

# Impact of Fast Fashion on Traditional Retail: A Comprehensive Analysis

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## Abstract

In recent times, the fashion industry has transformed unprecedentedly with the introduction of fast fashion. This research study analyses the multifaceted impact of fast fashion on traditional retail. Here, the analysis is carried out comprehensively based on micro and macro perspectives. This study has considered five fashion entities, out of which three are fast fashion and two are retail industries that play a crucial role in the fashion industry across the globe. A case study has also been presented on the selected brands' weekly sales analysis. Finally, this research summarizes the selected industries operational roles and analyses the resultant consequential efforts on production, supplier dynamics, and consumer behaviours by comprehending the fast fashion industry and its implications on the retail industry.

**Keywords:** Fast Fashion, Customer Behaviour, Retail Industry, Data Analysis, Supplier Dynamics.

## 1. Introduction

Traditional retail and fast fashion are two different approaches in the fashion industry, each with its unique characteristics and implications. Fast Fashion (FF) is a term that refers to the production of inexpensive apparel and clothing based on the latest shopping trends at affordable price [1]. FF model has revolutionized the global fashion industry by enabling effective world-wide supply chains and manufacturing networks to minimize the clothing production cycle and introduce new designs from the well-known fashion runway to retail stores. The top fast fashion brands are more agile as it quickly adapts the changing consumer preferences from time to time based on the social media influence, international fashion show

and celebrity influence. In contrary, the traditional retail mainly focuses on the material's durability, premium quality, expert craftsmanship and its heritage over the years. The traditional retails usually take long production time due to their premium quality outcome rather than focusing on the time-to-time fashion upgrade [2].

Traditional retail often targets premium customers who only preferred established brand clothes rather than contemporary style. While fast fashion thrives on trend setting clothes and affordability, traditional retail tends to withstand with only a loyal customer base, who prefer clothing to be an investment for wardrobe longevity. The differences between traditional retail and fast fashion extends beyond the product quality and its pricing to different attributes like consumer behaviour, sustainability and global market dynamics. Fast fashion encourages a new culture of disposable clothing, where people often discard the garments after few months when the trends change. This in turn increases the textile wastage and may also contribute to carbon emissions due to the frequent transportation of garments. On the other hand, the traditional retail is mainly focused on promoting timeless clothes with premium quality and only encourages the customers to invest in the quality clothing style to tackle the seasonal trends [3]. The coexistence of both traditional retail and fast fashion has broadened the market dynamics of the fashion industry. In order to compete with the fast fashion brands, traditional retailers are now forced to develop new strategies like increasing their online presence, introducing limited edition clothing, special editions for young consumers who are conscious of current trends, who may get easily diverted to the fast fashion's trend-setting clothing style. The recent rise of fashion industry has increased the awareness on the sustainability and ethical considerations in the fashion industry. Some consumers and environmental activists have recently raised few concerns about the environmental impact caused by the production of fast fashion clothing including, increased water consumption, chemical utilization and labour in the developing country like India. As a result, recently both the fast fashion and traditional retail brands are forced to adopt sustainable practices [4]. For instance, H&M brand's recycling initiatives, Macy's consciously refurbished and reused materials along with sustainable raw-material sourcing methods.

The fast-fashion clothing mainly attracts the price/budget-sensitive consumers, who also search for trendy styles. With its increasing consumption, fast fashion industries are prompted to prioritize the sustainable production methods and also launch eco-friendlier collections while maintaining their timely trending clothing style.

The brief illustration of the different characteristics of fast fashion and traditional retail are given in Table 1

**Table 1.** Comparison of Fast Fashion and Traditional Retail

<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Fast Fashion</b>	<b>Traditional Retail</b>
Product Launch Frequency	Multiple times a month or weekly	Seasonally (four times a year)
Design Cycle	Short (2-4 weeks)	Long (6-12 months)
Inventory Turnover	High, rapid turnover	Moderate to low turnover
Product Variety	High, many new styles regularly	Moderate, fewer new styles per season
Supply Chain	Agile and flexible	More rigid, long-term supplier relationships
Production Location	Often in low-cost regions, quick response to trends	Mix of domestic and international, stable sources
Pricing Strategy	Affordable, competitive pricing	Varied, often higher than fast fashion
Quality	Moderate, focuses on trendiness over durability	Higher, focuses on durability and craftsmanship
Consumer Target	Trend-conscious, younger demographic	Wide demographic, including brand loyalists
Marketing Approach	Social media, influencer partnerships, fast-paced	Traditional advertising, brand heritage focus
Environmental Impact	Higher due to quick production cycles and waste	Lower, but still significant, more focus on sustainability
Trend Responsiveness	Extremely high, quick adaptation to fashion trends	Moderate, slower adaptation to trends
Store Layout and Experience	Dynamic, fast-paced, frequent stock changes	Stable, organized, consistent store design
Technology Integration	High, with advanced analytics and demand forecasting	Moderate, slower adoption of cutting-edge technologies
Brand Perception	Trendy, fashionable, disposable	Reliable, high-quality, sustainable

