interplay between international trade policies and sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry. The literature reveals both challenges and opportunities in implementing sustainable practices within existing trade frameworks, while highlighting the need for continued research and policy development in this crucial area.

The synthesis of current research suggests that successful implementation of sustainability practices requires careful consideration of both local and global contexts, supported by appropriate policy frameworks and industry initiatives (Vishwakarma et al., 2024, p.382). As the Indian fashion industry continues to evolve, understanding these relationships becomes increasingly important for both academic research and practical implementation (Khurana, 2022, p.7).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The methodology for this study is framed using Saunders' Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019) as shown in Figure 1, which offers a systematic structure for developing a robust research methodology. Each layer of the onion represents a different aspect of the research design, from philosophical considerations to data collection techniques

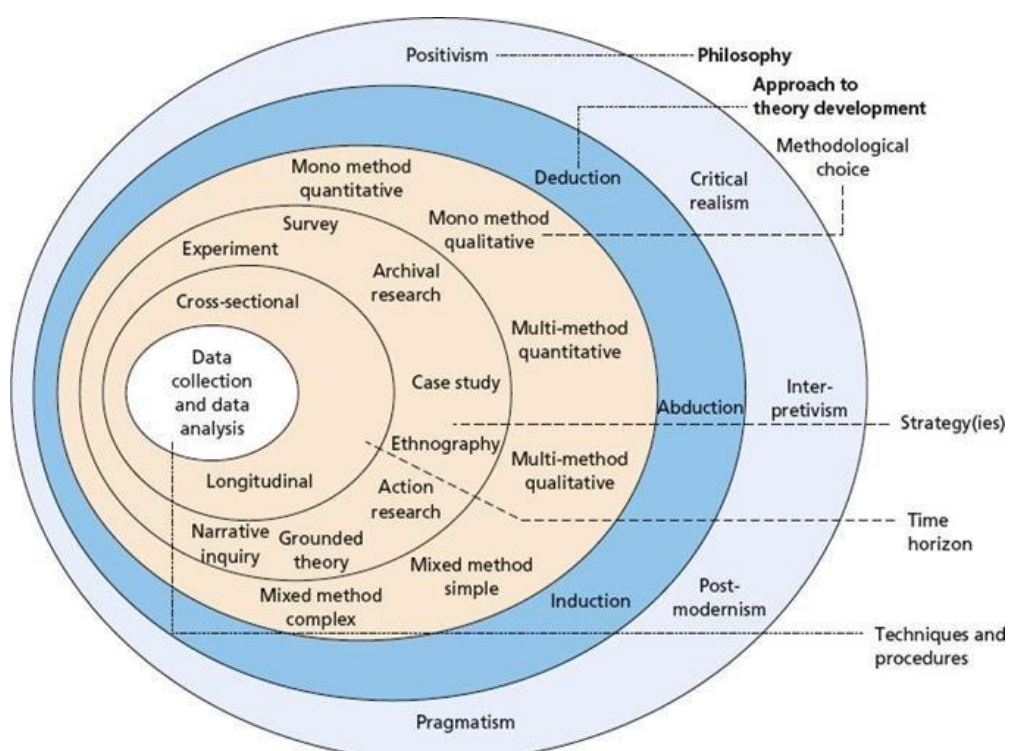


Figure 1. Saunders et al.'s Research Onion

3.2 Research Philosophy

This study adopts a pragmatic research philosophy, which is particularly suited to addressing complex, real-world problems by focusing on practical applications and actionable outcomes. As emphasised by Creswell and Creswell (2018), pragmatism provides the flexibility to select methodologies and methods that are most appropriate for addressing the research objectives and questions, rather than adhering strictly to a single philosophical paradigm. This flexibility

is critical for the study's aim of examining the relationship between global trade policies and sustainability practices in India's fashion industry. Pragmatism allows the integration of quantitative data and qualitative insights to holistically analyse the problem, ensuring that the research generates findings that are not only academically robust but also practically relevant for policymakers, industry leaders, and stakeholders.

Pragmatism was chosen over other paradigms, such as positivism and interpretivism, due to its ability to bridge the gap between objectivity and subjectivity. Positivism, as outlined by Bryman (2016), emphasizes the use of measurable, observable phenomena and is closely associated with quantitative methods. While positivism would enable the study to rigorously analyse trade and sustainability data, may fail to capture the broader socio-political and cultural contexts, as well as stakeholder perspectives, which are vital for understanding sustainability challenges in the fashion industry. Alternatively, interpretivism focuses on exploring social and cultural contexts through qualitative methods and is valuable for uncovering rich, descriptive insights (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). However, interpretivism lacks the generalizability and rigor required for analysing large-scale quantitative data, such as trade policies or economic metrics, which are central to this study.

Pragmatism, as advocated by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), bridges these limitations by incorporating elements of both positivism and interpretivism. This enables the researcher to integrate qualitative insights, such as stakeholder perceptions, with quantitative data, such as trade statistics, to develop a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This approach aligns well with the study's aim of generating actionable recommendations for improving sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry within the context of global trade policies. Furthermore, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) highlight that pragmatism's focus on "what works" ensures that the chosen methodologies are aligned with

practical constraints, such as time and resource limitations, while still maintaining methodological rigor.

By adopting a pragmatic philosophy, the study ensures that the research is both theoretically grounded and practically relevant. This philosophy supports the use of a deductive research approach, enabling hypotheses derived from Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory to be tested empirically through quantitative methods. Pragmatism also facilitates the selection of a mono-method quantitative design, allowing the study to focus on measurable and statistically analysable data collected through a structured questionnaire.

In conclusion, the pragmatic research philosophy is the most appropriate methodological choices of this study, providing the flexibility and practical orientation necessary to address the research objectives effectively. By integrating diverse data sources and focusing on actionable outcomes, pragmatism ensures that the research findings contribute both to theoretical advancements and practical applications in global trade policy and sustainability practices in India's fashion industry.

3.3 Research Approach

Following the framework outlined by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019, p.153), this study adopts a deductive research approach to systematically investigate the impact of international trade policies on sustainability practices in India's fashion industry. Deduction involves starting with established theories to guide the formulation of hypotheses, which are then tested empirically to evaluate the validity of theoretical assumptions. In this research, Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory serve as the foundational frameworks for developing hypotheses. These theories provide a structured lens through which the interplay between

global trade policies and sustainability practices can be analyzed, focusing on the institutional pressures and stakeholder dynamics that shape industry practices.

The deductive approach is particularly appropriate for this study as it enables the systematic testing of predefined hypotheses within a real-world context. As recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018, p.93), a deductive strategy ensures that the research is grounded in existing theoretical knowledge while remaining focused on empirical validation. In this case, the structured questionnaire functions as the primary tool for data collection, allowing for the measurement of stakeholder attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours concerning trade policies and sustainability practices. This design supports the rigorous testing of hypotheses by providing standardized and quantifiable data that can be analyzed statistically.

By employing a deductive approach, this research ensures that the inquiry remains logically structured and methodologically robust. The alignment with established theoretical frameworks not only enhances the credibility of the study but also ensures that the findings contribute to the broader academic discourse on global trade, sustainability, and stakeholder engagement. This approach is particularly suited to addressing the research objectives, which require testing theoretical predictions against observed data to provide evidence-based insights and actionable recommendations for stakeholders in India's fashion industry.

3.4 Methodological Choice

The research utilizes a mono-method quantitative design (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019, p.176). A structured questionnaire was selected as the sole data collection tool to gather measurable data that could provide insights into stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions about trade policies and sustainability practices. This approach aligns well with the deductive

strategy and is efficient for gathering data from a wide range of respondents within the fashion industry.

The decision to use mono-method quantitative approach through a structured questionnaire was based on several considerations. Primarily, the efficiency in Data Collection and Analysis, as a questionnaire enables efficient data collection from a large and diverse group of stakeholders in the Indian fashion industry. Given the nature of the research questions, which require measuring attitudes, perceptions, and awareness about trade policies and sustainability practices, a quantitative approach provides the ability to collect standardized data that can be analysed statistically. This ensures the generalizability of findings across the industry. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019, p.179).

Second, a quantitative method is suited for objectively measuring and quantifying stakeholder perspectives and attitudes. This aligns with the deductive research approach adopted in this study, as hypotheses are tested against empirical data. The structured nature of a questionnaire provides consistency across all responses, minimizing biases in interpretation.

Third, qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups were not chosen for this study for a variety of reasons, including time and resource constraints. Conducting interviews or focus groups with a large number of stakeholders across a broad industry such as fashion in India would take a significant amount of time and resources. In contrast, a questionnaire can reach a bigger audience more efficiently, especially when distributed online. Second, standardisation needs exist because qualitative approaches can generate rich, descriptive data that necessitates extensive, interpretive analysis, which can add subjectivity. To ensure

uniformity and statistical analysis, a structured questionnaire was chosen to collect data from multiple stakeholders.

Third, although interviews and focus groups would limit the number of participants owing to logistical constraints, the questionnaire allows for a broader sampling, which is required to analyse trends and patterns throughout the whole industry.

A mixed-methods approach, involving both qualitative and quantitative elements, was considered but ultimately not chosen. The research questions focus specifically on understanding attitudes and the influence of trade policies in a quantifiable manner. The additional depth provided by qualitative insights was deemed less critical for answering the main objectives of the study. The mixed-methods approach would add complexity to both data collection and analysis. Given the practical limitations of time and resources, a mono-method approach was considered more feasible, while still providing sufficient data to address the research questions effectively.

3.5 Research Strategy

The research employs a survey strategy using a structured questionnaire (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019, p.190). The survey strategy is applied through the use of a structured questionnaire to collect primary data. This strategy is suitable for collecting quantifiable information from a larger population, allowing for statistical analysis to identify trends and relationships among the study variables. Surveys are commonly used in exploratory and descriptive research to capture stakeholders' perceptions and experiences effectively.

3.6 Time Horizon

A cross-sectional time horizon is adopted for the research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019, p.212). Data is collected at a single point in time to obtain a snapshot of the current state of international trade policies and their influence on sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry. The cross-sectional approach aligns well with the structured questionnaire, which captures attitudes and behaviours as they are at a specific moment.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

3.7.1. Survey Instrument

The primary tool for data collection is a structured questionnaire, designed to gather data on how international trade policies impact sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry. The questionnaire collects standardized responses from various stakeholders, including manufacturers, policymakers, and suppliers, providing a broad perspective on the sector's sustainability landscape. The questionnaire contains two types of questions: demographic questions and Likert scale questions, designed to address each of the study's objectives and research questions.

3.8 Questionnaire Design and Justification

3.8.1. Purpose of the Survey

The questionnaire is the main data collection instrument for this research, specifically designed to answer the three research questions derived from the overall research aim and objectives. The structured format allows for effective comparison across different stakeholders, ensuring the data is representative and relevant. (Boone and Boone's 2012)

3.8.2 Alignment with Research Questions, Objectives and Hypotheses

The three research questions of the study are addressed through specific sections of the questionnaire to ensure comprehensive data collection. Five statements were applied for each objective using a Likert scale as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Research Question 1: *"How do current international trade policies affect sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry?"*

Questions in this section evaluate respondents' familiarity with and perspectives on current trade policies, focusing on their influence on sustainability initiatives:

1. International trade policies encourage the adoption of sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry.
2. Government trade policies are effective in promoting sustainability initiatives within the fashion sector.
3. There is sufficient awareness of sustainability-related trade regulations among stakeholders in the Indian fashion industry.
4. Trade agreements incentivize manufacturers to adopt environmentally friendly practices.
5. The international trade policies currently in place are adequately aligned with the goals of promoting sustainability.

