A Comparative Study of CEM on Fashion Brands in Trade & Commerce: A Study of Select Indian Brands

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ABSTRACT

This Study conducts a Comparative analysis of three Selected Brands. These brands are selected on the basis of Popularity among the Consumer. Consumer Experience which is one of the important factors is performed to judge the most popular brands in Fashion by performing CEM Strategy. The research performs a descriptive research, Comparative analysis & exploratory research. The study is based on the Primary source of collection of Data through Questionnaire & Google forms. The study s based on H&M, Fab India& Van Heusen which follows different division & Strategies. The research shows that H&M leads in most of the Digital aspect, Fab India performs moderately in most metrics & Van Heusen lags behind because they are niche focused. The research integrates the comparisons between the Brands on the basis of different categories to check the awareness of consumers which makes the study one of kind in itself.

Keywords: AI adoption, Sustainability, H&M, Fab India & Van Heusen.

Introduction

Fashion has always plays a meaningful role in overall trade and commerce serving as a intermediary between different economic, cultural, social & consumer preferences. Indian fashion has tremendously gained appreciation on worldwide presence as diversification, internationalization & technological up gradation increases the importance of CEM in the fashion Industry. According to (**Schmitt 1999**), customer experience extends beyond product features and encompasses sensory, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. Factors such as personalized shopping experiences, Omni channel retailing, sustainable sourcing & brand storytelling will became a key differentiation in a highly competitive market. *(**Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010**)* examine the rise of global fast fashion retailers in emerging markets and their emphasis on speed, efficiency, and digitalization.

This Study aims to assess the role of Fashion in Trade & Commerce, focusing on how Select Indian Brands uses the Consumer Experience to stay ahead. (**Joy et al. 2012**) argue that while fast fashion promotes affordability and variety, it often conflicts with the values of ethical consumption. (**Verhoef et al. 2015**) suggest that integrated channels lead to increased customer satisfaction and greater lifetime value.

Fashion Industry is known for his influential consumer preferences. (**Pantano & Gandini 2017**) highlight that digital retailing allows fashion brands to create immersive experiences across channels, which leads to improved consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

Fab India

Among the different Brands Fab India stands out as a leader in ethical fashion and sustainable consumer engagement. Founded with the vision of promoting Indian artisanship, Fab India has successfully positioned itself as a global brand while staying rooted in traditional textiles and handcrafted products. FabIndia**,** an Indian brand rooted in traditional craftsmanship, is often celebrated for its ethical

sourcing and support for rural artisans, making sustainability intrinsic to its brand philosophy (Mishra & Goyal, 2021).

This study explores the role of Women's fashion in India's trade and commerce, focusing on how Fab India manages consumer experiences to maintain a competitive edge. (Jain & Roy, 2020) this research aims to highlight Fab India's impact on the international fashion economy.

H&M

H&M (Hennes & Mauritz) has established itself as a leading player in the global fashion industry, offering a balance between affordability, trend-driven designs, and sustainability initiatives. (Shen, 2014) As a Multinational Brand operating in India, H&M integrates global fashion trends with local market preferences, creating a seamless shopping experience for consumers. The brand's commitment to circular fashion, ethical sourcing, and digital innovation further strengthens its position in the international fashion economy.

H&M is a front-runner in implementing AI, Big Data, and Omni channel retailing to personalize consumer engagement and streamline logistics (Weller, 2019) and sustainability initiatives, this research aims to highlight H&M's impact on the global fashion industry.

Van Heusen

Van Heusen brand under Aditya Birla Fashion & Retail Ltd., caters to the growing segment of working professionals who seek chic, stylish, and functional apparel Van Heusen focuses more on technological innovation and less prominently markets sustainability, although it adheres to corporate responsibility frameworks in India (Kumar & Singh, 2020). By integrating global fashion trends with Indian market preferences, Van Heusen has notably advanced in tech-enabled retail through "Van Heusen Style Studio," enhancing shopping with AI-driven recommendations, a trend aligning with aspirational Indian consumers (Rao & Sharma, 2021).

