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DRIVING THE CIRCULAR TRANSITION: EXAMINING THE ROLES OF BRAND TRANSPARENCY, LABELLING CLARITY, AND FABRIC QUALITY IN SHAPING SUSTAINABLE PURCHASE INTENTIONS

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Abstract—*The textile industry worldwide starts to adopt circular economy practices while manufacturing companies need to develop a "Circularity Edge" capability to stay ahead of their competitors. The study uses quantitative methods to determine which factors impact sustainable clothing consumption by testing how informational elements (Brand Transparency and Eco-Labeling) and material characteristics (Perceived Fabric Quality) affect consumer decision-making. Researchers collected data from 114 participants through a structured survey which used a 5-point Likert scale. The study used Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) to analyze how transparency and labeling together affect purchase intention, while Simple Linear Regression (SLR) allowed researchers to study how fabric quality affects purchase motivation. The study results show that brand transparency together with effective eco-labeling establishes consumer trust, but tactile fabric quality assessment functions as the main element that turns ethical purchasing plans into actual buying decisions. The research shows that a major gap exists between what people plan to do and what they actually do, which requires brands to establish ethical storytelling that matches their high-quality products in order to stay competitive.*

Keywords: *Circular Economy, Brand Transparency, Eco-Labelling, Fabric Quality, Purchase Intention.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The principles of circularity are challenging the traditional linear model of extract-produce-discard that the global business environment is currently experiencing. The current market is moving towards life-sustaining designs to encounter the urgent need of the business environment. **(Raman et al., 2025)[i]; (Khairul Akter et al., 2022)[ii]**. It is no longer a choice in the global textile sector but a necessity to stay afloat since the environmental impact of fast fashion is under intense scrutiny by international regulatory bodies **(Abbate et al., 2023)[iii]**, so-called Knitting City of India is at the crossroads of its blooming production capacity now having to be adjusted to the emerging global need of ethical and sustainable production **(Rana, 2025)[iv].**

The strategic competitive advantage of firms that have managed to integrate sustainability into their value proposition is called the Circularity Edge. In the case of apparel brands, it is not only the use of organic cotton, but the whole lifecycle of a specific garment, eco-design to post-consumer recycling **(Saha et al., 2024[v]; Ndagano et al., 2025[vi]).** This is an edge that consumers, especially Gen Z, are seeking when making a brand decision and perceiving their buying behaviour as a personal statement of their environmental beliefs **(Lin & Chen, 2022)[vii].** Since the market will soon be flooded with so-called green statements, the possibility of real circularity with quantifiable results has become a key factor in the brand differentiation. (**Polskie Towarzystwo Towaroznawcze, 2014)[viii].**

The transparency of the brand has become the key to this circular shift, which is the main mechanism to gain trust in the age of corporate distrust **(Montecchi et al., 2024)[ix].** With the large-scale supply chain of , transparency requires brands to give a clear picture of the who, where, and how of production, including all the issues of dye-house chemical control, fair wages to garment workers, etc. **(Rinaldi et al., 2022)[x].**

By publicly communicating its supply chain experience, a brand reduces the perceived risk that shoppers are likely to experience when purchasing sustainable products, which creates an emotional sense of responsibility **(Huynh et al., 2024)**[xi]. This is a strong connection based on the consumer desire for authenticity whereby purchase intention is becoming more and more affected by the ethical narrative behind the brand as opposed to the price itself **(Jin & Omar, 2025)**[xii]**.**

Eco-Labelling Clarity is the key factor that is the connection between the sustainable activities of a brand and the knowledge of the consumer at the point of purchase. These labels are a shortcut to complex environmental information, but their usefulness will solely be determined by their appeal to the layman **(Plakantonaki et al., 2023)**[xiii]**.** Clear labelling also makes the decision to use a sustainable product easy instead of heavy by enabling the consumer to experience it as a matter of course instead of heavy load **(Kyriakos Riskos et al., 2021)**[xiv]. A label with a clear mention such as 100% Recycled Polyester or Water-Neutral can instantly cause a positive purchase reaction, turning a generalized interest in the topic of ecology into a high-intent desire to buy the product in a fast-paced retail setting such as those in , which consists of factory outlets **(Shah, 2025** [xv]**; Nagar & Verma, 2025**[xvi]**).**