Customer Loyalty Programs	Focus on fast rewards and promotions	Focus on long-term loyalty and rewards
Returns Policy	Often less flexible, quick turnover focus	More flexible, customer satisfaction focus

## 2. Evolution of Fast Fashion in India

In this 21st century, the evolution of fast fashion in India reflects the unique fashion dynamics that blend the global fashion influence that align with the preferences of the local population and production capabilities. Initially, India's fashion industry was fully dominated by the traditional retail practices, later the entry of international fast fashion brands and the growth of domestic fast fashion initiatives have transformed the fashion industry significantly [5].

### 2.1 The Influence and Adoption

In the late 20th century, India has started to experience the fashion clothing and apparels from international fast fashion brands such as H&M and ZARA in the market. These stores have introduced the concept of affordable and trendy clothing to people. Slowly, the brands have started to attract the country's youth and middle-class population, who were increasingly influenced by the global fashion trends from social media, digital world and travel influence. The popularity has been significantly increased in the urban and metropolitan areas like Bangalore, New Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai etc., where people have embraced the opportunity to buy the international fashion styles at affordable price [6]. As international brands established their presence, local retailers and designers also began to adapt to the fast fashion model. Indian brands like Fabindia, westside, Reliance and Zudio have started to manufacture clothes that satisfy local tastes and preferences to offer affordable, trend-driven collections with quick production times. This localization strategy allowed to compete effectively with global players while catering to the diverse fashion sensibilities across different regions of India. Indian consumers, particularly Gen Z and millennials, have embraced fast fashion for its affordability, variety, and ability to reflect their individuality and fashion-forward sensibilities. Social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok have played a pivotal role in shaping consumer preferences and driving demand for new trends. Influencers and celebrities often collaborate with fast fashion brands to amplify their reach and influence purchasing decisions among their followers [7].

## 2.2 E-commerce and Digital Transformation

The increased usage of E-Commerce platforms particularly after the global pandemic COVID-19 have accelerated the growth of fast fashion industry in India. Online retailers like Ajo, Myntra, Flipkart and Amazon have provided convenient and digital access to buy a wide range of fast fashion choices at the comfort of staying at home. The major shift towards the online shopping has increased the adaptation of fast fashion trend and its market expansion. India's ability to offer abundant supply of raw materials, skilled workforce, and competitive production costs made it an attractive hub for both domestic and international fast fashion brands looking to optimize their supply chains. Many fast fashion brands in India such as ZARA, Uniqlo have adopted a "design-to-deliver" model, leveraging local manufacturing capabilities to shorten lead times and respond swiftly to the evolving consumer preferences.

There are three key elements that drive Fast Fashion Industry forward, they are:

**Globalization:** Providing access to low-cost labor markets to produce clothing cheaply and quickly.

**Technological Advancements:** Increasing innovations in design, production, and logistics enabled faster turnaround times.

**Consumer Behavior:** Increasing demand for new and trendy clothing led to a shift towards more frequent shopping and higher turnover of fashion collections.

## 2.3 Notable Fast Fashion Brands in India

### **ZARA**

Company Name: Inditex Group

As a business strategy, Zara revolves around fast fashion and vertical integration. It is famous for its agile supply chain and immediate reaction to fashion fads. By combination of in-house design, manufacturing, and distribution, Zara concentrates on delivering fashionable clothes to customers at affordable prices. New collections are launched by Zara after every two weeks. This allows it to continuously renew its product mix with the most recent styles and trends from different seasons. Such frequent changes in stock ensure that Zara remains valid and attractive for fashion-conscious consumers all over the globe.

The market value of Inditex, the parent company of Zara, is roughly 90 billion Euros making it one of the largest fashion retailers globally in terms of market capitalization [8].