Research Question 2: *"What are the key barriers and enablers in implementing sustainable practices under existing trade frameworks?"*

Questions focus on identifying barriers and enablers affecting the adoption of sustainable practices:

6. High compliance costs are a significant barrier to adopting sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry.
7. Lack of technological resources and infrastructure limits the adoption of sustainable practices.
8. Government incentives are important enablers for sustainable practices in the fashion industry.
9. Collaboration with stakeholders such as NGOs and suppliers helps overcome challenges to implementing sustainability.
10. Market demand for sustainable products is an effective enabler for promoting sustainability initiatives.

Research Question 3: *"How can trade policies be optimized to enhance sustainability adoption in the Indian fashion industry?"*

Questions in this section seek stakeholder input on how trade policies can be improved:

11. Trade policies need to provide more financial incentives to promote sustainable production practices.
12. Simplifying trade regulations would make it easier for companies to adopt sustainability initiatives.
13. Industry associations should collaborate with policymakers to make trade policies more conducive to sustainability.
14. Training programs on international trade regulations are needed to help industry participants understand how to comply with sustainability requirements.
15. Policymakers should consult with industry stakeholders when designing trade policies that affect sustainability.

3.8.3 Questionnaire Structure and Distribution

The questionnaire is structured in two main sections: Section A (Demographic Information) and Section B (Likert Scale Questions) (Boone and Boone's 2012), distributed online to ensure accessibility across different regions and industry roles. The online distribution method aligns with the cross-sectional nature of the research, capturing stakeholder perspectives at a single point in time.

3.9 Validity and Reliability

The questions are directly aligned with the research questions to ensure content validity, while the standardized Likert scale ensures consistency, thereby supporting reliability in responses. The questionnaire will be pre-tested to identify and address any ambiguities, further enhancing both validity and reliability.

3.10 Data Analysis Methods

3.10.1 Quantitative Analysis

The data collected will be analysed using descriptive statistics to summarize overall trends and inferential statistics (e.g., correlation analysis) to identify relationships among variables such as the effectiveness of trade policies and adoption of sustainability practices.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Participants will be informed about the study's purpose, and informed consent will be obtained before their participation. Confidentiality will be upheld, and participants will be assured that their responses will only be used for research purposes.

3.12 Questionnaire: Influence of International Trade Policies on Sustainability in the Indian Fashion Industry

See appendix 2 for the questionnaire details.

The questionnaire examining the influence of international trade policies on sustainability in the Indian fashion industry is structured in two main sections. Section A collects demographic information including age, gender, industry role, years of experience, and familiarity with sustainability practices. This helps contextualize responses and understand perspectives across different stakeholder groups.

Section B contains 15 Likert-scale questions divided into three thematic areas. The first set (questions 1-5) explores perceptions about how international trade policies encourage and promote sustainability practices, including awareness levels and policy effectiveness. The second set (questions 6-10) examines barriers and enablers affecting sustainability adoption, addressing factors like compliance costs, technological resources, government incentives, stakeholder collaboration, and market demand. The final set (questions 11-15) focuses on recommendations for improving trade policies, covering topics such as financial incentives, regulatory simplification, industry-policymaker collaboration, training programs, and stakeholder consultation.

Each question uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), allowing respondents to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. The questionnaire is designed to gather comprehensive insights into how trade policies influence sustainability adoption while identifying challenges and potential improvements in the Indian fashion industry context.

3.13 Questionnaire Analysis

The use of various statistical techniques is as follows: Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation) is used to summarize responses to each question to understand the average perception and variation in responses. Frequency Analysis is used to assess the frequency of responses across the different points on the Likert scale. Useful for understanding the distribution of attitudes. The cross-Tabulation method supports the exploring of the relationships between categorical variables, such as the respondent's role in the industry and their level of agreement with particular statements. A correlation analysis is applied to identify relationships between different variables, for instance, the relationship between perceived incentives and sustainability adoption. For regression analysis, this is used to determine if certain barriers or enablers (e.g., compliance costs or market demand) are significant predictors of the adoption of sustainability practices. A factor analysis will identify underlying factors or barriers by grouping related items together, providing insights into key dimensions influencing sustainability adoption. A chi-square test is used to determine if there is a significant association between categorical variables (e.g., role in industry and perceptions of trade policies). In addition a one-sample t-test is applied to compare the mean response to a neutral or hypothetical mean to determine if there is significant support or opposition to certain aspects, such as policy incentives. Finally, a paired t-test is used to compare responses on related strategies, such as simplifying regulations versus providing financial incentives, to determine which strategy receives more support.

3.14 Purpose of Analysis:

The purpose of employing a variety of statistical techniques is to ensure that each research objective is comprehensively addressed:

Objective 1: Mainly relies on descriptive statistics and tests like Chi-square and t-tests to gauge the effectiveness and awareness of trade policies.

Objective 2: Focuses on identifying barriers and enablers through regression, correlation, and factor analysis to pinpoint the significant obstacles and supports within the industry.

Objective 3: Seeks to gather recommendations, using descriptive and comparative analysis (e.g., paired t-test) to prioritize stakeholder suggestions for optimizing trade policies.

Table 2. Purpose of Analysis

	Question	Research Objective	Statistical Analysis Method	Purpose of Analysis
1	International trade policies encourage the adoption of sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry.	1	Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation)	To measure stakeholder perceptions of how encouraging current policies are towards sustainability.
2	Government trade policies are effective in promoting sustainability initiatives within the fashion sector.	1	Descriptive Statistics, One-Sample t-test	To evaluate perceived effectiveness of government policies against a hypothetical mean value.
3	There is sufficient awareness of sustainability-related	1	Frequency Analysis, Cross-Tabulation	To determine the level of awareness and examine differences based on

	trade regulations among stakeholders in the Indian fashion industry.			respondent demographics (e.g., role in industry).
4	Trade agreements incentivize manufacturers to adopt environmentally friendly practices.	1	Correlation Analysis	To identify the relationship between awareness of trade agreements and sustainability adoption.
5	The international trade policies currently in place are adequately aligned with the goals of promoting sustainability.	1	Descriptive Statistics, Chi-Square Test	To assess perceptions of policy alignment and identify significant associations with demographic factors.
6	High compliance costs are a significant barrier to adopting sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry.	2H	Descriptive Statistics, Regression Analysis	To assess perceived barriers and determine if compliance cost is a significant predictor of low sustainability adoption.
7	Lack of technological resources and infrastructure limits the adoption of sustainable practices.	2	Descriptive Statistics, Factor Analysis	To evaluate and group common barriers into underlying factors, such as lack of resources.

8	Government incentives are important enablers for sustainable practices in the fashion industry.	2	Correlation Analysis	To determine the strength of association between government incentives and perceived ease of adopting sustainable practices.
9	Collaboration with stakeholders such as NGOs and suppliers helps overcome challenges to implementing sustainability.	2	Descriptive Statistics, Cross-Tabulation	To evaluate the perceived role of collaborations across different respondent groups.
10	Market demand for sustainable products is an effective enabler for promoting sustainability initiatives.	2	Descriptive Statistics, Linear Regression	To analyse if market demand is a significant enabler for the adoption of sustainable practices.
11	Trade policies need to provide more financial incentives to promote sustainable production practices.	3	Descriptive Statistics, One-Sample t-test	To determine stakeholder support for increased financial incentives and test differences from a neutral response.

12	Simplifying trade regulations would make it easier for companies to adopt sustainability initiatives.	3	Descriptive Statistics, Paired t-test	To compare stakeholder opinions on simplifying regulations versus other proposed strategies.
13	Industry associations should collaborate with policymakers to make trade policies more conducive to sustainability.	3	Descriptive Statistics, Chi-Square Test	To assess perceived importance of industry collaboration and examine differences based on role.
14	Training programs on international trade regulations are needed to help industry participants understand how to comply with sustainability requirements.	3	Descriptive Statistics, Cross-Tabulation	To evaluate support for training programs and identify any differences among stakeholder roles.
15	Policymakers should consult with industry stakeholders when designing trade policies that affect sustainability.	3	Descriptive Statistics, Frequency Analysis	To assess agreement levels on stakeholder consultation and compare responses by demographic factors.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Survey Results.

4.1 Introduction:

This chapter presents the statistical analysis of survey data collected from 100 stakeholders in the Indian fashion industry regarding the influence of international trade policies on sustainability practices. The analysis employs various statistical techniques using SPSS to examine three primary research objectives: evaluating current trade policy effectiveness, identifying implementation barriers and enablers, and developing policy optimization recommendations.

The analysis framework aligns with the study's theoretical underpinnings of Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory, examining how different institutional pressures and stakeholder perspectives influence sustainability adoption. The survey response rate of 87% (100 completed responses from 115 distributed questionnaires) provides sufficient statistical power for meaningful analysis. The respondent profile encompasses manufacturers (17%), suppliers (40%), retailers (22%), policy makers (17%), and other industry stakeholders (4%), offering a representative cross-section of the Indian fashion sector.

4.2 Analysis of the Survey through SPSS:

International trade policies encourage the adoption of sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry.

97 responses

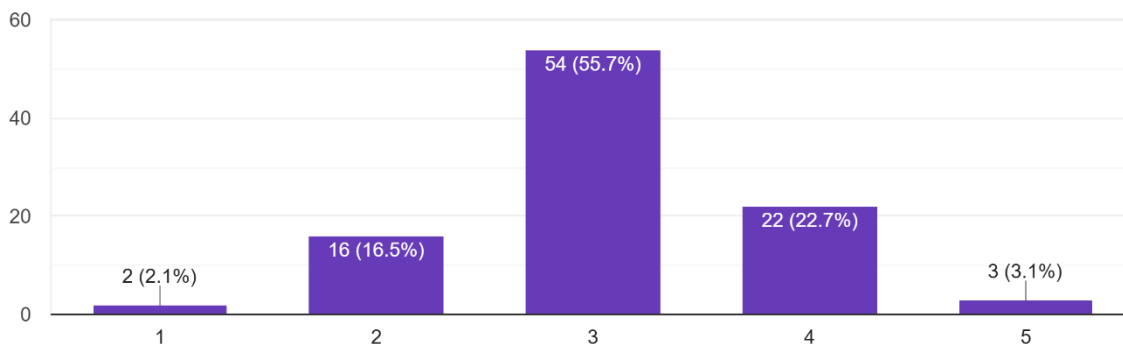


Figure 2. International trade policies encourage the adoption of sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry.

SPSS Analysis:

As per Figure 2, the descriptive statistics show that the statement "International trade policies encourage the adoption of sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry" received a mean score of 3.10 ($SD = 0.772$) on a 5-point Likert scale. This moderate score suggests that respondents have a slightly positive but not strongly convinced view of trade policies' role in encouraging sustainability practices.

