



Research Paper

Sustainability in Indian Textile Sector: A Welcome Positive Trend

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Abstract: Indian Textile industry successfully passed the test of time and has only become exponentially important due to its magnanimous scale, highly significant economic contributions, impressive export potential and tremendous employability. This sector encircles a wide range of product segments including diverse range of fibres and fabrics, spinning, weaving, and garment production, traditional handloom, handicrafts providing employment to millions of people and contributing significantly to India's GDP all synchronously. For last some years, this industry has been subjected to severe criticism due to its negative and harsh impact on ecology. In contemporary world where environmental concerns are extremely serious and environmental friendliness has become a kind of litmus test for products in general to attract buyers and consumers, it is first essentiality for Indian Textile industry to face the challenge head on prove its worth as a sustainability conscious industry. Matching pace with changing times, the Indian Textile Industry is already progressing in this direction and working

heavily on achieving its aim towards sustainability.

Keywords: Indian, Sustainability, Textile Sector

Introduction: Indian Textile Sector is unique in its character. Reflecting the rich cultural heritage and tremendous commercial potential, it is now one of the critical sectors of the Indian economy. Indian Textile industry successfully passed the test of time and has only become exponentially important due to its magnanimous scale, highly significant economic contributions, impressive export potential and tremendous employability. This sector encircles a wide range of product segments including diverse range of fibres and fabrics, spinning, weaving, and garment production, traditional handloom, handicrafts providing employment to millions of people and contributing significantly to India's GDP all synchronously. Berwal (2019) also states that the Indian Textile industry holds a significant position in the country's economy. Although recognized as one of the most important industries from economic point of view, this industry has

been at times subjected to severe criticism due to its negative and harsh impact on ecology. The main environmental problem associated with textile industry consists of water body pollution caused by discharge of untreated effluents. The industry also generates air pollution prior to processing of fibres and during spinning and weaving which degrades working environment in the industry (Blackburn 2009). Earlier the concern for the environment was the most neglected area of the textile industry but with growing awareness on environment protection due to depletion of non-renewable resources, global warming and destruction to ecology, this issue has gained acceptance worldwide that there is a need for more responsible approach to the environment (Sharma et al 2020). Matching pace with changing times, the Indian Textile Industry is already progressing in this direction with working heavily on achieving its aim towards sustainability.

Synthesizing secondary data from various sources such as literature reviews like journal articles, government and industry reports and statistical data, this research paper analyses the issue of sustainability with respect to textile industry, examines the challenges faced and proposes strategies to overcome them. The findings of this study will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the matter in question in relation to the India Textiles Industry.

Objectives: the objectives of this paper are as following:

1. Collect information on the current scenario of the Indian textiles industry with special reference to sustainability
2. Highlight the major challenges faced by the industry in this regard
3. Propose strategies to address these challenges

Hypothesis: Indian Textile Sector is not paying attention to sustainability issues.

Research Methodology:

This study stands its ground on collection, scrutiny and analysis of secondary data from various sources, including scholarly articles, industry reports, government publications, and statistical databases and identify trends and insights in relation to the Indian Textiles Sector's approach towards sustainability.

Review of Literature:

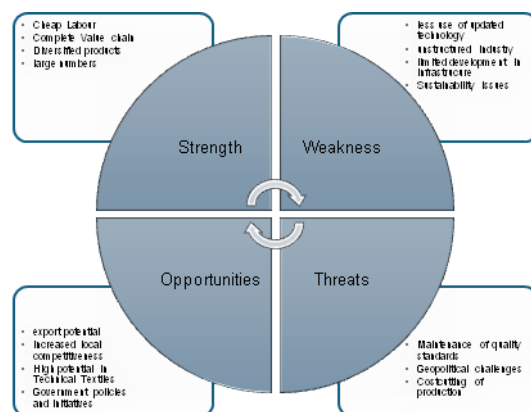
Textile and apparel sector is one of the most significant sectors and plays a major role towards contribution to national economy, employment generation and exports. (Karthik and Gopalkrishnan 2014). The Indian Textile Industry is one of the oldest and most important industries in India. The Indian Textile industry is a key contributor of around 1% of GDP. The sector employs over 45 million people directly and indirectly, making it one of the largest employment generators in the country (Gautam H 2023). In 2020, India stood as the third highest exporter of raw cotton globally, accounting for 10.2% of the total global exports. The value of exports amounted to 6.3 billion US Dollars in the year 2020-2021 which has been just halfway as Indian Government targets to reach to 100 billion US dollars in exports by 2025-2026 via Indian Textile Industry (Dixit, 2019). Not just this, the Textile industry is the second largest industry after agriculture that provides skilled and unskilled employment (Hasan, 2020).