### **H&M (Hennes & Mauritz)**

Company Name: H&M Group

The H&M business strategy is built around affordable but trendy clothes. The brand has a strong bias towards sustainability and has made commitments to using eco-friendly inputs as well as operations. Besides, H&M is widely distributed globally with many stores and an online platform. Several times in a year, the company launches an array of collections that include partnerships with famous designers and stars. Such activities increase hype that draws traffic to both online shopping site including traditional shops thus making H&M a vogue setter in fast fashion industry.

With more than SEK 230 billion of market capitalisation by the Mueller family trust it reflects how much they have influenced global fashion trends through their holdings within this particular sector [8].

### **Zudio**

Company Name: Trent Limited (A Tata Enterprise)

Zudio, which is part of Tata Group's retail arm called Trent Limited, offers affordable fashion for the whole family. The brand is about value and accessibility with clothes that are trendy and have a good quality for consumers who are sensitive to prices. It operates stores across India. Every now and then Zudio updates its product offerings with new arrivals that keep pace with current fashion trends. Diverse consumer preferences from various regions in India are taken into account when designing the brand's product launches so as to maintain their relevance and appeal within the competitive clothing industry.

With INR 40,000 crore market capitalization (Indian Rupees), this reflects Trent Limited's strong position in Indian retail sector, one of the biggest contributors to Tata Group's business portfolio [9].

## **3. Literature Review**

This section reviews the impact of fast fashion on traditional retail. Most of the existing research studies raise a complex issue with several key research gaps. Mukendi et. al [10]

highlights the need to explore the increasing need for sustainable fashion, particularly in terms of upgrading consumer habits and organizational workflow. Camargo et. al [11] identified the strategic differences between the emerging ultra-fast and fast fashion supply chain management, suggesting a need to incorporate advanced digital and sensor technology in the fashion industry. Schleper et. al [12] highlighted the need for extending the research on the pandemic-based impacts of COVID-19 on retail, which has likely increased the challenges faced by traditional retailers in the era of fast fashion. Optitek et. al [13] have analysed how fast the fashion retail chains has developed a good and mutual relationship with their suppliers. As a result, the study found that there is a need to formulate standard practices for defining the relationship of brands and their suppliers. Bailey et. al [14] have analysed the environmental impact of fast fashion by evaluating the clothing production process based on its carbon footprint. The study suggested the introduction of recycling and a circular economy to develop a sustainable fashion. As an alternate solution, Cai et.al [15] have suggested the utilization of technologies like AI, VR and AR for enabling inventory management in fashion industry. Abbate et.al [16] have also supported this research initiative by identifying the sub-fields in fast fashion that require new approaches to support the introduction of circular economy and sustainable practices and also suggested ways to improve consumer behaviour analysis. These studies illustrated in Table 2 collectively point to the need for more research on the environmental, strategic, and operational aspects of fast fashion's impact on traditional retail.

**Table 2.** Literature Review

References	Key Findings	Limitations	Research Gaps
Mukendi et al. [10]	Identified seven research streams shaping consumer habits and practices	Representative sample only	Influence on major fashion brands towards sustainability
Camargo et al. [11]	Analyzed ultra-fast and fast fashion supply chain strategies	Restricted sample	Technology as a competitive advantage in ultra-fast fashion
Schelper et al. [12]	Impact of COVID-19 on fast fashion and traditional retail	Lacks specific impact analysis	Effect on specific fashion brands

Opitek et al. [13]	Insights on retailer-supplier relationships in fast fashion	No conclusive evidence	Best practices for retailer-supplier relationships
Bailey et al. [14]	Evaluated clothing production's carbon and water footprints	Lacks quantitative water quality analysis	Water footprints, recycling, sustainable fashion
Cai et al. [15]	Role of new technologies in supply chain and inventory management	Absence of Omni channel exploration	New technologies in Omni channel management
Abbate et al. [16]	Consumer behavior towards sustainable clothing and circular economy	No effective solutions suggested	Unexplored sub-fields in sustainability

#### 4. Research Methodology

The research methodology used here initiates an analysis on the fast fashion industry based on two different perspectives: Micro Analysis and Macro Analysis. For qualitative and quantitative analysis, this study investigates the six leading fashion brands, which include 3 top fast fashion brands in India viz. ZARA, H&M and Zudio. For a comparison, this study has considered top retail brands like Macy's, Nordstrom and Gap Inc. This study employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative data analysis to gain a comprehensive overview on the impact of fast fashion culture. The qualitative analysis provides a micro and macro perspective of fast fashion in retail industry. The quantitative analysis provides a statistical analysis on the spread of fast fashion brands.