Notwithstanding the significance of ethics, the basic physical need that a garment has to meet is Perceived Fabric Quality. Sustainability is perceived as a trade-off but the current consumers demand eco-friendly clothes to work similarly and sometimes even better than the traditional clothes. The specialty of hosiery items, the sense of the material is the main measure of its quality **(Tryphena & Aram, 2023)**[xvii]**.** This quality perception is a strong force behind the purchase motivation because it can fulfil the rational need of the consumer in having a product that is durable **(Rao & Chaudhary, 2025)**[xviii]**.** In the case of manufacturers, it is necessary to invest in the feel and the longevity of sustainable materials that will help the consumer transition to a motivated purchase with a longer-term perspective **(Dangelico et al., 2022**[xix]**; Wagner & Heinzel, 2020)**[xx]**.**

To sum it up, this study offers a comprehensive study of the interaction of transparency, labelling, and quality to influence the future of sustainable fashion. The city of offers a dense and localized environment since it is a micro-environment of the textile industry problems and success. Even though consumers prefer sustainable choice, other factors like price sensitivity **(Pires et al., 2024)**[xxi],unavailable trendy styles and indigent availability act as a gate which in turn lead to an attitude behaviour gap **(Zdenka Musova et al., 2021)**[xxii]**.**The concept of building the circularity edge in is not only to protect the environment, it gives an competitive edge in the hub of the Indian textile sector and provides a parallel road between ethical narratives and fast moving products **(Ramesh, 2025)**[xxiii]**.**

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **(Attitudes of Young European Consumers toward Recycling Campaigns of Textile Companies - ProQuest, 2019)**[xxiv] discusses the manner in which textile firms use recycling programs to enlist the youth segment. The researchers also discovered that although young customers are very positive about the concept of recycling, their actual involvement in the take-back programs is strongly determined by the accessibility of the drop-off facilities and the perceived openness of what becomes of the clothes after the drop-off. This is an indication that circularity requires the brands to go beyond marketing and concentrate on logistical convenience of the circular loop.
2. **(Lou & Xu, 2024)**[xxv] explore how eco-labels that are block chain certified affect sustainable denim consumption. They emphasize in their study that the eco-labels that are usually accepted as traditional are usually taken with scepticism because of greenwashing. Brands can greatly decrease consumer scepticism by tracking the path of a garment by creating an immutable record of the garment with the help of block chain. The paper shows that block chain certification is a very effective quality signal, which enhances the trust of the consumer on the authenticity of the label and increases the desire to buy high-value products such as denim.
3. **(Kim et al., 2020)**[xxvi] discuss the truthfulness in policy or not by investigating the place of price and production transparency in fashion marketing. The study found out that when brands publicly reveal the composition of their prices (including labour, materials, and transport) as well as their way of production, consumers consider the brand to be more ethical. This disclosure helps to elevate the adverse attitude towards higher prices commonly connected to sustainable products because customers can easily reveal the value and fair wages that were inherent in the price.
4. **(Brydges, 2021)**[xxvii] is a comprehensive exploration of the concept of the circular economy, with a particular reference to the Swedish fashion industry. The study finds that the loop that needs to be closed is to be done

through a fundamental change in the business models to stop looking at sales in terms of volumes and instead look at the sales in terms of value to create longevity. The research indicates that lack of infrastructure to recycle textile-to-textile is even a barrier in the process of transition in developed markets. In the case of manufacturing centers, this study indicates the need to invest in localized recycling technology to convert the same.

5. **(Panopoulos et al., 2022)**[xxviii] examine the potency of the eco-labels and user-generated content (UGC), e.g. social media reviews and unboxing videos, in eliciting green purchase intentions. The study shows that eco-labels give the official stamp of approval, whereas UGC can give the social proof that the product is stylish and useful. In the case of sustainable brands, the research recommends the use of a two-pronged approach of official certification and informal digital storytelling as the best means to affect the contemporary digitally connected consumer.