Handlooms dominate the country's textile industry, employing millions of people. The country so far has more than 3400 textile mills with 48 million spindle capacity. (fiber2fashion/Indian textile industry-an-overview)

As per fiber2fashion/Indian textile industry-an-overview, the Indian Textile industry produces diverse textiles from fibre, yarn and fabric to readymade garments. The country has the second largest vertically integrated production

base. There are a lot of potential factors that can be the reason for the industry's success. These include availability of

lowcost labour, abundance of naturally available cotton, the location of textile mills and geographical economies of scale.



Though recognised as one of the most important industries from the economic point of view, at the same time this industry is subjected to severe ecological and social problems throughout the supply chain (Shen et al 2017.) The textile business has been referred to as the most environmentally damaging industry in the world. In some instances, wastewater with significant chemical loads, abnormal pH values, and temperatures is dumped into groundwater (mostly untreated) (Mora, Rocamora, & Volonte, 2014). The life cycles of textiles and garments can become unsustainable in the following areas (Hendricks, 2013):

Water consumption
Energy consumption
Waste production
Air emissions
Transportation
Supplies for packing

The main environmental problems associated with textile industry consists of water body pollution caused by discharge of untreated effluents. During production, the cloth passes through the various processes and chemical operations like sizing, desizing, bleaching, dyeing, printing and finishing and several dyes, chemicals are used in desired quality in fabrics, and this causes environmental

problems unless it is properly treated before disposal (Dasgupta et al).

the industry also generates air pollution prior to processing of fibres and during spinning and weaving it generates dust, cotton lint etc which degrades working environment in the industry. Such activities and loopholes only add to the challenges faced by the industry at global level. It is absolutely necessary in contemporary world to make the products 'sustainable' and meeting with the set standards for it to be able to be launched, survive and perform in the international market .

According to Bhargava A (2023), a sustainable textile product can be stated only if:

It is safe for humans, animals and the environment. It is created out of renewable materials using renewable sources of energy.

Manufactured using the optimum utilization of resources including human resources, wherein, they are provided with a decent working environment. Capable of being washed at low temperatures with natural laundry resources.

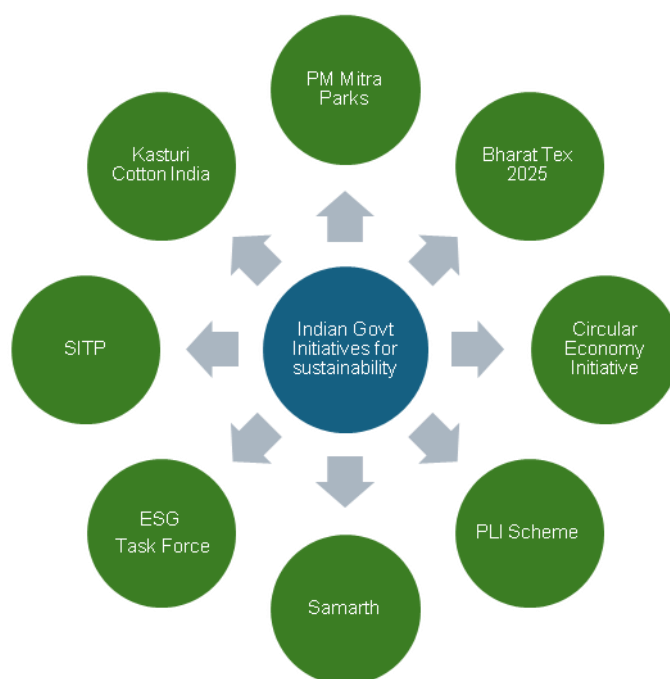
Has a decent life span to avoid repeated production.

It is maintaining an ecological balance, thus, can return to nature at the end of its useful life.

The strategies and policies developed in the last decade to promote sustainable development have increased much pressure on all industries to find ways to maintain a balance in the ecosystem wherein the business and the industry can stay side by side (Hiba, 1998). The industrial sectors now need to exhibit their social responsibility to save the environment keeping in mind the effect on the human race, thereby, withholding the criteria of sustainability (Israel Urban Forum, 2019). The increasing focus on environmental sustainability and compliance with regulations is very necessary for industrial growth. The challenges faced by the textiles industry in meeting environmental standards and explore strategies to adopt eco-friendly

practices and technologies must be taken care for industry's betterment Berwal R (2023)

According to Berwal R (2023), focus on sustainable practices may involve raising the worth of local producing goods, extending the life cycle of materials, boosting the value of timeless clothes, minimizing waste and lowering the environmental impact caused by production and consumption. The growing importance of sustainable practices in the textiles industry has a great importance. There is a need for eco-friendly manufacturing processes, recycling initiatives and the demand for sustainable textiles is the need of the hour. It will contribute how the Indian textiles industry can capitalize on the global shift towards sustainability to drive growth and market differentiation.