##### 4.1 Data Collection

###### Primary Data Collection

The data collection phase includes collecting the financial reports, corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports, website blogs, SDGs from the official websites of the considered six leading fashion brands.

## 4.2 Secondary Data Collection

Additionally, as a secondary data, we have also collected the market analysis reports of the selected brands from the well-known industry-specific data reporting companies like Deloitte and McKinsey. Also, to gain deeper insights, we have also analysed the already published research studies in well-known academic repositories like Springer, Elsevier, MDPI, and Emerald as shown in Table 2.

To be more specific, by analysing the annual revenue generated by each brand and its number of employees, the economic impact has been analysed. Further, by going through the fashion brand’s official website, their usage of water resources and sustainable materials to reduce carbon footprint has been analysed to comprehend their environmental initiative. Next, their social responsibility is analysed by going through their working conditions, labour practices and community engagement. Finally, this study analyses how the advanced technologies are advancing the brands’ supply chain management, digital marketing, E-Commerce, and production process.

## 5. Impact Analysis



**Figure 1.** Impact of Fast Fashion on Traditional Retail – Micro Perspective

With the summarized facts given on the micro impact of fast fashion in traditional retail in figure 1, this perspective focuses on how the fast fashion industry operates in a traditional retail context by focusing on achieving a high product turnover, effective supply chain models and responsive actions to consumer trends.

### **5.1 Responsive to the Current Design and Trend**

It is a well-known fact that the fast fashion brands have the regular activity of updating their traditional retail outlet by recreating the top fashion runway trends and street fashions into affordable range clothing. Fast fashion brands like H&M and ZARA have their in-house design teams, whose work is to continuously monitor the new launches in fashion shows, fashion trends in social media to identify and launch the translated affordable version of it in their outlet within two to three weeks, on the other hand, the traditional retail fashion houses take at least 6-months long cycles to manufacture a new style clothing as they prefer quality over quantity.

### **5.2 Achieving Efficiency in terms of Production Cycle and Supply Chain**

The main strength for the micro-level success of fast fashion is its responsive and effective supply chain. ZARA pioneered this process by using the Just-In-Time (JIT) production strategy, where the company will only manufacture clothing in small batches and frequently the design will be changed based on the consumer demand. This strategy reduces the inventory cost and the risk of over-production. Also, the fast fashion companies will often outsource the manufacturing process to countries that have low labour costs such as Vietnam, Bangladesh etc. On the other hand, the traditional retails brands strictly follow a controlled supply chain with only qualified and strategic partnerships that ensure high quality. Moreover, logistics play a major role in rapid spread of the fast fashion industry. For Example: ZARA's central distribution center located in Spain can process and ship the goods worldwide within a time span of 48 hours. This helps to ensure the timely reach of new collections to the retail floor.

### **5.3 Consumer Engagement and Marketing Strategy Impact**

Fast fashion introduces aggressive marketing strategies in the retail industry to attract and at the same time retain customers. The aggressive marketing strategies include social media engagement, celebrity influencer partnership, frequent advertisement and in-store offers and

promotions. Brands like H&M and Zudio are active in showcasing their new collections in social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram and Facebook by creating a fashion buzz with celebrity influencer collaborations to drive consumer traffic to their online and physical stores. On the other hand, in-store experience plays a crucial role in attracting customers. The fast fashion stores will often have a visually appealing front hangings, which may even attract the window shopping consumers. The fast fashion brands overtake the traditional retail outlets with its dynamic visual merchandising and constant inflow of new products which the traditional retailers don't prefer as they give utmost preference to the classy design collections with limited inflow of new designs.

#### **5.4 Inventory Management and Sales Strategy Impact**

As the fast fashion retailers have a high inflow of new products, they use advanced inventory tracking system to regularly monitor the weekly sales and adjust the in-store stock levels accordingly. This regular monitoring helps them to easily identify the popular products to repeat the same type of design and remove the unsold and less popular designs. Moreover, this also helps them to gain insights on the product pricing strategies. In contrary to the traditional retailers, fast fashion stores often follow different promotion strategies like seasonal sales, special promotions and discount coupons to create a sense of urge to purchase. Also, their limited time offers and exclusive collections helps to clear out old stocks in order to make space for more newly launched items.