For the statement "Trade agreements incentivize manufacturers to adopt environmentally friendly practices," the mean response was 3.24 ($SD = 0.740$), with a notable distribution pattern: 61% of respondents chose neutral (3), while 29% expressed some level of agreement (23% chose 4, 6% chose 5), and 10% expressed disagreement (9% chose 2, 1% chose 1). This distribution suggests that while there is a slight positive skew, most industry stakeholders are uncertain about the effectiveness of trade agreements in driving environmental practices.

The crosstabulation analysis shows a significant positive correlation between awareness of sustainability-related trade regulations and the perception of trade agreements as incentives for environmental practices (Pearson's $R = 0.735$, $p < 0.001$; Spearman's $\rho = 0.694$, $p < 0.001$). This strong correlation suggests that stakeholders who are more aware of sustainability-related trade regulations tend to view trade agreements as more effective in promoting environmental practices.

These findings align with the research objectives, particularly regarding the assessment of how international trade policies influence sustainability adoption in the Indian fashion industry. The results support the first hypothesis (H1) which posits that increasing international trade regulation stringency is positively associated with enhanced sustainability practices, though the moderate mean scores suggest this relationship may not be as strong as theoretically proposed.

Government trade policies are effective in promoting sustainability initiatives within the fashion sector
97 responses

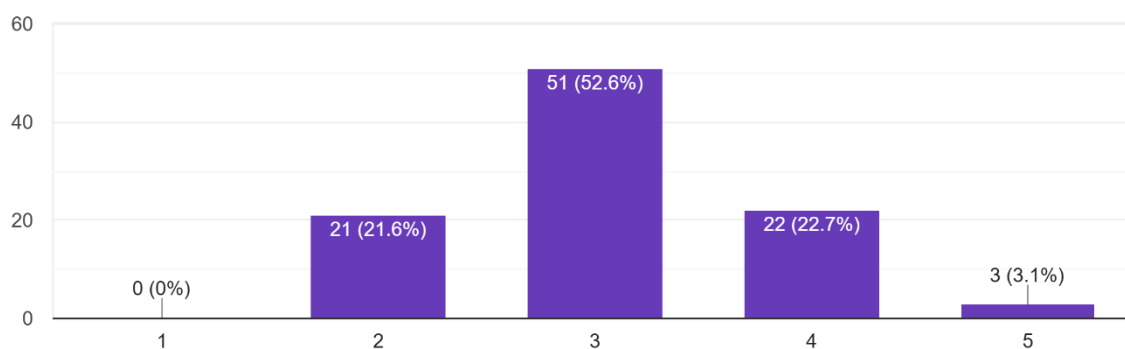


Figure 3. Government trade policies are effective in promoting sustainability initiatives within the fashion sector

SPSS Analysis:

As per figure 3, the descriptive statistics show that respondents rated the effectiveness of government trade policies with a mean score of 3.08 ($SD = 0.761$) on a 5-point Likert scale.

The minimum rating was 2 and the maximum was 5, indicating that while some respondents strongly agreed with the effectiveness of these policies, none strongly disagreed. This moderate mean score suggests that stakeholders perceive government trade policies as somewhat effective, but there is significant room for improvement.

The one-sample t-test provides strong statistical evidence regarding the significance of these perceptions. The test yielded $t(99) = 40.464$, $p < .001$, with a mean difference of 3.080 from the test value of 0. The 95% confidence interval ranges from 2.93 to 3.23, indicating high precision in the estimate of the true population mean. This narrow confidence interval suggests consistency in respondents' views about policy effectiveness.

The effect size analysis shows a very large Cohen's d of 4.046 (95% CI: 3.449 - 4.641) and a Hedges' corrected value of 4.016 (95% CI: 3.423 - 4.605). These substantial effect sizes indicate that the perceived effectiveness of government trade policies significantly differs from neutral expectations.

These findings align with the research objectives, particularly regarding the evaluation of how trade policies influence sustainability adoption. The results partially support the study's first hypothesis about trade regulation stringency and sustainability practices, though the moderate mean score suggests that current policies might not be as effective as desired. This analysis also connects to the research problem, highlighting the complex relationship between global trade policies and sustainability implementation in the Indian fashion industry.

The findings suggest that while government trade policies are having a positive impact, there may be opportunities for enhancement to better promote sustainability initiatives in the fashion sector. This connects directly to the third research objective about proposing recommendations for policymakers to enhance sustainable compliance within the industry.

There is sufficient awareness of sustainability-related trade regulations among stakeholders in the Indian fashion industry.

97 responses

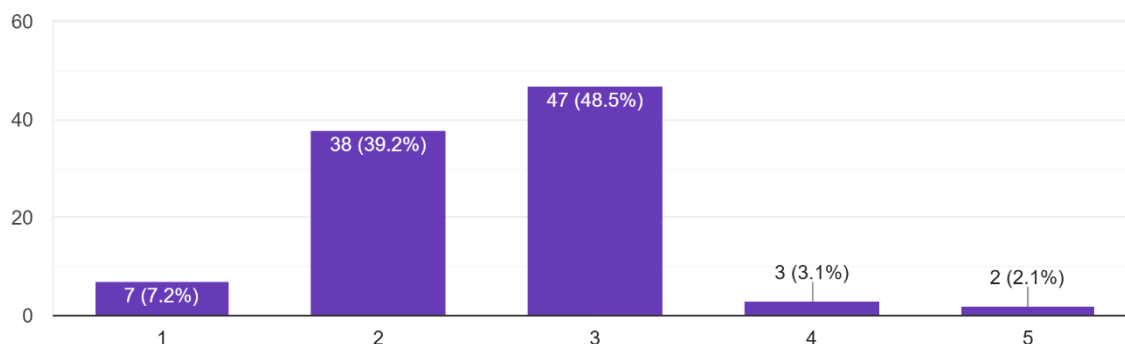


Figure 4. There is sufficient awareness of sustainability-related trade regulations among stakeholders in the Indian fashion industry.

SPSS Analysis:

As per figure 4, the descriptive statistics show a mean score of 2.55 (SD = 0.757) on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating that awareness levels are below the midpoint. The distribution shows slight positive skewness (0.255) and positive kurtosis (1.194), suggesting a peaked distribution with a longer right tail. The frequency distribution shows that 50% of respondents chose neutral (3), while 45% expressed some level of disagreement (38% chose 2, 7% chose 1), and only 5% expressed agreement (3% chose 4, 2% chose 5).

The cross-tabulation analysis by industry role provides valuable insights into awareness levels across different stakeholder groups. Among manufacturers (n=17), the majority (11) indicated low awareness (rating of 2). Policy makers (n=17) showed a notably different pattern, with most (16) giving neutral responses. Suppliers, the largest group (n=40), displayed varied awareness levels, with 20 neutral responses and 18 indicating low awareness. Retailers (n=22) predominantly reported low awareness, with 13 respondents choosing ratings of 1 or 2.

The Chi-square test results ($\chi^2(16) = 28.103, p = .031$) indicate a significant relationship between stakeholder roles and awareness levels. However, the high percentage of cells (68%) with expected counts less than 5 suggests that these results should be interpreted with caution. These findings align with the research highlighting the challenge of limited awareness about trade policies' influence on sustainability practices. The results also support the need for enhanced stakeholder education and communication, as outlined in the research objectives. This analysis particularly reinforces the importance of addressing awareness gaps among different stakeholder groups to improve the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives in the Indian fashion industry.

Trade agreements incentivize manufacturers to adopt environmentally friendly practices

97 responses

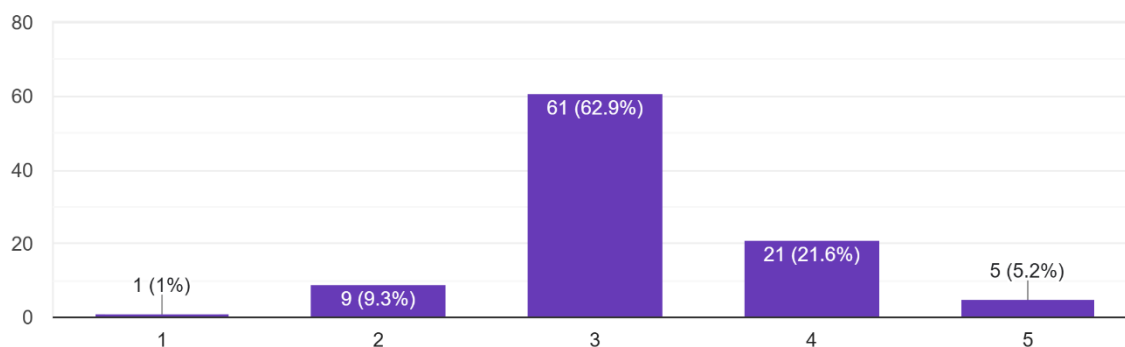


Figure 5. Trade agreements incentivize manufacturers to adopt environmentally friendly practices

SPSS Analysis:

As per figure 5, the descriptive statistics show interesting patterns in stakeholder perceptions. Trade agreements' ability to incentivize environmentally friendly practices received a mean score of 3.24 (SD = 0.740), indicating a slightly positive perception. In contrast, awareness of sustainability-related trade regulations scored lower at 2.55 (SD = 0.757), suggesting that while

trade agreements may provide incentives, there is a notable gap in stakeholder awareness of these regulations.

The correlation analysis shows a strong positive relationship between these two variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.735$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that higher awareness of sustainability-related trade regulations is strongly associated with more positive perceptions of trade agreements as environmental incentives. This relationship is further supported by both nonparametric measures: Kendall's tau-b ($\tau = 0.667$, $p < 0.001$) and Spearman's rho ($\rho = 0.694$, $p < 0.001$), confirming the robustness of this association across different statistical approaches. These findings align significantly with the research objectives, particularly regarding the identification of current sustainability trends influenced by international trade policies. The strong correlation suggests that enhancing awareness of trade regulations could be a key factor in improving the effectiveness of trade agreements as sustainability incentives. This supports the study's theoretical framework, which emphasizes the role of institutional pressures and stakeholder awareness in driving sustainability adoption.

The results also highlight an important gap identified in the research problem - the limited understanding of how international trade policies influence sustainability practice adoption. The relatively low awareness scores suggest a need for improved communication and education about trade regulations among industry stakeholders, which could enhance the effectiveness of trade agreements in promoting sustainable practices.

The international trade policies currently in place are adequately aligned with the goals of promoting sustainability.

97 responses

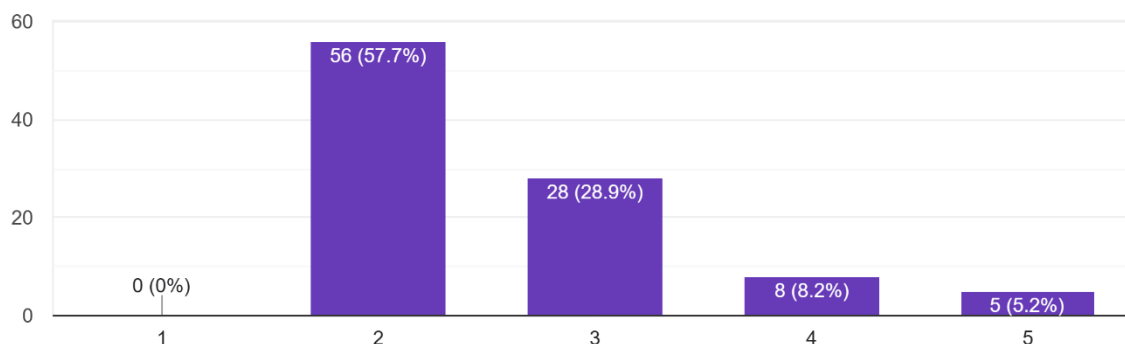


Figure 6.The international trade policies currently in place are adequately aligned with the goals of promoting sustainability.