Literature Review

Consumer Experience Management

(Lemon, Verhoef, 2016). (Kim, Lee, and Shin 2019), CEM is particularly vital in the fashion industry due to the emotional and experiential aspects tied to clothing purchases. The global apparel market size was valued at $1.5 trillion in 2020 and is expected to grow, with significant contributions from women's clothing *(McKinsey & Company, 2020).* A study by *Hennig-Thurau et al. (2006)* suggests that global commerce has redefined the consumer brand relationship, especially in the fashion industry, where trends rapidly evolve.

The rise of Omni Channel retailing has necessitated that brands in the fashion sector enhance their CEM by integrating in-store and online experiences seamlessly *(Verhoef et al., 2015).* In the context of fashion, brands need to cater to diverse cultural preferences while maintaining a consistent brand identity *(Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011).* Research by *(Ahmed & Shim 2020)* highlights cultural sensitivity in advertising. The age of digital disruption and to address sustainability concerns by *(Bocken et al., 2016).* The introduction of personalized styling advice helps enhance the overall consumer experience *(Sharma et al., 2019).*

The brand's loyalty programs incentivize repeat purchases, offering members exclusive promotions and early access to new collections *(Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).* Virtual Try-Ons and Fit Prediction help minimize dissatisfaction due to wrong sizes or fit issues, improving the overall consumer experience *(Pantano, 2015).* Suggest that offering a holistic and memorable shopping journey that spans personalized experiences. *(Pine & Gilmore, 1999).* According to *Kapoor (2020),* the brand's emphasis is on sustainable practices *(Zhang, 2019).* Social media platforms provide an opportunity for consumers to engage directly with the brand *(Chahal & Rani, 2020).*

H&M

H&M is one of the key players in the global clothing market, focusing on customer engagement through personalization. According to *Forbes (2020),* H&M's consumer experience strategy includes integrating online and offline shopping experiences, personalized recommendations based on purchase behavior, and a strong commitment to sustainability. According to *Malshe and Saeed (2019),* H&M has made significant investments in technology, implementing AI and data analytics to offer personalized recommendations based on customers' past shopping behaviors.

This strategy not only enhances convenience but also increases consumer loyalty. H&M continues to champion sustainability, as evidenced by its global garment collection initiatives and the promotion of circular economy practices *(Joergens, 2017)*.H&M leads the charge in the fashion industry by leveraging AI and machine learning for inventory management, demand forecasting, and personalized marketing *(Dube et al., 2018)*.

Hypothesis

H&M shows significantly higher adoption practices like AI, Big Data, and Omni Chanel Retailing than Fab India & Van Heusen.

Fab India

According to a study by *Singh and Sharma (2018),* Fab India differentiates itself by focusing on the cultural experience and emotional connection with customers. Fab India focuses on community-driven initiatives. This approach builds a distinct consumer experience that resonates with its target demographic, consisting of middle to high-income individuals interested in both traditional and sustainable fashion *(Singh, 2020).*In Fab India Personalized recommendations on the website also help guide customers toward products aligned with their values *(KPMG, 2021).*Augmented reality, by providing virtual views of clothing in different environments or on a virtual avatar, could greatly enhance Fab India's ability to engage customers and highlight its craftsmanship *(Huang & Liao, 2017). (Sharma & Arora, 2020),* customers are drawn to Fab India because it provides them with a sense of cultural belonging and pride, as well as an opportunity to contribute to the preservation of traditional skills. Fab India's website and mobile platforms also provide this sense of authenticity, often showcasing behind-the-scenes videos and profiles of artisans, which reinforces the brand's identity and connects online shoppers with the physical stores' cultural narratives *(Kannan & Li, 2017).*

Hypothesis

Fab India scores higher on the sustainability index compared to H&M and Van Heusen