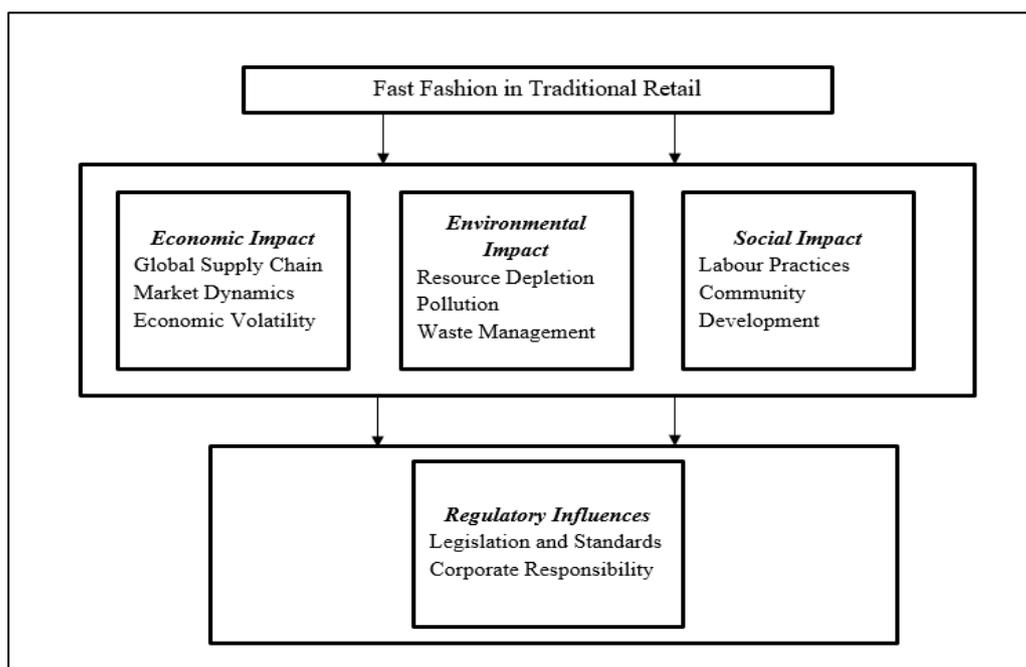
#### **5.5 Impact of Purchasing and Customer Behaviour Pattern Analysis**

The traditional retailers usually depend on the artisans' and designer's new ideas to launch new products into the fashion market but fast fashion business capitalizes only the consumer's preferences and the ways to launch more affordable fashion. This has led to a new trend of buying clothes for less price and using it only for a short period of time unlike the products sold by traditional retailers, which stands out in quality and can also be worn as a classic outfit irrespective of the new fashion trend. Even though the business model followed by fast fashion has attracted people to buy more clothes at affordable price range, the model also faces criticism for its overconsumption of resources and causing both environmental and societal issues. As this impact grows, people and many fast fashion brands are slowly moving towards sustainable alternatives.

## 5.6 Sustainability and Ethical Compliance Impact

The frequent production cycles and increased turnover of fast fashion industry results in increased resource consumption, pollution and waste generation demands an immediate solution. Both fast fashion retailers and traditional retailers are moving towards adopting sustainable practices like using sustainable materials and reducing wastage during the manufacturing process. On the other hand, traditional retailers are moving towards emphasizing ethical material sourcing practices, fair labour policies, and the community development programs. Additionally, the competitive pricing of fast fashion brands has pushed the traditional retailers also to balance cost-cutting by integrating innovations such as circular fashion models and technologies for enabling transparency in supply chain to meet customer expectations and follow sustainable practices.

## 5.7 Qualitative Analysis (Macro Perspective)



**Figure 2.** Impact of Fast Fashion on Traditional Retail – Macro Perspective

With the summarized facts given on the macro impact of fast fashion in traditional retail in figure 2, this perspective focuses on how the fast fashion industry operates in a traditional retail context and how it makes considerable economic, environmental and social impact with formulating new regulatory influences in traditional retail. Fast fashion's influence extends beyond the individual retailers, shaping entire economies and industries.