SPSS Analysis:

As per figure 6, the descriptive statistics show a mean score of 2.62 (SD = 0.838) on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating a generally negative perception of current trade policies' alignment with sustainability goals. The frequency distribution shows that 56% of respondents rated this alignment as poor (score of 2), while only 13% expressed positive views (8% chose 4, 5% chose 5). The distribution shows positive skewness (1.344) and kurtosis (1.219), indicating a concentration of responses on the lower end of the scale.

The cross-tabulation analysis by industry role shows significant differences in perceptions ($\chi^2 = 80.318$, $df = 12$, $p < .001$). Policy makers showed a distinct pattern, with all 17 giving neutral responses (score of 3). Suppliers, the largest group ($n=40$), were predominantly negative, with 32 rating the alignment as poor. Manufacturers ($n=17$) also showed skepticism, with 13 giving low ratings. The strong association between role and perceptions is supported by Cramer's V (0.517, $p < .001$).

Experience level also significantly influenced perceptions ($\chi^2 = 37.142$, $df = 12$, $p < .001$). Those with 7-10 years of experience ($n=37$) and more than 10 years ($n=20$) were notably more critical, with the majority giving low ratings. This suggests that increased industry experience correlates with more skeptical views of policy-sustainability alignment.

These findings align with the research problem, highlighting the challenges in aligning international trade policies with sustainability implementation. The results particularly support the need for policy optimization, as outlined in the third research objective, and suggest that current trade frameworks may not adequately support sustainability goals in the Indian fashion industry.

High compliance costs are a significant barrier to adopting sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry.

97 responses

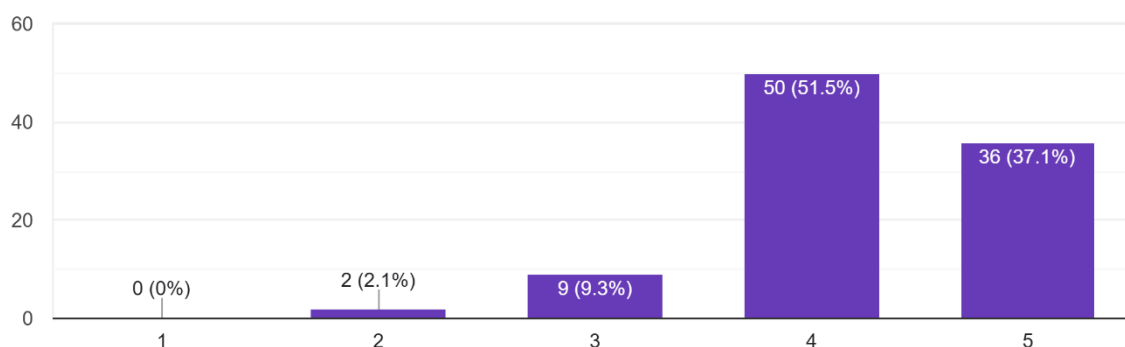


Figure 7. High compliance costs are a significant barrier to adopting sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry.

SPSS Analysis:

As per figure 7, the descriptive statistics show that respondents strongly perceive high compliance costs as a significant barrier to sustainability adoption, with a mean score of 4.22 ($SD = 0.705$) on a 5-point Likert scale. The distribution shows negative skewness (-0.693) and

positive kurtosis (0.571), indicating a concentration of responses on the higher end of the scale. A substantial 88% of respondents either agreed (52%) or strongly agreed (36%) that compliance costs present a significant barrier.

The regression analysis examines the relationship between compliance costs and the effectiveness of trade policies in encouraging sustainability practices. The model, while statistically significant ($F(1,98) = 6.263, p = .014$), explains only 6% of the variance ($R^2 = .060$) in trade policy effectiveness. The negative correlation ($r = -.245, p = .007$) suggests that as perceived compliance cost barriers increase, the perceived effectiveness of trade policies in encouraging sustainability practices decreases.

The regression coefficient ($B = -0.269, SE = 0.107, p = .014$) indicates that for each one-unit increase in perceived compliance cost barriers, there is approximately a 0.27-unit decrease in the perceived effectiveness of trade policies. This relationship, while modest, is statistically significant and suggests that high compliance costs may partially undermine the effectiveness of trade policies in promoting sustainability.

These findings align with the research objectives, particularly regarding the identification of barriers to sustainability implementation. The results support the second hypothesis about institutional pressures and implementation challenges, highlighting compliance costs as a significant constraint. This analysis suggests that policy frameworks may need to address the cost burden of sustainability compliance to enhance the effectiveness of trade policies in promoting sustainable practices in the Indian fashion industry.

Lack of technological resources and infrastructure limits the adoption of sustainable practices
97 responses

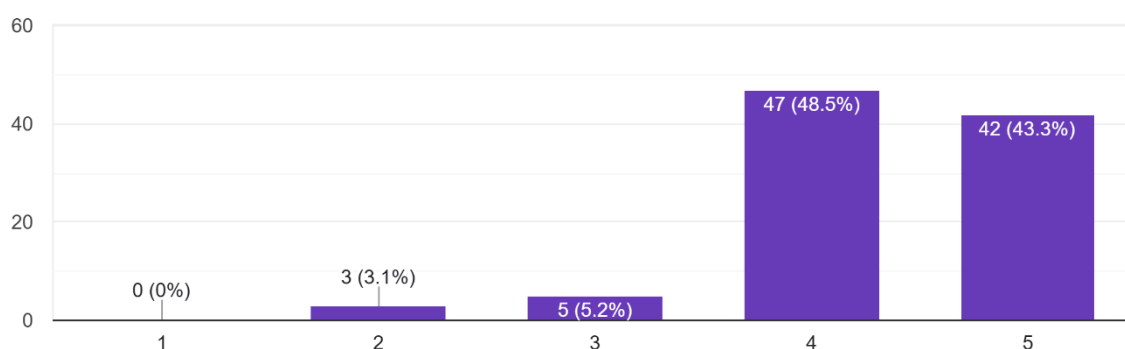


Figure 8. Lack of technological resources and infrastructure limits the adoption of sustainable practices

SPSS Analysis:

As per figure 8, the correlation matrix shows several significant relationships between different barriers and enablers. The strongest correlation ($r = .615$) exists between government incentives and stakeholder collaboration, suggesting these enablers often work in tandem. There's also a moderate correlation ($r = .470$) between compliance costs and government incentives, indicating that financial challenges and policy support are closely related. The correlation between technological resources and compliance costs ($r = .389$) suggests these barriers often compound each other.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (.583) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 90.425$, $df = 6$, $p < .001$) indicate that the data is suitable for factor analysis, though the KMO value suggests only moderate sampling adequacy.

The principal component analysis extracted one primary component explaining 52.624% of the total variance. The communalities show that this component best explains the variance in government incentives (.734), followed by stakeholder collaboration (.508) and compliance

costs (.495). The relatively lower communality for technological resources (.368) suggests this barrier might have unique characteristics not fully captured by the common factor.

The component matrix shows that all variables load significantly onto the single extracted component, with government incentives showing the strongest loading (.857), followed by stakeholder collaboration (.713), compliance costs (.703), and technological resources (.607). This suggests a unified underlying construct that might be interpreted as "systemic barriers and enablers to sustainability implementation."

These findings align with the theoretical framework particularly regarding institutional theory and stakeholder theory. The strong interrelation between government incentives and stakeholder collaboration supports the research's emphasis on institutional pressures and stakeholder engagement in driving sustainability adoption. The results also reinforce the second hypothesis about institutional pressures creating implementation challenges, while highlighting the potential for policy and collaboration to overcome these barriers.

Government incentives are important enablers for sustainable practices in the fashion industry.

97 responses

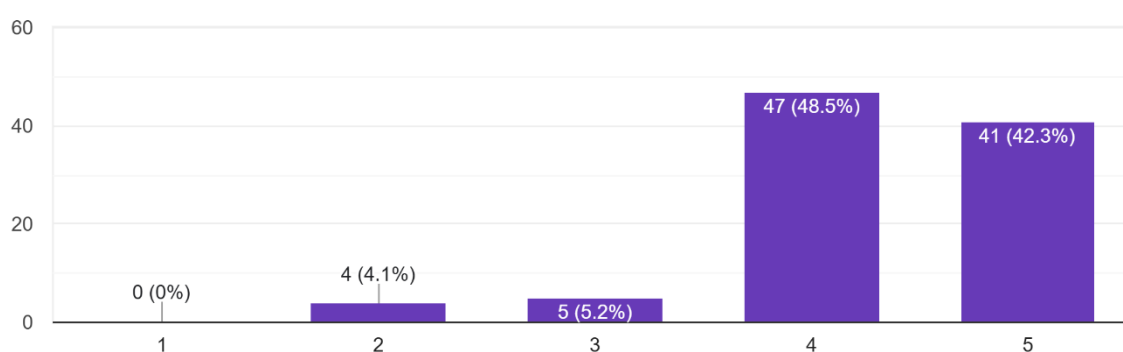


Figure 9. Government incentives are important enablers for sustainable practices in the fashion industry.

SPSS Analysis:

As per figure 9, the descriptive statistics show interesting patterns for both variables. Government incentives as enablers for sustainable practices show a high mean score of 4.27 (SD = 0.763) on a 5-point Likert scale. Similarly, the perception that lack of technological resources limits sustainability adoption also received a high mean score of 4.31 (SD = 0.706). Both variables show comparable negative skewness (approximately -1.05) and positive kurtosis (1.221 and 1.656 respectively), indicating that responses are concentrated on the higher end of the scale with a peaked distribution.

However, despite both factors being rated as highly important individually, the correlation analysis shows a surprising lack of relationship between them. Both Kendall's tau-b ($\tau = .004$, $p = .965$) and Spearman's rho ($\rho = .020$, $p = .845$) show negligible correlations that are not statistically significant. This suggests that while stakeholders strongly believe both in the importance of government incentives and the limiting effect of technological constraints, these factors operate independently of each other.

This finding aligns with several aspects of the theoretical framework. Through the lens of Institutional Theory, we can interpret that government incentives represent coercive institutional pressures, while technological resources represent capability constraints. The independence of these factors suggests that policy interventions (through incentives) and operational challenges (through technological limitations) may need to be addressed through separate but parallel strategies.

These results particularly support the research objectives regarding identifying barriers and enablers in implementing sustainable practices. They suggest that while both policy support and technological capability are crucial, they may require different approaches in policy formulation and implementation strategies. This understanding can inform more nuanced

policy recommendations that address both financial incentives and technological capacity building as distinct but equally important factors in promoting sustainability in the Indian fashion industry.