Now, the psychological and behavioural motivation of Indian consumers in the sustainable apparel industry is not fully researched, namely, the interaction between informational transparency and perception of a physical product. Although there is a growing interest in the global literature on the topic of the circular economy, there is a considerable gap in the comprehension of the attitude behaviour gap in the context of the developing market of India. The question of the extent to which consumers trust different eco-labelling programmes is unanswered and the feel factor of hosiery as a purchase motivator rather than an ethical factor is not answered. Furthermore, the sluggishness of label fatigue and the real intentions of consumers to pay premiums on prices in the Eastern societies have not been properly discussed. The current literature mostly addresses the developed economies and thus missing a gap in addressing the solutions that are based on the socio-economic reality of Indian shoppers who are both green-conscious and highly price-sensitive. In this way offering actionable information between the ethical appreciation and the behaviour of actual purchase becomes frequently a matter of the back row.

3. OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the influence of brand transparency and eco labelling clarity on purchase intention.

2. To explore the role of perceived fabric quality in driving purchase motivation.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design using a causal and descriptive approach to analyze sustainable purchase intentions. Data was collected from a sample of 114 respondents using a convenience sampling technique. The research instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) was utilized for the first objective to determine the influence of Brand Transparency and Eco-Labeling Clarity on Purchase Intention. For the second objective, Simple Linear Regression (SLR) was applied to measure the direct impact of Perceived Fabric Quality on Purchase Motivation.

5. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The global textile industry is rapidly transitioning toward a circular economy, yet a significant **"intention-behavior gap"** remains among consumers, particularly in manufacturing hubs like Tirupur. While consumers express a psychological preference for sustainable fashion, this often fails to translate into actual purchase finalization. The core of this problem lies in two areas: **informational ambiguity** and **perceived quality risk**. Currently, shoppers face "label fatigue" and corporate skepticism due to a lack of brand transparency and overly complex eco-labeling, making it unclear which informational cues actually drive purchase intent. Simultaneously, a "quality paradox" exists where sustainable fabrics are often perceived as less durable or tactically inferior to conventional hosiery. Without empirical evidence quantifying how these specific factors—brand transparency, labeling clarity, and fabric quality—statistically influence the Indian consumer, brands in Tirupur risk misallocating resources. There is an urgent need to determine which variables act as the primary drivers of purchase motivation to ensure the economic and environmental resilience of the sector.

6. HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1

- **H_{o1} (Null):** Brand Transparency and Eco-Labeling Clarity do not have a significant joint influence on consumer Purchase Intention.
- **H_{a1} (Alternate):** Brand Transparency and Eco-Labeling Clarity have a significant joint positive influence on consumer Purchase Intention.

a. Dependent Variable: DV

b. Predictors: (Constant), IV2, IV1

Hypothesis 2

- **H_{01} (Null):** Perceived Fabric Quality does not have a significant impact on driving consumer Purchase Motivation.
- **H_{a2} (Alternate**)Perceived Fabric Quality has a significant positive impact on driving consumer Purchase Motivation

7. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

- **Objective:** To examine the influence of Brand Transparency and Eco-Labelling Clarity on Purchase Intention

H_{a1}: Brand Transparency and Eco-Labeling Clarity have a significant joint positive influence on consumer Purchase Intention.

Model Summary				
Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**
1	.668[a]	.446	.436	.64442

a. Predictors: (Constant), IV2, IV1

ANOVA[a]						
Model		**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	36.087	2	18.043	43.449	.000[b]
	Residual	44.850	108	.415		
	Total	80.937	110			

Coefficients[a]						
Model		**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
1	(Constant)	.861	.282		3.057	.003
	IV1	.335	.079	.339	4.255	.000
	IV2	.436	.078	.445	5.590	.000

a. Dependent Variable: DV

Model Fit and Predictive Power

The **Multiple Linear Regression (MLR)** model indicates a strong fit for the data. The R value of **.668** shows a substantial correlation between the informational predictors and the consumer's intent to buy. The Model Summary reveals an R^2 of **.446**, implying that Brand Transparency and Labelling Clarity together account for **44.6%** of the variance in Purchase Intention. The ANOVA table confirms the model's high statistical significance ($F = 43.449$, $p = .000$), proving that these informational factors are reliable predictors of consumer behavior.