### ❖ **Economic Impact**

Fast Fashion generally relies on the complex global supply chain models to produce and distribute textile garments quickly and affordably to different parts of the world. Their production usually takes place in developing countries with lower labour wages. While this approach benefits fast fashion brands it also contributes to the economic benefits of the developing countries in terms of job creation and contributing the country's GDP. Despite this positive economic impact, there is also some negative facts such as poor working conditions, exploitation and economic dependence on the unstable fashion demand. Fast fashion industry is characterized by fast production cycles and sell new, trendy clothing at low price. This has significantly impacted the traditional retail models by forcing the established traditional retail brands to either risk or adapt obsolescence. As the fast fashion industry works based on continuous innovation and improvements in efficiency, traditional retailers are increasingly adopting the elements of fast fashion business model like shortening their production cycles and developing responsive supply chain model. This paradigm shift impacts the traditional retail market by increasing customer expectations on clothing and styling variety with quick turnaround time. Overall, the quick trends and increasing consumer demand of the fast fashion industry makes it susceptible to the economic fluctuations. Hence, the changes in the people's spending habits, global economic conditions and the global trade policies can create a major impact on the fashion industry.

### ❖ **Environmental Impact**

Despite its increasing production rates and the ability to increase the economic value of a country, Fast fashion also results in some negative impact on the environment as the high production rates lead to increased resource consumption from nature such as water, energy and the increased usage of various raw materials such as cotton, silk and synthetic fabrics. This extensive usage leads to environmental degradation. Traditional retailers are currently working under the pressure to adopt sustainable practices like sourcing eco-friendly raw materials that have zero impact on nature.

Next, the fashion industry is majorly contributing to the environmental pollution. The material dyeing and finishing process releases harmful chemicals and also contributes to the micro-plastic pollution. Traditional retailers are now responding to overcome these challenges

by implementing green production method and reduce carbon footprints by introducing water-efficient natural dyeing process and using harmless chemicals. Recently, the fast fashion models promote the culture of frequent disposability, which results in massive textile wastes and landfill overflow. To combat this challenge, traditional retailers are now adopting circular economy principles such as take-back schemes, recycling programs, and promotion of thrift clothing.

### ❖ **Social Impact**

Fast fashion always prefers cheap labour from the developing and under developed countries. This action may lead to lack of worker rights, low wages and unethical working conditions. These practices call for defining better labour standards. Traditional retailers are now working towards improving their labour practices by conducting regular audits, ensuring labour law compliance and investing in worker welfare programs. Also, employing more labours from a low-income community group will increase their economic dependence on fashion industry making them vulnerable to the sudden market changes. To overcome this, some traditional retailers are now focused on supporting community development initiatives by introducing fair trade practices and local economic development projects and skill development programs to enable long-term sustainability and stability.

### ❖ **Regulatory Influences**

Recently many international governmental and non-governmental organizations are implementing different standards and regulations to reduce the social and environmental impact of fast fashion industry. These include environmental regulations, labour laws and sustainability and eco-friendly certifications. As fashion brands seek to advance their image and meet the expectations of stakeholders, they are increasingly taking up corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. This involves making commitments to sustainability, ethical labour practices, as well as engaging with the community.

### ❖ **Quantitative Analysis**

This analysis shows the dynamic nature of fashion retail and how fast fashion's agility and reliability cater to different consumer segments. As the market evolves, fast fashion will

need to balance innovation and tradition to sustain growth and meet changing consumer expectations.