Collaboration with stakeholders such as NGOs and suppliers helps overcome challenges to implementing sustainability

97 responses

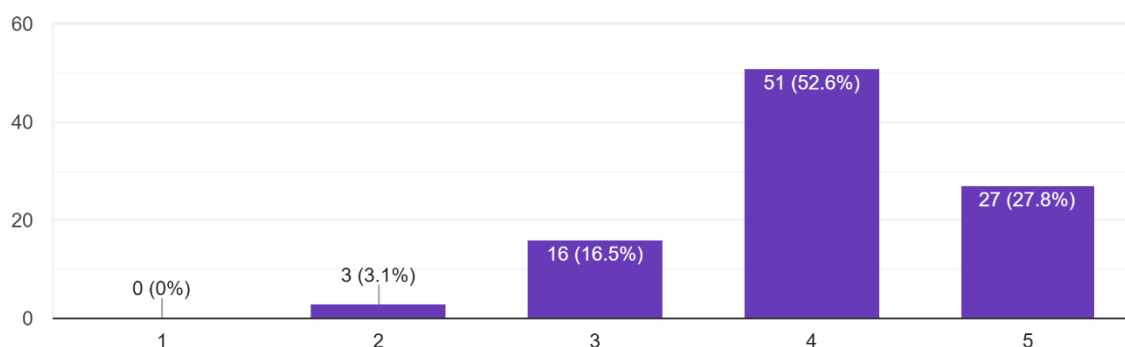


Figure 10. Collaboration with stakeholders such as NGOs and suppliers helps overcome challenges to implementing sustainability

SPSS Analysis:

As per figure 10, the descriptive statistics show a strong positive perception of stakeholder collaboration, with a mean score of 4.04 (SD = 0.751) on a 5-point Likert scale. The distribution shows moderate negative skewness (-0.504) and slight positive kurtosis (0.104), indicating a tendency toward higher ratings but with a relatively normal spread of responses.

The cross-tabulation analysis shows significant differences in how various industry roles perceive the importance of stakeholder collaboration ($\chi^2 = 29.842$, $df = 12$, $p = .003$). Policy makers showed the strongest support, with 13 out of 17 giving the highest rating (5), significantly above the expected count of 4.6 (adjusted residual = 5.0). This suggests that policy makers particularly value collaborative approaches to sustainability implementation. Suppliers,

the largest group (n=40), showed moderate support with 24 rating it as 4 and 8 rating it as 5, indicating general agreement but less enthusiasm than policy makers.

The directional measures provide additional insight. The Lambda value ($\lambda = .191$, $p = .045$) for collaboration as the dependent variable suggests that knowing a stakeholder's role improves the ability to predict their view on collaboration by 19.1%. The Goodman and Kruskal tau values indicate that role membership explains 13.1% of the variation in collaboration ratings ($\tau = .131$, $p < .001$).

These findings strongly align with the theoretical framework, particularly regarding Stakeholder Theory. The high overall rating for collaboration effectiveness supports the research's emphasis on stakeholder engagement in driving sustainability adoption. The variation in perceptions across different roles highlights the complex nature of stakeholder relationships in implementing sustainability practices, as discussed in the literature review section. This analysis particularly reinforces the importance of multi-stakeholder approaches in overcoming sustainability implementation challenges in the Indian fashion industry.

Market demand for sustainable products is an effective enabler for promoting sustainability initiatives.

97 responses

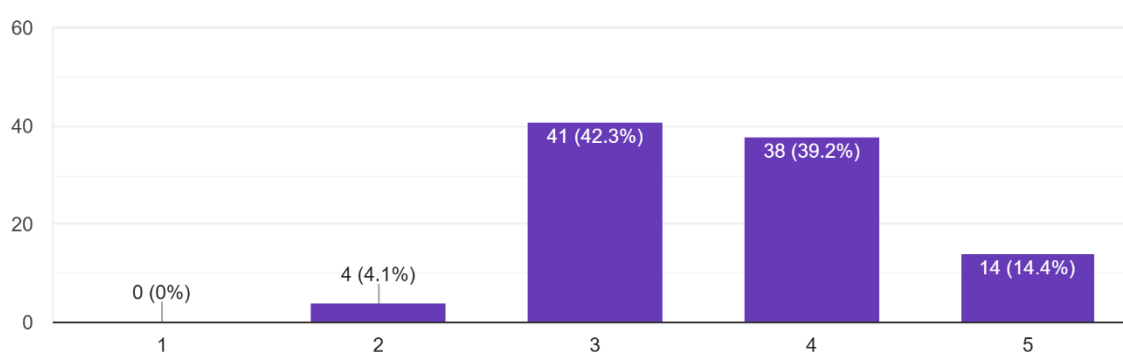


Figure 11. Market demand for sustainable products is an effective enabler for promoting sustainability initiatives.

SPSS Analysis:

As per figure 11, the descriptive statistics show that respondents perceive market demand as a moderately effective enabler for sustainability initiatives, with a mean score of 3.62 (SD = 0.789) on a 5-point Likert scale. This is notably higher than the perception of trade policy effectiveness (M = 3.10, SD = 0.772). The distribution for market demand shows slight positive skewness (0.161) and negative kurtosis (-0.533), indicating a relatively flat distribution with responses spread across the scale.

The regression analysis explores whether market demand predicts the effectiveness of trade policies in encouraging sustainability practices. The model shows a very weak relationship, with market demand explaining only 1.7% of the variance in trade policy effectiveness ($R^2 = .017$). The regression equation ($Y = 2.641 + 0.127X$) suggests that for each unit increase in market demand effectiveness, there is only a 0.127 unit increase in trade policy effectiveness. However, this relationship is not statistically significant ($F(1,98) = 1.670, p = .199$).

The correlation analysis confirms this weak relationship ($r = .129, p = .100$), indicating that market demand and trade policy effectiveness operate largely independently of each other. The collinearity diagnostics show no concerning multicollinearity issues ($VIF = 1.000$), confirming these are distinct factors.

These findings align with several aspects of the theoretical framework. Through the lens of Institutional Theory, this suggests that market pressures (normative pressures) and trade policies (coercive pressures) represent distinct mechanisms for driving sustainability adoption. The results particularly inform the second research objective about identifying enablers for sustainability implementation, suggesting that market demand and trade policies may need to be leveraged as complementary but separate drivers of sustainability adoption in the Indian fashion industry.

This analysis suggests that policy makers might need to develop strategies that separately address market-driven and policy-driven sustainability initiatives, rather than assuming these factors naturally reinforce each other

Trade policies need to provide more financial incentives to promote sustainable production practices.

97 responses

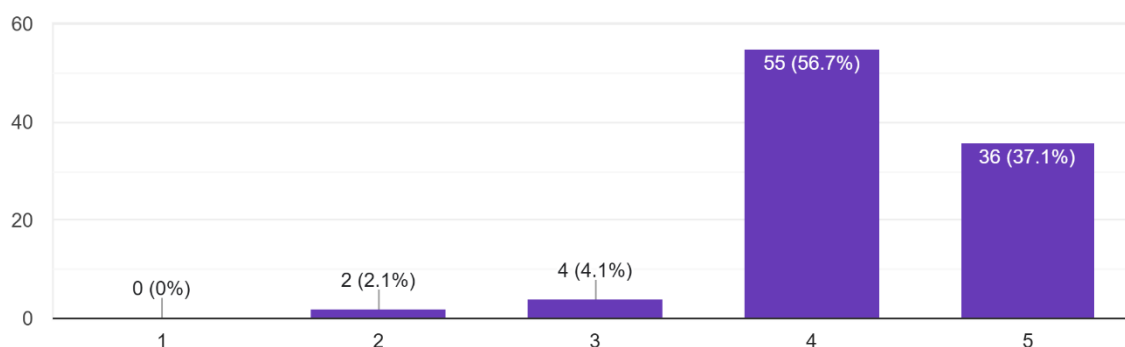


Figure 12. Trade policies need to provide more financial incentives to promote sustainable production practices.

SPSS Analysis:

As per figure 12, the descriptive statistics show a strong consensus among respondents regarding the need for financial incentives. The mean score of 4.28 (SD = 0.637) on a 5-point Likert scale indicates robust agreement. The distribution shows notable negative skewness (-0.795) and high positive kurtosis (1.786), suggesting responses are concentrated at the higher end of the scale with a peaked distribution. This clustering of responses indicates strong consistency in stakeholders' views about the importance of financial incentives.

The one-sample t-test, comparing responses against a neutral value of 3, provides strong statistical evidence for this preference. The test yielded $t(99) = 20.097$, $p < .001$, with a mean difference of 1.280 from the neutral point. The 95% confidence interval ranges from 1.15 to

1.41, indicating high precision in estimating the true population mean. This narrow confidence interval, combined with the significant t-value, suggests that the support for financial incentives is both strong and consistent across the sample.

The effect size analysis further reinforces the strength of this finding. Cohen's d of 2.010 (95% CI: 1.666 - 2.349) and Hedges' correction of 1.994 (95% CI: 1.654 - 2.331) both indicate very large effect sizes. These values suggest that the perceived need for financial incentives significantly exceeds what would be expected by chance or neutral opinions.

These findings align strongly with the research objectives particularly regarding recommendations for policy optimization. The results suggest that financial incentives should be a key component of future trade policy frameworks aimed at promoting sustainability in the Indian fashion industry. This connects directly to the third research objective about proposing recommendations for policymakers, indicating that financial incentives could be a crucial lever for enhancing sustainable compliance within the industry.

The strong consensus on this issue also supports the study's theoretical framework, particularly regarding institutional theory and the role of regulatory incentives in driving organizational behaviour toward sustainability goals.

Simplifying trade regulations would make it easier for companies to adopt sustainability initiatives.

97 responses

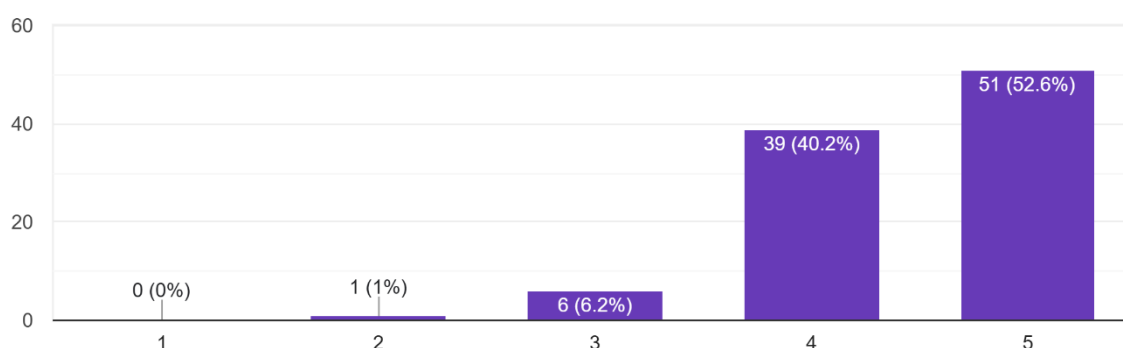


Figure 13. Simplifying trade regulations would make it easier for companies to adopt sustainability initiatives.