Van Heusen

In Van Heusen's approach to CEM *Sharma et al. (2019),*the brand's strength lies in its ability to blend physical and digital experiences, making it easy for consumers to purchase apparel both in-store and online. Van Heusen has started to incorporate eco-friendly materials into its collections, as reported by *Kapoor (2020),*the brand's gradual move toward sustainability, while still in its early stages. Van Heusen, too, has started incorporating virtual try-ons on its website to help customers make informed decisions *(Pantano, 2015).* Literature on retail technology innovation underscores Van Heusen's use of digital solutions to enhance shopping experiences. The 'Style Studio' concept, which includes body scanners, virtual trial mirrors, and interactive touch screens, reflects a shift towards experiential retail *(Retail Technology Review, 2017).*

Several studies emphasize the importance of product diversification in retaining consumer interest. Van Heusen Women's foray into the innerwear and athleisure segments is highlighted as a response to a ₹16,000 cr. market opportunity *(India Retailing, 2018).*

Hypothesis

Among H&M, Fab India & Van Heusen. Van Heusen has the highest social media presence because of its global brand appeal.

Research Objective

The Research objectives are:

- To assess and compare the uses of digital tools (AI, Big data, social media presence, sustainability & global trade efforts by these brands

- To analyze the influence of age and gender on brand perception in relation to digital transformation.

- To analyze the ranking to the brands on the basis of different factors studied in the research.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research to examine the consumer perception among selected fashion brands- H&M, Fab India and Van Heusen. Fab India focuses on ethical fashion & handcrafted textile, H&M uses AI driven personalization & focuses on affordability & sustainable initiative. Van

Heusen focuses on Premium Quality & Work wear fashion. These brands are selected on the basis of performance in the fashion industry. The design help in understanding the differences on the grounds of age and gender.

A Non probability purposive sampling method was used to collect data from the consumer who are aware or have interacted with any one of the Selected Brands. The total sample size is of 160 respondents using primary data collection through a structured Questionnaire which includes closed Questionnaire. The data is collected by the respondents from Lucknow region only. The Questionnaire was distributed via online survey method and in person questionnaire filling. Data was compiled using MS Excel & analysis was done by the help of Pivot Table to derive cross Tabulation & data was interpreted on the basis of Age, Gender factors affecting the brand performance and consumer experience related to brands.

Result & Discussion

The purpose of data analysis is to interpret the responses collected from the respondents which include the demographic information and Questions related to Factors and their relationship with the selected brands- H&M, Fab India & Van Heusen. The analysis focuses on how consumer perceives the integration of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, Social Media, Sustainable practices as well as their understanding of each brand efforts in Digital Transformation, Omni Channel Retailing & Global Trade. The Study employs a descriptive research to summarize the data.The Pivot table is made with the MS Excel to analyze the data. Each Brands performance across key digital dimension has been evaluated allowing comparison across demographic factors.

Table 1: Table showing the comparison between the Factors, Age Group & Brands

Count of AI Adoption	Age				
Brands	**18-28**	**28--38**	**38-48**	**48-58**	**Grand Total**
Fab India	16	4	1	1	22
H&M	61	19	9	11	100
Van Heusen	20	6	6	5	37
Grand Total	**97**	**29**	**16**	**17**	**159**
Count of Big Data	**Age**				
Brands	**18-28**	**28-38**	**38-48**	**48-58**	**Grand Total**
Fab India	33	8	2	2	45
H&M	54	16	11	11	92
Van Heusen	10	5	3	4	22
Grand Total	**97**	**29**	**16**	**17**	**159**
Count of Social Media	**Age**				
Brands	**18-28**	**28-38**	**38-48**	**48-58**	**Grand Total**
Fab India	18	10	3	2	33
H&M	57	13	7	9	86
None of the above	7	3	2	4	16
Van Heusen	15	3	4	2	24
Grand Total	**97**	**29**	**16**	**17**	**159**
Count of Sustainability	**Age**				
Brands	**18-28**	**28-38**	**38-48**	**48-58**	**Grand Total**
Fab India	40	7	5	6	58
H&M	46	16	9	10	81
Van Heusen	10	6	2	1	19
Grand Total	**96**	**29**	**16**	**17**	**158**
Count of Digital Transformation	**Age**				
Brands	**18-28**	**28-38**	**38-48**	**48-58**	**Grand Total**
Fab India	28	9	6	4	47
H&M	60	19	9	11	99
Van Heusen Women	9	1	1	2	13
Grand Total	**97**	**29**	**16**	**17**	**159**