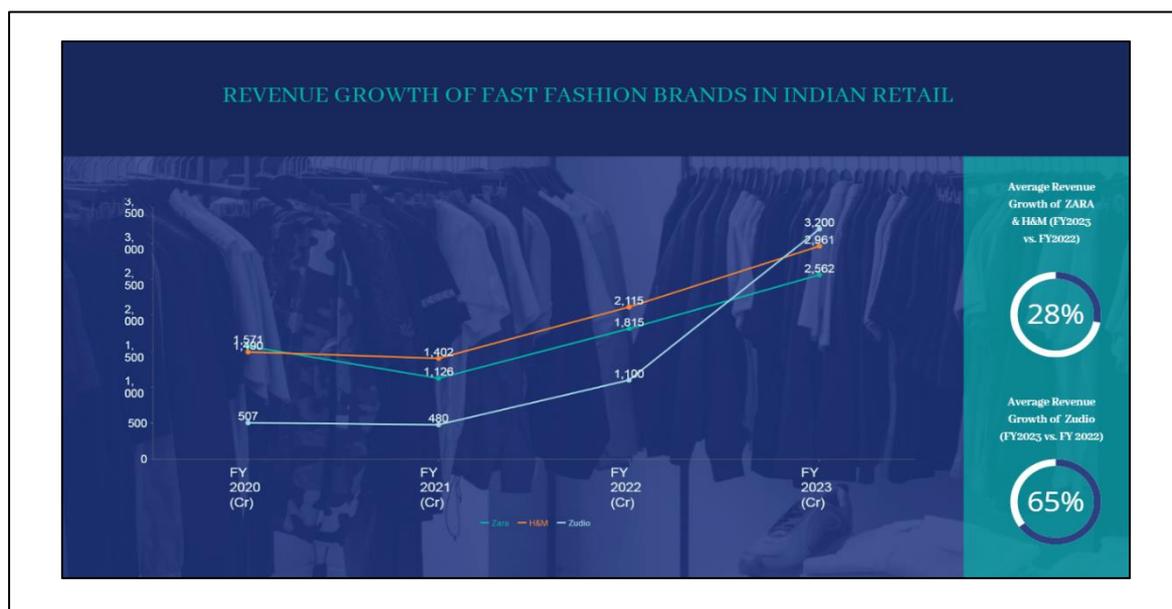
For quantitative analysis, here this study analysed the annual reports and financial statements of Zara, H&M, and Zudio from their official statements and their respective stock exchange prices for the Fiscal Year 2020 (FY2020) to Fiscal Year 2023 (FY2023). Reports from market research firms, online databases, new articles, press releases like Livemint, Economic Times, Deloitte and McKinsey were reviewed to get more insights. The total number of stores for each brand was taken from their official websites.

### ❖ Data Analysis

The revenue generated by each brand were compared year-wise to calculate the growth rate, here, this study calculates the growth from FY2022 to FY2023 using the following formula:

$$\text{Revenue Growth} = \frac{(\text{Revenue generated in FY2023} - \text{Revenue Generated in FY2022})}{(\text{Revenue Generated in FY2022})} \times 100$$

The revenue data of Zara, H&M, and Zudio were compared across the four fiscal years (FY2020 to FY2023) and finally the trends, growth patterns, and market performance are depicted in figures 3 and 4. Here, the revenue costs are given in terms of INR.



**Figure 3.** Revenue Growth Comparison

From Figure 3, it is evident that Zudio has demonstrated the highest revenue growth at 65% from FY22 to FY23, significantly outperforming Zara (29%) and H&M (28%). On the other hand, Zara and H&M have shown consistent revenue growth but at a slower pace compared to Zudio.

#### ❖ Store Expansion Analysis

The analysis projected in Figure 4 also reveals that Zudio has the highest number of stores (557), which is substantially more than H&M (63) and Zara (21). The large number of Zudio stores indicates a strong market presence and accessibility, contributing to its revenue growth.



**Figure 4.** Store Expansion Analysis

To analyse the impact of fast fashion in retail and quickly bring the newest trends to customers, Zudio is empowered by fast fashion ideas while still maintaining a flexible designing, manufacturing and distribution process. Consequently, the brand can be at par with rapidly shifting fashions and adapt to customer requirements promptly. Thus Zudio's aggressive store expansion that has reached 557 locations mainly in Tier 2 and T3 cities helps to enhance its visibility and accessibility of its products hence reaching out to untapped markets. Middle income consumers are targeted because they appreciate affordability in fashion as they get value for their money through logistical control on costs making use of large numbers. By providing cheap trendy clothes, Zudio satisfies the needs of price sensitive consumers that generate traffic and sales volume. This brand perception of affordability, trendiness and accessibility is also maintained through targeted marketing tactics. A good supply chain system plus local sourcing promotes competitive pricing for Zudio brand.

Meanwhile, considering the likes of H&M or Zara which are seen as premium brands, the latter sets itself apart concentrating on market penetration into less developed areas at affordable prices thereby giving it a competitive advantage over others.

## **6. Strategies to Make Positive Impact of Fast Fashion on Traditional Retail**

### **6.1 Preferring Eco-Friendly Clothing Fashion**

Fast fashion brands can use recycled and sustainable materials in the clothing production cycle. Recently, some Indian rooted brands like Nicobar are using organic cotton, which reduces the usage of water. Brand like “No Nasties” have made an initiative on using recycled materials like wool or polyester in manufacturing new clothes. The well-known brand H&M has launched the take-back programs, where they will give exclusive discounts for the customers who return their used/thrift clothes back in the store.