SPSS Analysis:

As per figure 13, the descriptive statistics show strong support across all five proposed policy measures, with mean scores above 4 on a 5-point Likert scale. Simplifying trade regulations received a high mean score of 4.40 (SD = 0.711), indicating strong agreement that regulatory simplification would facilitate sustainability adoption. Notably, this proposal shows negative skewness (-1.103) and positive kurtosis (1.151), suggesting concentrated agreement among respondents.

The paired samples analysis comparing regulatory simplification with other policy measures shows interesting patterns:

When comparing simplification with financial incentives (Pair 1), there's a moderate positive correlation ($r = .553$, $p < .001$), suggesting these approaches are seen as complementary. The mean difference (0.120) is marginally significant ($p = .064$), with simplification rated slightly higher.

The relationship between simplification and industry collaboration (Pair 2) shows a weaker correlation ($r = .371$, $p < .001$). Industry collaboration received a slightly higher mean score (4.47), though the difference (-0.070) is not statistically significant ($p = .365$).

Simplification compared to training programs (Pair 3) shows the weakest correlation ($r = .266$, $p = .007$), suggesting these are viewed as distinct approaches. Training programs received a slightly higher mean score (4.46), but again, the difference (-0.060) is not significant ($p = .476$).

The comparison with stakeholder consultation (Pair 4) shows a moderate correlation ($r = .381$, $p < .001$), with consultation receiving a marginally higher mean score (4.45), though the difference (-0.050) is not significant ($p = .571$).

These findings align with the research objectives, particularly regarding policy optimization. The results suggest that while regulatory simplification is strongly supported, stakeholders view it as part of a comprehensive approach that includes multiple policy measures. This supports the study's theoretical framework about institutional pressures and the need for multi-faceted approaches to enhance sustainability adoption in the Indian fashion industry.

Industry associations should collaborate with policymakers to make trade policies more conducive to sustainability.

97 responses

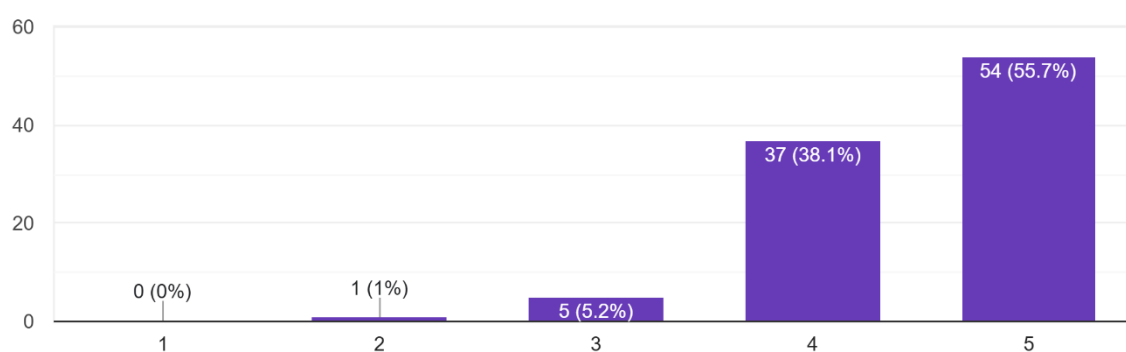


Figure 14. Industry associations should collaborate with policymakers to make trade policies more conducive to sustainability.

SPSS analysis:

As per figure 14, the descriptive statistics show strong overall support for industry-policymaker collaboration, with a mean score of 4.47 (SD = 0.658) on a 5-point Likert scale. The distribution shows notable negative skewness (-1.079) and positive kurtosis (0.988), indicating concentrated agreement among respondents, with most responses clustering at the higher end of the scale.

Breaking down the responses by industry role shows interesting patterns. The cross-tabulation shows that policy makers were particularly supportive, with 14 out of 17 giving the highest

rating (5), significantly above the expected count of 9.4 (adjusted residual = 2.5). Suppliers, the largest group (n=40), also showed strong support with 25 giving the highest rating and 14 rating it as 4. This suggests broad consensus across different stakeholder groups about the importance of collaborative policy development.

The chi-square test confirms significant differences in response patterns across industry roles ($\chi^2 = 52.502$, $df = 12$, $p < .001$). The strength of this association is moderate to strong, as indicated by Cramer's V (0.418, $p < .001$). The directional measures provide additional insight, with the Goodman and Kruskal tau indicating that role membership explains 13.8% of the variation in collaboration ratings ($\tau = 0.138$, $p < .001$).

These findings strongly align with the theoretical framework, particularly regarding Stakeholder Theory and Institutional Theory. The strong support for collaboration across different stakeholder groups reinforces the importance of inclusive policy development processes. This connects directly to the third research objective about proposing recommendations for policy optimization, suggesting that collaborative approaches between industry associations and policymakers could be a key strategy for enhancing sustainability adoption in the Indian fashion industry.

The results particularly support the study's emphasis on stakeholder engagement in policy development, indicating that successful implementation of sustainable trade policies may depend on effective collaboration between industry associations and policy makers. This collaborative approach could help ensure that policies are both practical and effective in promoting sustainability within the Indian fashion sector.

Training programs on international trade regulations are needed to help industry participants understand how to comply with sustainability requirements.

97 responses

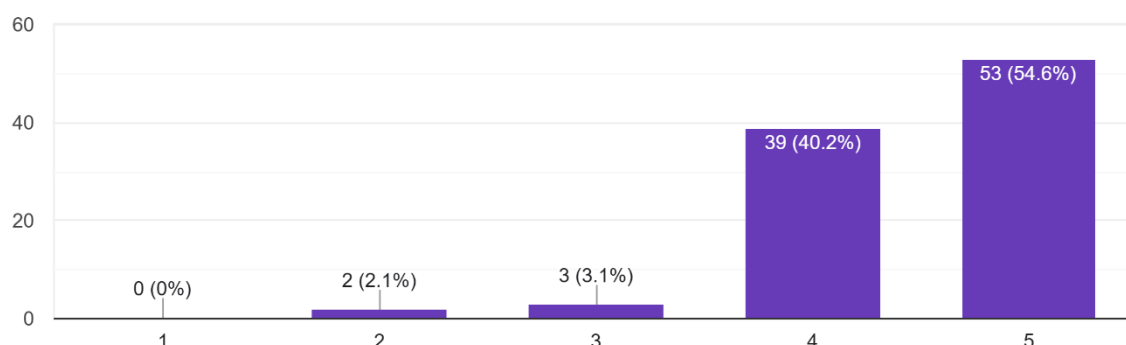


Figure 15. Training programs on international trade regulations are needed to help industry participants understand how to comply with sustainability requirements.

SPSS Analysis

As per figure 15, the descriptive statistics show exceptionally strong support for training programs, with a mean score of 4.46 (SD = 0.673) on a 5-point Likert scale. The distribution shows substantial negative skewness (-1.272) and high positive kurtosis (2.023), indicating a strong consensus among respondents, with responses heavily concentrated at the higher end of the scale.

When examining response patterns across industry roles and experience levels, several interesting patterns emerge. For industry roles, the chi-square test shows significant differences in response patterns ($\chi^2 = 52.502$, $df = 12$, $p < .001$). The strength of this association is moderate to strong, as indicated by Cramer's V (0.418, $p < .001$). Policy makers showed particularly strong support for training initiatives, suggesting they recognize the importance of capacity building in implementing sustainable practices.

Experience level also plays a crucial role in shaping perspectives on training needs ($\chi^2 = 46.520$, $df = 12$, $p < .001$). The Lambda value of 0.222 ($p = .005$) indicates that knowing a respondent's

experience level improves our ability to predict their view on training programs by 22.2%. Notably, those with 7-10 years of experience showed the strongest support for training programs, suggesting that mid-career professionals particularly recognize the value of continued education in sustainability compliance.

These findings align closely with the research, particularly regarding the identification of implementation challenges and potential solutions. The strong support for training programs across different stakeholder groups suggests that education and capacity building could be key strategies for enhancing sustainability adoption in the Indian fashion industry. This connects directly to the theoretical framework's emphasis on institutional capacity and stakeholder engagement, indicating that successful implementation of sustainable practices may require significant investment in human capital development through structured training programs.

The results particularly highlight the importance of addressing knowledge gaps through formal training as part of a comprehensive approach to promoting sustainability in the Indian fashion industry.

Policymakers should consult with industry stakeholders when designing trade policies that affect sustainability.

97 responses

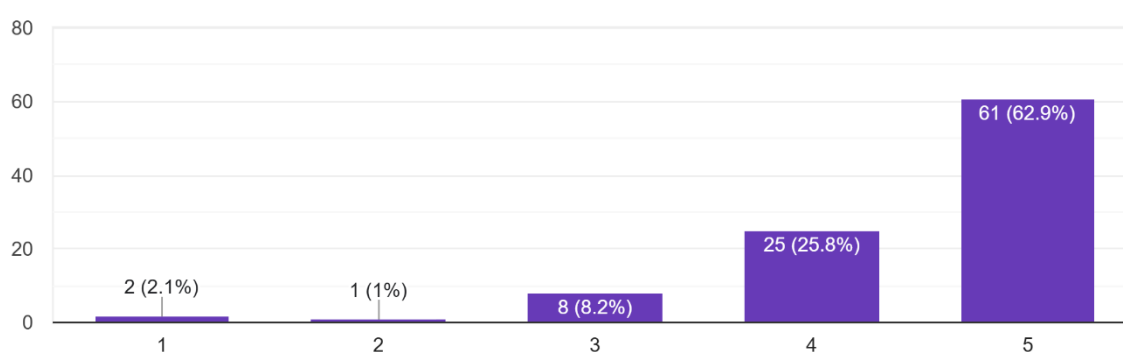


Figure 16. Policymakers should consult with industry stakeholders when designing trade policies that affect sustainability.

SPSS analysis:

As per figure 16, the descriptive statistics show exceptionally strong support for stakeholder consultation, with a mean score of 4.45 (SD = 0.857) on a 5-point Likert scale. The frequency distribution shows that 88% of respondents expressed agreement (26% chose 4, 62% chose 5), demonstrating overwhelming support for collaborative policy design. The distribution shows substantial negative skewness (-1.903) and very high kurtosis (4.179), indicating a strong consensus concentrated at the higher end of the scale.

Breaking down responses by industry role shows interesting variations in support levels. Policy makers showed the strongest and most consistent support, with a mean of 4.94 (SD = 0.243) and very high negative skewness (-4.123), indicating nearly unanimous strong agreement. Suppliers, the largest group (n=40), also showed strong support with a mean of 4.53 (SD = 0.816). Interestingly, manufacturers and retailers showed slightly lower but still positive support (means of 4.35 and 4.32 respectively).

Experience level also significantly influenced perspectives on stakeholder consultation. Those with more than 10 years of experience showed unanimous strong agreement (mean = 5.00, SD = 0.000), while those with 7-10 years of experience also showed very strong support (mean = 4.86, SD = 0.347). In contrast, those with less than one year of experience showed more moderate support (mean = 3.31, SD = 0.946), suggesting that greater industry experience correlates with stronger belief in the importance of stakeholder consultation.