Count of Omni Channel	Age				
Brands	**18-28**	**28-38**	**38-48**	**48-58**	**Grand Total**
Fab India	25	7	3	5	40
H&M	56	16	9	11	92
Van Heusen	16	6	4	1	27
Grand Total	**97**	**29**	**16**	**17**	**159**
Count of Global Trade	**Age**				
Brands	**18-28**	**28-38**	**38-48**	**48-58**	**Grand Total**
Fab India	24	6	3	4	37
H&M	52	16	10	11	89
Van Heusen	20	7	3	2	32
(blank)					
Grand Total	**96**	**29**	**16**	**17**	**158**

Source: Author

Majority of data is skewed towards the 18-28 groups, suggesting they are most engaged demographic. Age group 28-38 contributes a significant but smaller portion. Very few responses for the age 38+ indicating limited awareness or interaction in older segments. H&M dominates and leads in most of the category with scores 100, 92, 86, 99, 92, 81 & 89. Fab India comes after in performance of H&M with total scores 282 and least in Van Heusen with 174 scores.

Table 2: Chart comparing consumer experience factors across brands on basis of responses (Male & Female)

Count of AI Adoption	Gender		
Brands	**Female**	**Male**	**Grand Total**
Fab India	13	9	22
H&M	60	41	101
Van Heusen	13	24	37
Grand Total	86	74	160
Count of Big Data	**Gender**		
Brands	**Female**	**Male**	**Grand Total**
Fab India	25	20	45
H&M	52	41	93
Van Heusen	9	13	22
Grand Total	**86**	**74**	**160**
Count of Social Media	**Gender**		
Brands	**Female**	**Male**	**Grand Total**
Fab India	17	16	33
H&M	53	34	87
None of the above	5	11	16
Van Heusen	11	13	24
Grand Total	**86**	**74**	**160**
Count of Sustainability	**Gender**		
Brands	**Female**	**Male**	**Grand Total**
Fab India	28	30	58
H&M	49	33	82
Van Heusen	8	11	19
Grand Total	**85**	**74**	**159**
Count of Digital Transformation	**Gender**		
Brands	**Female**	**Male**	**Grand Total**
Fab India	21	26	47
H&M	59	41	100
Van Heusen Women	6	7	13
Grand Total	**86**	**74**	**160**

Count of Omni Channel	Gender		
Brands	Female	Male	Grand Total
Fab India	18	22	40
H&M	54	39	93
Van Heusen	14	13	27
Grand Total	**86**	**74**	**160**
Count of Global Trade	Gender		
Brands	Female	Male	Grand Total
Fab India	17	20	37
H&M	56	34	90
Van Heusen	12	20	32
Grand Total	**85**	**74**	**159**

Source: Author

Across all the parameters female's consumer showed slightly higher engagement compared to males especially for the H&M across all experience dimensions particularly in the area of AI, Big Data, and Sustainability & Digital Transformation.

Male consumers' shows more diversified patterns, while H&M still leads. Fab India gains notable traction among male especially in sustainability, Digital Transformation & Global Trade. Van Heusen sees relatively balanced but lower engagement but especially from the female shoppers.