Initiatives taken by Government of India for handling the challenges:

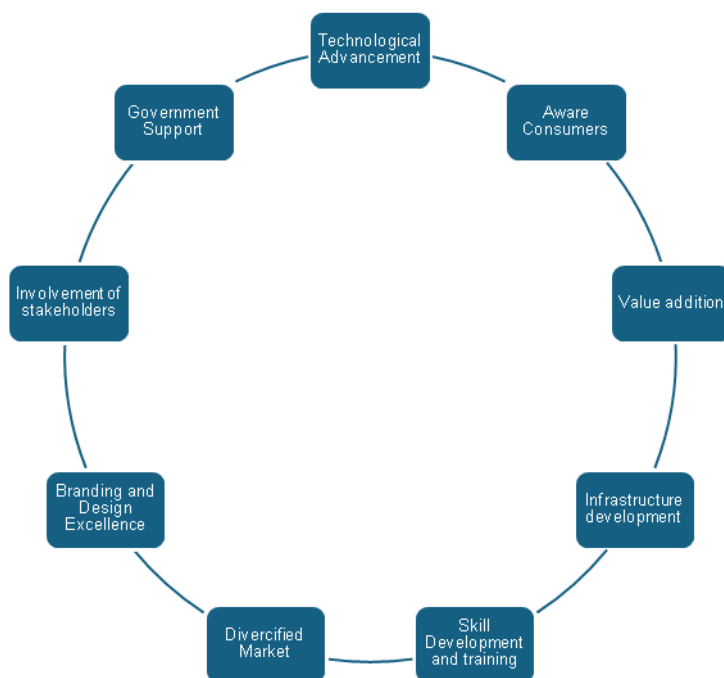
Conclusion: The collection and analysis of secondary data from various sources for identifying trends and insights in relation to the Indian Textiles Sector's approach

towards sustainability presents following conclusion:

Sustainability issues are a real and major concern for Indian Textile Industry due to

their direct and tremendous impact on environment. The importance of the industry as an economy booster as well as employment provider, makes it imperative to make necessary updates to suit the further growth of the industry along with taking care of the sustainability aspect. The first and foremost requirement is to create awareness amongst both the manufacturer and the consumers regarding the issue and its relevance. This awareness will bind the manufacturers to be more responsible, and the consumers will create both pressure and demand for meeting the set guidelines. If the consumer is aware and proactive, it will automatically increase the market demand and reduce cost and price for sustainable products. Another crucial aspect is investment in

research and development in this area. Embracing advanced technologies, such as automation and digitization can enhance productivity and competitiveness. Technologically advanced and superior quality products that are in accordance with sustainability criteria will strengthen India's position in global market as well. This can open new avenues for growth. The government initiatives and policies with a supportive outlook play a crucial role in promoting the industry's growth and competitiveness. However, the recent adoption of robotics, automation and blockchain in the textile stages of spinning, weaving and processing is slowly yet steadily leading to growth in the textile sector (fiber2fashion/Indian textile industry-an-overview)



The analysis and results of the paper are imperative in as contribution towards understanding of the Indian textiles industry's present scenario. These findings will directly and indirectly support in chalking directions to make judicious decisions and effective strategies. The Indian textiles industry contributes

significantly towards the country's economy and employment generation holds great potential for growth and development to an even larger scale. In this fast-changing world, where environmental concerns and sustainability is becoming increasingly important, this paper steps up to provide insights into the

prospects and challenges faced by the industry and proposed recommendations for future action. It can be concluded that the Indian textiles industry has a promising future and by adopting innovative approaches, investing in research and technology, infrastructure and skills and embracing sustainability it can shine at the global level as a leader. Thus the hypothesis that Indian Textile Sector is not paying attention to sustainability issues, is rejected and it is concluded that the Indian Textile sector is forwarding in the direction of multi-pronged approach towards incorporation of idea of sustainability in all possible areas of the sector and also trying to involve all the stakeholders to contribute as a help to achieving the goal. And its certainly a welcome positive trend.

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