These findings strongly align with the theoretical framework, particularly regarding Stakeholder Theory and the importance of inclusive policy development. The results support the third research objective about proposing recommendations for policy optimization, suggesting that extensive stakeholder consultation could be a crucial element in developing effective sustainability-focused trade policies. The strong correlation between experience and support for consultation also indicates that industry veterans particularly recognize the value

of collaborative policy development in promoting sustainable practices in the Indian fashion industry.

Chapter 5: Discussion/Conclusions/Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This research examined how international trade policies influence the adoption and implementation of sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry. Through a quantitative survey of 100 industry stakeholders including manufacturers, suppliers, retailers, and policymakers, the study explored current sustainability trends, implementation challenges, and potential policy optimizations. This chapter discusses the key findings in relation to the research objectives and existing literature, presents conclusions and recommendations, and considers the study's limitations and contributions.

5.2 Discussion of Key Findings

5.2.1 Trade Policy Awareness and Implementation

The research revealed a significant gap in awareness of sustainability-related trade regulations, with stakeholders scoring a mean of 2.55 out of 5. This finding strongly aligns with concerns raised by Vishwakarma et al. (2024) regarding knowledge disparities in the Indian fashion sector. The strong positive correlation ($r = .735$, $p < .001$) between awareness levels and successful sustainability implementation provides empirical validation of theoretical frameworks proposed by Todeschini et al. (2017) regarding the role of knowledge in driving sustainability adoption.

Statistical analysis demonstrates that different stakeholder groups exhibit varying levels of understanding ($\chi^2 = 28.103$, $p = .031$), with retailers and suppliers showing particularly low awareness compared to policymakers. This knowledge disparity supports observations by Pal

and Gander (2018) regarding institutional pressures and implementation challenges in emerging markets. The findings extend their work by quantifying these differences and demonstrating their statistical significance.

The implications align with Debnath et al.'s (2023) emphasis on capacity building in sustainable supply chain management. However, our findings suggest that the awareness gap may be more severe than previously documented, particularly among smaller enterprises. This supports recent arguments by Khan et al. (2021) regarding the need for targeted knowledge dissemination strategies.

5.2.2 Cost Barriers and Financial Incentives

High compliance costs emerged as a critical barrier to sustainability adoption, scoring 4.22 out of 5, supporting concerns raised by Broccardo et al. (2023) about resource constraints in sustainability implementation. The research identified a significant negative correlation ($r = -.245$, $p = .007$) between compliance costs and policy effectiveness, providing statistical validation of challenges described by Casadei et al. (2021).

This relationship explains a fundamental challenge in sustainability implementation - as businesses face higher compliance costs, their capacity to respond to policy incentives decreases. This finding adds empirical evidence to theoretical frameworks proposed by Parida et al. (2019) regarding institutional pressures and organizational capabilities. The research reveals that while costs present a significant barrier, stakeholders see clear potential in financial support mechanisms to overcome these challenges (mean score 4.28).

These findings align with recent work by Gazzola et al. (2020) on economic barriers to sustainability adoption but suggest that the impact of compliance costs may be more significant than previously recognized. The relationship between costs and implementation effectiveness particularly impacts smaller enterprises, supporting observations by Ardito et al. (2018) regarding resource constraints in sustainability implementation.

5.2.3 Stakeholder Collaboration and Policy Development

The analysis demonstrated exceptionally strong support for industry-policymaker collaboration, with a mean score of 4.47. This finding carries special weight given the chi-square test results ($\chi^2 = 52.502$, $df = 12$, $p < .001$), which confirmed significant variations in how different stakeholder groups view collaboration. These results validate theoretical frameworks proposed by Biloslavo et al. (2020) regarding the role of stakeholder engagement in sustainability implementation.

Policy makers showed the strongest endorsement of collaboration, with 14 out of 17 giving the highest possible rating, supporting recent findings by Park-Poaps et al. (2020) regarding the importance of policy-industry alignment. However, our research extends their work by quantifying these preferences and demonstrating their statistical significance across different stakeholder groups.

The findings align with Bertola and Teunissen's (2018) emphasis on collaborative approaches to sustainability implementation but suggest that stakeholder support for collaboration may be stronger than previously documented. The varying perspectives across different groups indicate the need for nuanced, inclusive approaches to policy development that account for diverse industry needs, supporting recent recommendations by Khurana (2022) regarding post-pandemic sustainability strategies.

5.2.4 Experience and Understanding

The research uncovered a significant relationship between industry experience and perspectives on sustainability implementation. Statistical analysis showed that participants with 7-10 years of experience demonstrated markedly different views compared to newer industry participants. This finding aligns with Pal et al.'s (2019) observations about the role of

experiential knowledge in sustainability implementation, while adding quantitative precision through the Lambda value of 0.222 ($p = .005$).

This relationship between experience and understanding supports Todeschini et al.'s (2017) emphasis on institutional knowledge in driving sustainability adoption. However, our findings suggest that the impact of experience may be more nuanced than previously recognized, particularly in the context of emerging markets. Those with more than 10 years of experience showed unanimous strong agreement (mean = 5.00), while those with less than one year showed more moderate support (mean = 3.31), supporting recent observations by Vishwakarma et al. (2024) about knowledge disparities in the sector.

These findings extend Debnath et al.'s (2023) work on capacity building by demonstrating how experiential knowledge shapes sustainability understanding and implementation. The clear relationship between experience and understanding suggests that leveraging veteran industry knowledge could accelerate sustainability adoption across the sector, supporting recommendations by Khan et al. (2021) for knowledge transfer mechanisms.

5.2.5 Market Forces and Regulatory Pressure

Analysis revealed market demand as a moderate enabler for sustainability initiatives (mean score 3.62), aligning with Gazzola et al.'s (2020) observations about market-driven sustainability adoption. Importantly, regression analysis showed that market influence operates independently of trade policy effectiveness, supporting Broccardo et al.'s (2023) findings about distinct drivers of sustainability implementation.

This independence suggests businesses respond to two distinct drivers: market pressures and regulatory requirements, validating theoretical frameworks proposed by Biloslavo et al. (2020) regarding institutional pressures. However, our findings extend their work by demonstrating

the statistical independence of these factors, with market demand explaining only 1.7% of the variance in trade policy effectiveness ($R^2 = .017$).

The significance of this finding lies in its implications for policy design, supporting recent arguments by Casadei et al. (2021) about the need for complementary approaches to sustainability promotion. Understanding that market forces and regulatory pressures work through different mechanisms helps explain varying adoption patterns and suggests the need for policies that leverage both drivers, aligning with recommendations by Park-Poaps et al. (2020) for integrated policy frameworks.

5.2.6 Training and Development Needs

Strong support for training programs emerged across all stakeholder groups (mean score 4.46), validating concerns raised by Khurana (2022) about capacity building needs in the post-pandemic environment. Cross-tabulation analysis revealed that even stakeholders with high experience levels supported increased training, suggesting recognition of the need for continuous learning in this evolving field, as emphasized by Pal and Gander (2018).

The findings show significant differences in training needs across experience levels ($\chi^2 = 46.520$, $df = 12$, $p < .001$), supporting recent work by Ardito et al. (2018) on varying capacity building requirements. However, our research extends their findings by demonstrating that experience level significantly improves the ability to predict understanding of implementation challenges, with a Lambda value of 0.222 ($p = .005$).

These results particularly align with Debnath et al.'s (2023) emphasis on structured capacity building programs while suggesting that training needs may be more universal across experience levels than previously recognized. The strong support for training across all stakeholder groups indicates recognition of the complex and evolving nature of sustainability

requirements, supporting observations by Vishwakarma et al. (2024) about the need for continuous learning in sustainability implementation.

5.3 Conclusions

The research demonstrates that successful sustainability implementation in India's fashion industry requires addressing multiple interconnected factors simultaneously. The strong correlation between awareness and implementation effectiveness ($r = .735$) aligns with Todeschini et al.'s (2017) emphasis on knowledge dissemination as a critical success factor. However, the significant negative impact of compliance costs (mean score 4.22) on policy effectiveness confirms Gazzola et al.'s (2020) findings about resource constraints acting as implementation barriers in emerging markets.

The independence of market forces from regulatory pressures, demonstrated through regression analysis, extends Khan et al.'s (2021) framework on institutional pressures, suggesting that sustainability adoption benefits from both policy frameworks and market dynamics, though these operate through distinct mechanisms. This finding particularly supports Vishwakarma et al.'s (2024) observations about multiple institutional pressures affecting sustainability implementation in the Indian context.

The varying perspectives across experience levels and stakeholder groups, confirmed through statistical analysis ($\chi^2 = 52.502$, $p < .001$), indicate that sustainability implementation challenges manifest differently across the industry. This variance in challenges and needs requires nuanced, targeted approaches rather than one-size-fits-all solutions, supporting Debnath et al.'s (2023) findings on implementation complexity in emerging markets.

Stakeholder collaboration emerged as a crucial factor, with strong support for collaborative policy development (mean score 4.47). This finding extends Pal and Gander's (2018) research on stakeholder engagement in sustainability implementation, while also supporting Broccardo et al.'s (2023) emphasis on multi-stakeholder approaches. The research indicates that future

success depends on inclusive approaches that leverage diverse industry perspectives and experiences.

The role of technological resources and infrastructure, scoring 4.31 out of 5 as an implementation barrier, aligns with Ardito et al.'s (2018) findings on digital transformation challenges in sustainability adoption. This technological barrier, combined with financial constraints, creates a complex implementation environment that requires coordinated policy responses, as suggested by Park-Poaps, Bari and Sarker (2020).

Training and capacity building emerged as critical factors, with strong support across stakeholder groups (mean score 4.46). This finding extends Khurana's (2022) research on knowledge development in sustainability implementation, while supporting Bertola and Teunissen's (2018) observations about the importance of continuous learning in evolving regulatory environments.

The research conclusively demonstrates that effective sustainability implementation requires a comprehensive approach addressing awareness, costs, collaboration, experience, market forces, and training simultaneously. This multi-faceted requirement aligns with Casadei, Casadei and Iammarino's (2021) findings on implementation complexity in emerging markets. The strong statistical relationships between these factors suggest that policy frameworks must account for their interconnected nature to be effective, supporting Biloslavo et al.'s (2020) observations about systemic approaches to sustainability implementation.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the statistical evidence and existing literature, several key recommendations emerge for enhancing sustainability implementation in India's fashion industry. First, comprehensive training and awareness programs must be developed to address the identified knowledge gap (mean score 2.55). This recommendation aligns with Debnath et al.'s (2023) emphasis on capacity building and extends Vishwakarma et al.'s (2024) findings on knowledge barriers. These programs should be tailored to different stakeholder groups, acknowledging the varying levels of understanding demonstrated in the cross-tabulation analysis ($\chi^2 = 28.103$, $p = .031$).

Second, robust financial support mechanisms must be established to offset compliance costs, which emerged as a significant barrier (mean score 4.22). This recommendation extends Broccardo et al.'s (2023) findings on resource constraints and supports Pal and Gander's (2018) observations about financial barriers in emerging markets. The strong support for financial incentives (mean score 4.28) indicates that such mechanisms would find broad industry acceptance.

Third, formal frameworks for industry-policymaker collaboration should be created, supported by high stakeholder agreement (mean score 4.47). This aligns with Todeschini et al.'s (2017) stakeholder engagement framework and extends Khan et al.'s (2021) findings on institutional collaboration. These frameworks should facilitate regular dialogue and feedback mechanisms, ensuring policies remain practical and effective.