Individual Predictor Significance (Hypothesis Testing)

- **Brand Transparency :** This variable yielded a standardized coefficient (β) of **.339** and a t-value of **4.255**. With a p-value of **.000**, it is highly significant. Thus, **H_{a1} is supported**, confirming that open communication about supply chains increases purchase intent.
- **Labelling Clarity :** This variable emerged as a stronger predictor with a β of **.445** and a t-value of **5.590**. The p -value of **.000** indicates extreme statistical significance. Thus, **H_{a1} is supported**, showing that easy-to-understand labels have a greater impact on the final decision than general transparency.

1. Objective: To explore the role of Perceived Fabric Quality in driving Purchase Motivation.

H_{a2}: Perceived Fabric Quality has a significant positive impact on driving consumer Purchase Motivation.

Model Summary				
Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**
1	.527[a]	.278	.272	.77020

a. Predictors: (Constant), IV

ANOVA[a]						
Model		**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	24.927	1	24.927	42.021	.000[b]
	Residual	64.659	109	.593		
	Total	89.586	110			

a. Dependent Variable: DV

b. Predictors: (Constant), IV

Coefficients[a]						
Model		**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
1	(Constant)	1.554	.288		5.394	.000
	IV	.559	.086	.527	6.482	.000

a. Dependent Variable: DV

Model Fit and Predictive Power

The **Simple Linear Regression (SLR)** was used to isolate the impact of the product's physical "hand-feel". The model is statistically significant ($F = 42.021$, $p = .000$), establishing a clear cause-and-effect relationship. The R^2 value of **.278** indicates that Perceived Fabric Quality alone explains **27.8%** of the total motivation to purchase sustainable apparel.

Hypothesis Testing

- **Fabric Quality:** The analysis shows a standardized coefficient (β) of **.527** and a t-value of **6.482**. Since the p-value is **.000**, the relationship is highly significant. Therefore, **H_{a2} is supported**, proving that consumers are significantly motivated by the tactile and functional performance of the garment

8. IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Implications for Brands and Sustainable Merchandisers

- **Prioritize Radical Disclosure over Symbolic Reporting:** The brands need to stop using general sustainability statements. They must establish complete transparency through their verified data about how their raw materials and manufacturing processes were sourced. This approach will help decrease consumer doubts about their products.
- **Integrate Tactile Quality in Product Development:** Merchandisers need to create superior sustainable hosiery that please, customers because they want to overcome the "recycled equals low quality" stigma. The data shows that perceived fabric quality functions as a primary factor which drives customers to make purchases ($t = 6.482$, $p = .000$).
- **Simplify Choice Architecture through Standardized Labeling:** Shoppers need better decision-making support through standardized product labels which simplify their choices. The research discovered that Labelling Clarity ($\beta = .445$) functions as a better predictor of purchase intention compared to Brand Transparency ($\beta = .339$).
- **Leverage Digital Traceability as a Strategic Asset:** The implementation of digital solutions like QR codes and block chain technology enables brands to create unchangeable transparent systems which help them establish enduring customer relationships with Gen Z.

8.2 Implications for Policymakers and Regulators

- **Mandate Uniformity in Eco-Labeling Standards:** The officials need to establish a standard eco-labeling system which will cover all environmental aspects from a garment's manufacturing process through its final disposal time.
- **Incentivize Infrastructure for Circularity:** The government needs to establish financial backing for Zero Liquid Discharge ZLD technologies and automated textile sorting systems which will help smaller manufacturers achieve circularity at a lower cost.
- **Promote National Sustainability Literacy:** The public needs educational programs according to their current understanding of eco-labels and the long-term benefits of sustainable fabrics to help them understand eco-labels.

8.3 Implications for Future Research

- **Investigate Cultural Nuances:** The research should investigate how economic conditions and traditional frugality practices from different Indian regions impact their residents' spending habits for eco-certified clothing.
- **Conduct Longitudinal Studies on Performance:** The study requires research that will evaluate how long recycled fiber materials perform through multiple wash cycles while measuring customer satisfaction compared to traditional materials.
- **Explore "Social Proof" in Digital Retail:** The research should investigate how influencer endorsements and user-generated content combine with formal certifications to affect young people through the green movement.
- **Account for Missing Data:** The study needs to implement strict data cleaning procedures for its quantitative research activities because missing values from this study were eliminated to protect the accuracy of regression analysis results.