### **6.2 Enabling Transparency in Supply Chain**

Nowadays, consumers are becoming more conscious on the ethical and environmental impact of their clothing. In such a case, transparency helps to build trust. Also, it helps to differentiate the brands based on their quality. As an initiative for this H&M publishes a list of their production facilities and some brands have started to release their annual sustainability reports. Since self-reported data by brands does not ensure accuracy, in the future all the brands can move towards following a common ranking index like “Fashion Revolution Transparency Index” to know where they actually rank in terms of transparency and sustainability. Also, the advanced technologies and location tracking networks can be used to trace the entire journey of clothes from the raw material sourcing, production to purchase.

### **6.3 Preferring Quality Over Quantity**

Preferring quality over quantity is totally contradictory with the core concept of the fast fashion business model as it always thrives on assuring low prices, high turnover and trendy clothing styles but with the growing movement towards the sustainable fashion, the fast fashion should also start moving towards introducing timeless designs and more options on organic cotton, linen, and Tencel material based clothes. Some notable brands like Virgio, knowtow, Everlane and No Nasties have started manufacturing quality clothing with a focus on ethical

production. To withstand the future, moving forward and preferring quality clothing will be viable solution for fast fashion brands.

#### **6.4 Enabling Advanced Retail Experience**

Efforts can be made to connect and use both online and offline experience and also to engage in-store experience by introducing interactive displays, personalized styling services and organizing exclusive events to attract customers to the store. Some fast fashion brands have already initiated such measures: ZARA offer features like click-and-collect (buy online, pick up in store), reserve in store (check online if an item is available in your size at a specific store), and the ability to scan items in-store for more information or to see if other sizes/colors are available online. Similar to Zara, Mango offers click-and-collect and online inventory checks for physical stores. They also utilize digital signage in-store to showcase new arrivals and styling inspiration. H&M has a robust online presence and leverages it to enhance the in-store experience. They offer self-service kiosks for checking stock, ordering online for in-store pickup, and even returning online purchases in-store. Forever 21 has experimented with interactive touchscreens for product information and styling suggestions, as well as offering social media integration points where customers can share their outfits.

#### **6.5 Increasing Collaboration with Local Artisans**

While fast fashion brands are known for mass production and trend-driven designs, these brands can also focus on collaborating and promoting local craftsmen and artisans as they typically charge low wages when compared to the qualified top fashion designers. Recently, a small but growing number of fast fashion brands are incorporating such collaborations, they are: H&M collaborated with the Indigo People of Oaxaca, Mexico, on a collection that incorporated traditional dyeing methods. Levi's partnered with artisans in Guatemala on a limited-edition collection featuring traditional weaving techniques.

#### **6.6 Introducing Technology and Innovation in Inventory Management**

Fast fashion brands can utilize the state-of-the-art data analytics technology to manage inventory and reduce the wastage and overproduction. Some fast fashion brands have implemented such measures; they are: Zara uses real-time sales data and customer feedback to adjust production and distribution. This helps them minimize overstock and ensure popular styles are readily available. H&M leverages data analytics to analyse sales trends and optimize inventory levels across different regions and channels. They can identify slow-selling items

early and adjust production accordingly. Mango offers a virtual try-on feature on their app that allows customers to see how clothes would look on them using their phone's camera. American Eagle has a similar virtual try-on feature in their app, allowing customers to see clothing on a 3D model or upload their own photo for a more personalized experience.

### **6.7 Introducing Community Engagement**

While organising community events and charitable partnerships promoting sustainability are rare in fast fashion, some initiatives can be taken to contribute to building a more mindful and environmentally conscious fashion industry. In recent past, some fast-fashion brands have organized clothing donation drives, although these are not widespread or a consistent part of their business model. For example, H&M has run clothing collection initiatives.

By implementing these strategies, fast fashion can have a more positive impact on traditional retail, balancing the need for trend-driven, affordable clothing with sustainability and ethical considerations.

## **7. Conclusion**

From the qualitative and quantitative analysis carried out in this research study, it is evident that the fast fashion has changed the face of fashion by providing cheap and fashionable clothes at an unprecedented rate. Nonetheless, this sustainable business model has huge drawbacks such as environmental damage, labor exploitation, and undermining the traditional retail. The public is increasingly demanding sustainable and ethical approaches to fashion as they become more conscious of these problems. Traditional retailers have to respond to this challenge by embracing innovation, improving their value proposition and emphasizing sustainability. This may result in a hybrid approach whereby the future fashion industry combines fast fashions' agility with traditional retails' focus on quality and ethics thereby creating a more equitable market.

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