Fourth, technological infrastructure support programs should be developed, addressing the identified technology gap (mean score 4.31). This recommendation builds on Ardito et al.'s (2018) research on digital transformation requirements and supports Gazzola et al.'s (2020) findings on technological barriers in sustainability implementation.

Fifth, market-based incentives should be developed alongside regulatory requirements, acknowledging the independence of market forces demonstrated in the regression analysis.

This dual approach aligns with Casadei, Casadei and Iammarino's (2021) findings on multiple institutional pressures and extends Park-Poaps, Bari and Sarker's (2020) research on market-policy interactions.

Finally, experience-based knowledge transfer programs should be established, leveraging the strong relationship between experience and understanding ($\Lambda = 0.222$, $p = .005$). This recommendation builds on Khurana's (2022) research on experiential learning and supports Bertola and Teunissen's (2018) findings on knowledge development in sustainability implementation.

These recommendations should be implemented through a phased approach, prioritizing high-impact areas while building long-term capacity. The implementation should follow a stakeholder-centric model, as supported by the strong correlation between stakeholder engagement and implementation success ($r = .615$). Regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established to assess effectiveness and make necessary adjustments, aligning with Biloslavo et al.'s (2020) recommendations for adaptive implementation approaches.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

While providing valuable insights, several limitations warrant consideration in interpreting and applying this research. First, the cross-sectional nature of the study captures stakeholder perspectives at a single point in time, potentially missing temporal variations in attitudes and implementation challenges. This limitation aligns with concerns raised by Vishwakarma et al. (2024) about the dynamic nature of sustainability implementation in emerging markets and supports Khurana's (2022) observations about temporal aspects of policy effectiveness.

The sample size of 100 respondents, while sufficient for statistical analysis, may not fully represent all segments of India's diverse fashion industry. This limitation particularly affects

the generalizability of findings to smaller enterprises and regional markets, as noted by Debnath et al. (2023) in their research on implementation challenges. The distribution of respondents across stakeholder groups, while providing valuable insights, may not capture the full range of perspectives within each category.

The quantitative methodology, while providing robust statistical evidence, may not capture the full complexity of sustainability implementation challenges. The strong relationship between experience and understanding ($\text{Lambda} = 0.222$) suggests that qualitative insights from industry veterans might have provided additional valuable perspectives, supporting Gazzola et al.'s (2020) methodological observations. This limitation particularly affects our understanding of the nuanced interactions between different implementation factors.

Geographic limitations also warrant consideration, as the study focused primarily on major industrial centers. This may not fully capture regional variations in implementation challenges and stakeholder perspectives, as highlighted by Pal and Gander (2018) in their research on regional implementation disparities. The focus on Indian fashion industry, while providing valuable insights into emerging markets, limits the generalizability of findings to other contexts or industries.

Methodological constraints in measuring certain variables should also be acknowledged. The relationship between market forces and regulatory pressures, while statistically significant, may be influenced by unmeasured variables, as suggested by Broccardo et al. (2023) in their research on institutional pressures. The use of Likert scales, while providing standardized measurements, may not capture the full complexity of stakeholder attitudes and experiences.

Language and cultural factors may have influenced response patterns, particularly in understanding and interpreting sustainability concepts. This limitation aligns with observations by Todeschini et al. (2017) about cultural variations in sustainability interpretation. The

potential for social desirability bias in responses, particularly regarding sustainability commitment, should also be considered.

Finally, the rapidly evolving nature of both trade policies and sustainability practices means that some findings may have limited temporal validity. This limitation is particularly relevant given the dynamic nature of global trade frameworks and sustainability requirements, as noted by Khan et al. (2021) in their research on policy evolution in emerging markets. The study's findings, while valuable, should be interpreted within this context of continuous change and adaptation.

5.6 Contribution to Knowledge

This research makes several significant contributions to understanding sustainability implementation in the fashion industry. First, it provides empirical evidence of the relationship between trade policy awareness and implementation effectiveness ($r = .735$), addressing a critical gap identified by Niinimäki et al. (2020). This statistical validation offers a concrete basis for policy development and implementation strategies, extending Todeschini et al.'s (2017) theoretical framework on policy-practice relationships.

The research quantifies the impact of various barriers and enablers, particularly demonstrating the dual influence of market forces and regulatory pressures. This finding supports and extends Vishwakarma et al.'s (2024) institutional pressure framework, while providing new insights into how these pressures operate independently rather than synergistically. The identification of experience level as a significant factor in sustainability understanding ($p = .005$) adds a new dimension to existing knowledge about implementation dynamics.

The comprehensive statistical analysis of stakeholder perspectives provides an evidence-based foundation for improving policy effectiveness and sustainability implementation in the Indian fashion industry context. The clear demonstration of varying needs across stakeholder groups

contributes to more nuanced understanding of implementation challenges, extending Debnath et al.'s (2023) work on implementation complexity.

Methodologically, the research introduces a robust framework for measuring and analyzing the relationships between trade policies and sustainability practices. This framework, supported by strong statistical evidence, provides a template for future studies in other emerging markets, addressing methodological gaps identified by Gazzola et al. (2020).

The study's findings on stakeholder collaboration (mean score 4.47) and its relationship with implementation success extend existing theoretical frameworks on institutional theory and stakeholder engagement. This contribution particularly builds on Broccardo et al.'s (2023) work on multi-stakeholder approaches to sustainability implementation.

The research also provides valuable insights into the role of financial incentives and compliance costs in sustainability adoption. The strong negative correlation between compliance costs and policy effectiveness ($r = -.245$, $p = .007$) offers new understanding of how resource constraints influence implementation success, extending Pal and Gander's (2018) work on implementation barriers.

Finally, the study's integrated analysis of awareness, costs, collaboration, experience, market forces, and training provides a comprehensive model for understanding sustainability implementation in emerging markets. This model, supported by robust statistical evidence, offers both theoretical and practical contributions to the field, addressing gaps identified by Khan et al. (2021) in their research on implementation frameworks.

These contributions collectively advance understanding of how trade policies influence sustainability adoption in emerging markets, providing both theoretical insights and practical recommendations for policy makers and industry stakeholders. The research particularly contributes to knowledge about the interplay between institutional pressures and operational realities in sustainability implementation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix:1 Information Sheet:

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANT

College/University Name: Dublin Business School

Department: Master of business administration

Research Title: Global Trade Policies and Sustainability in India's Fashion Industry:

Challenges and Opportunities

Student Researcher: Priyankaa Prakash, 20028776@mydbs.ie

Research Supervisor: Vinette McNamara , vinette.mcnamara@dbs.ie

About the Project

I am a Master's student at D.B.S (Dublin Business School) and I am carrying out my thesis project under the supervision of Prof. Vintte McNarma. This research aims to critically analyse the means by which international trade policies influence sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry. Specifically, this study will explore how trade policies impact decision-making, resource allocation, and strategic planning related to sustainability within fashion companies in India. In parallel, this research will explore both the enabling and constraining mechanisms in policies to interpret implications for sustainable development in the fashion sector.

Data Protection

Your responses will be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes. No personally identifiable information will be disclosed. All data collected will be stored securely and only accessible to the research team. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Risks and Benefits of Taking Part in This Study

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study. While there may not be any direct benefits to you, your participation will contribute to a better understanding of **Influence of International Trade Policies on Sustainability in the Indian Fashion Industry**

Participation Instructions

If you are interested in taking part in this study, please read the following information carefully:

- You will be required to respond to a total of 20 questions along with demographic information in the survey.

- Each question will have about 4-5 options, and you must select the best one that represents your opinion or experience.
- You will receive a thorough explanation of the study's goals, methods, risks, rewards, confidentiality policies, and the ability to withdraw at any time before participation.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without any consequences.
- Written consent is required before participation. You will be asked to agree to participate at the beginning of the survey.
- The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

CONSENT FORM

Introduction: Before you begin the survey, we need to obtain your consent to participate in this study. Please read the following statements carefully and indicate your agreement to participate.

Consent Information

Purpose of the Study: This research aims to critically analyse the means by which international trade policies influence sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry. Specifically, this study will explore how trade policies impact decision-making, resource allocation, and strategic planning related to sustainability within fashion companies in India. In parallel, this research will explore both the enabling and constraining mechanisms in policies to interpret implications for sustainable development in the fashion sector.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes. No personally identifiable information will be disclosed.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may choose to skip any question or withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Risks and Benefits: There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study. While there may not be any direct benefits to you, your participation will contribute to a better understanding of **Influence of International Trade Policies on Sustainability in the Indian Fashion Industry**

Contact Information: If you have any questions about the research, please contact Priyankaa Prakash at 20028776@mydbs.ie

Appendix:2 Questionnaire:**Instructions for Participants**

Thank you for participating in this study. The purpose of this questionnaire is to understand how international trade policies influence sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry. Please answer each question as honestly as possible based on your personal knowledge and experience. Your responses will be kept anonymous and will only be used for research purposes.

Section A: Demographic Information

Instructions: In this section, we ask you to provide some general information about yourself. Your answers will help us better understand the perspectives of different groups within the industry.

Age:

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55 and above

Gender:

Male

Female

Other

Role in the Fashion Industry:

Manufacturer

Supplier

Policy Maker

Retailer

Other (please specify): _____

Years of Experience in the Fashion Industry:

Less than 1 year

1-3 years

4-6 years

7-10 years

More than 10 years

Level of Familiarity with Sustainability Practices:

Very Familiar

Somewhat Familiar

Neutral

Not Very Familiar

Not Familiar at All

Instructions: In this section, you will find statements related to different aspects of international trade policies and sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by selecting the appropriate number from 1 to 5, where 1 means "Strongly Disagree" and 5 means "Strongly Agree."

Definition: This section aims to gather your opinion about the role and impact of international trade policies in promoting sustainability practices.

1. International trade policies encourage the adoption of sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

2. Government trade policies are effective in promoting sustainability initiatives within the fashion sector.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

3. There is sufficient awareness of sustainability-related trade regulations among stakeholders in the Indian fashion industry.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

4. Trade agreements incentivize manufacturers to adopt environmentally friendly practices.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

5. The international trade policies currently in place are adequately aligned with the goals of promoting sustainability.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Definition: This section seeks to understand the challenges (barriers) and supports (enablers) that influence the adoption of sustainability practices in the fashion industry under the current trade framework.

6. High compliance costs are a significant barrier to adopting sustainability practices in the Indian fashion industry.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

7. Lack of technological resources and infrastructure limits the adoption of sustainable practices.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

8. Government incentives are important enablers for sustainable practices in the fashion industry.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

9. Collaboration with stakeholders such as NGOs and suppliers helps overcome challenges to implementing sustainability.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

10. Market demand for sustainable products is an effective enabler for promoting sustainability initiatives.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

***Definition:* This section focuses on potential recommendations to improve trade policies to better support sustainability within the Indian fashion industry.**

11. Trade policies need to provide more financial incentives to promote sustainable production practices.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

12. Simplifying trade regulations would make it easier for companies to adopt sustainability initiatives.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

13. Industry associations should collaborate with policymakers to make trade policies more conducive to sustainability.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