9. CONCLUSION

The empirical findings of this research confirm that the "**Circularity Edge**" in the apparel sector is a multi-dimensional construct that relies on the strategic alignment of informational integrity and physical product excellence. The study demonstrates that while **Brand Transparency** and **Eco-Labelling Clarity** are foundational for establishing initial consumer trust and reducing the cognitive burden of sustainable shopping, they function primarily as entry-level requirements rather than sole drivers of final action. The Multiple Linear Regression model proved that these informational cues are significant predictors, accounting for **44.6%** of the variance in consumer purchase intentions. This

indicates that a substantial portion of the consumer's decision-making process is rooted in the "ethical story" provided by the brand before a physical interaction with the product occurs.

A critical nuance revealed by the data is the hierarchical importance of how information is presented to the consumer. **Labelling Clarity**, with a higher standardized beta coefficient (β = .445) than **Brand Transparency** (β = .339), emerged as the most potent informational trigger among the 111 respondents. This suggests that in a fast-paced retail environment, consumers prioritize immediate, easy-to-digest certifications and clear environmental claims at the point of sale over broad, complex corporate sustainability narratives. For brands, this implies that radical disclosure is only effective when translated into intuitive, minimalist visual cues that allow the shopper to make a "green" choice without high cognitive effort.

However, the analysis of the second objective reveals that informational cues alone cannot sustain purchase motivation if the physical requirements of the garment are unmet. **Perceived Fabric Quality** was found to be a highly significant independent driver, explaining nearly **28%** of the total variance in purchase motivation through the Simple Linear Regression model. With a high t-value of **6.482**, the data proves that in a manufacturing hub where hosiery expertise is a specialty the tactile "hand-feel" and perceived durability remain non-negotiable bedrocks of consumer satisfaction. This finding highlights that sustainability is often viewed as a performance trade-off, and motivation is only secured when the eco-friendly material matches or exceeds conventional textile standards.

In summary, this research provides a clear roadmap for bridging the "intention-behavior gap" within the Indian sustainable apparel market. The study concludes that while transparency and labeling are essential for building the **trust** necessary to form an intention, fabric quality provides the **functional justification** required to convert that intent into a motivated purchase. To achieve a true "Circularity Edge," manufacturers and marketers must move beyond symbolic reporting and prioritize a "design-for-longevity" approach. By aligning clear, transparent ethical storytelling with superior sensory product performance, the industry can ensure its economic resilience while driving the essential transition toward a circular textile economy.

10. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite the statistical significance of the results, this study is subject to several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the sample size of **111 respondents**, while sufficient for the localized context of the textile hub, may not fully capture the vast regional and socio-economic diversity of the entire Indian consumer market. Second, the research relied on a **convenience sampling technique**, which may introduce a degree of selection bias toward digitally savvy individuals who already possess a baseline awareness of sustainability. Furthermore, because the data is **self-reported**, there is an inherent risk of social desirability bias, where participants might overstate their "Sustainable Purchase Intentions" to align with perceived ethical norms, potentially creating a discrepancy between reported intent and actual retail behavior. Finally, the study utilized a **cross-sectional design**, capturing consumer sentiment at a single point in time (April 2026), which does not account for how fluctuating economic conditions or seasonal fashion trends might alter the weight consumers place on fabric quality versus brand ethics

11. FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

Future academic inquiries should build upon these findings by expanding the demographic and variables analyzed. A primary recommendation is to conduct a **longitudinal study** to track these 111 respondents over a 12-month period to determine the actual conversion rate from purchase "intention" to "behavior." Additionally, future researchers should investigate **Price Sensitivity** as a moderating variable; since the current model explains roughly **45%** of purchase intent, a significant portion of the consumer's decision remains unexplained and is likely tied to cost. There is also a distinct opportunity to explore the role of **digital traceability tools**, such as blockchain-enabled QR codes, to see if "immutable transparency" significantly shifts the beta values observed in this study. Lastly, comparative research between Gen Z and older cohorts could provide deeper insights into whether the preference for **Labelling Clarity** over general **Brand Transparency** is a generational trend or a permanent shift in how information is consumed in the circular economy.

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