Table 3: Tabular Presentation Comparing Different Brands on the basis of Factors Opted

S.NO.	FACTORS	H&M	FAB INI	VAN HEUSI	GRAND TOTAL
1	AI Adoption	101	22	37	160
2	Big Data Analysis	92	46	22	160
3	Social Media Presence	87	33	24	144+16=160
4	Sustainability Index	83	58	19	160
5	Digital Transformation	100	47	13	160
6	Omni Channel Retailing	93	40	27	160
7	Global Trade & Commerc	91	37	32	160
8	Grand Total	647	283	174	1120
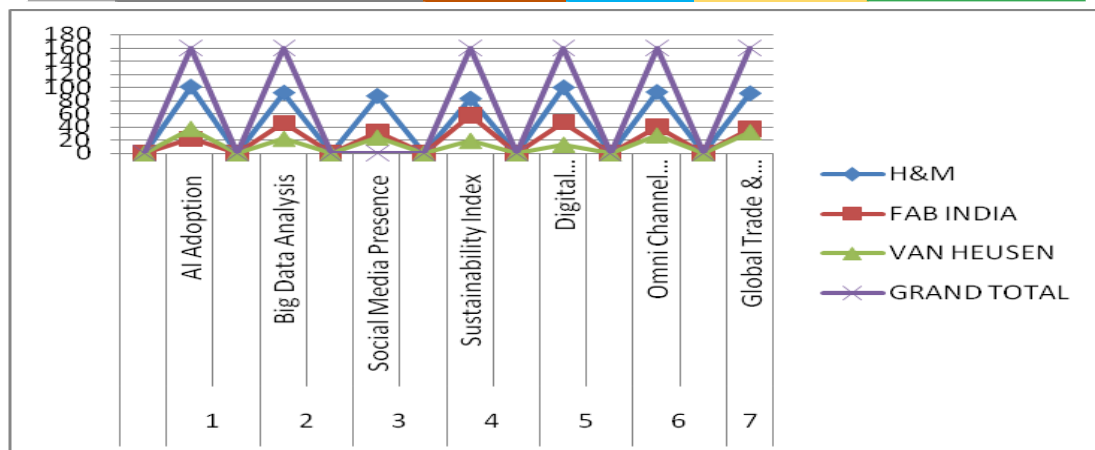
Source: Author

Chart 1: Pictorial Presentation of Different Brands on Various Factor

The chart and table provides a "Comparative analysis of three selected fashion brands- H&M, Fab India & Van Heusen across seven key CEM factors. The overview of total responses includes H&M got the highest responses with 647 total responses followed by Fab India with 283 total & lastly Van Heusen with 174 total responses which makes the grand total 1104 in addition 16 marked None of the above which makes the Total 1120 Responses.

H&M dominates across all CEM factors with especially strong sources in Digital Transformation (100), AI adoption (100), Omni Channel retailing (93), Big Data (91), Global Trade (91). Fab India performs best in the sustainable practices (58), Digital Transformation (47). It shows moderate adoption of Big Data (46) and Omni channel retailing(40) but still they are behind to H&M. Van Heusenlags behind both brands n nearly all the factors expect the Global Trade & Commerce (32) Social Media Influence (33). Its lowest score is in Digital Transformation (13).

Graph Analysis

The Line graph clearly shows that H&M is the leader in all seven factors as the blue line which signifies H&M consistently peeked in all the seven factors. Fab India (orange line) stays in the middle across most categories with a significant rise only in sustainability & Digital Transformation. Van Heusen (Yellow Line) shows more fluctuation and remains lowest in most of the factors.

Conclusion

In case of Hypothesis I which states that H&M shows significantly higher adoption practices than Fab India & Van Heusen. We accept the Hypothesis as empirically validated as H&M leads in all the key dimensions as depicted by Line and Radar Graph. H&M high adoption is reflected in both the male and females on the basis of Gender. Fab India comes second in AI &Omni Channel but ranks higher than Van Heusen in Big Data.

In case of Hypothesis II which states that Fab India scores higher on the sustainability index compared to H&M & Van Heusen. The hypothesis is rejected because it does not support the current data as H&M with 82 scores rank higher on the sustainability index as compared to Fab India with 58 score.

Moving towards the third Hypothesis which states that among H&M, Fab India & Van Heusen, and Van Heusen has the highest social media presence due to its global brand appeal. We reject the Hypothesis because Van Heusen does not have the highest social media presence. H&M clearly dominates in terms of Social Media Engagement.

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