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FAST FASHION BRAND ACCOUNTABILITY IN INDIA: ANALYSING THE LEGAL AND REGULATORY GAPS IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPLY CHAIN

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Abstract

The Indian fashion industry is a diverse and culturally rooted one which was primarily known for its rich heritage and traditional craftsmanship. From hand-stitched garments focused mostly on elaborate and detailed embroidery we experienced a paradigm shift to mass-produced, cheap clothing. The rapid growth of India's fast fashion industry has economically benefitted the country but has also been instrumental in creating a massive environmental crisis on an unprecedented scale characterised by severe water pollution, textile waste generation and heaps of carbon gas emission. Fast fashion brands operating in India remain largely unaccounted for the significant and catastrophic global environment degradation caused by them primarily due to critical gaps existing within the legal and regulatory frameworks governing environment and the environmental supply chain management. This paper takes a dive at examining this accountability deficit by analysing the massive disconnect between brand accountability and legal enforceability within the supply chain. This paper evaluates India's existing legal frameworks including Constitutional provisions, Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and various environmental and textile-specific regulations exploring their lacunas in holding fast fashion brands accountable. This paper also thoroughly scrutinises the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility governed under the Companies Act, 2013 and how mandatory CSR spending requirements often fail to translate into substantive supply chain reforms. Through case studies of multinational brands such as H&M and Zara, this paper exposes the pervasive greenwashing problem where voluntary mechanisms fail to drive substantive supply chain transformation. The role of emerging

technological solutions while acknowledging the implementation barriers in India is also discussed in this paper. The paper concludes by advocating for transforming brand accountability from voluntary initiatives to legally enforceable environmental obligations essential for achieving sustainable fashion practices in India.

Introduction

The Indian fashion industry is a diverse and culturally rooted one which was primarily known for its rich heritage and traditional craftsmanship. From hand-stitched garments focused mostly on elaborate and detailed embroidery we experienced a paradigm shift to mass-produced, cheap clothing. This shift puts India in a paradoxical position, as a civilization with an unbroken 5,000-year textile heritage rooted in sustainable and ethical practices, the country now stands at a critical crossroads in its fashion evolution.¹ Over the years India has started to adopt various practices to become a lucrative market for international fast fashion giants and domestic brands alike. However, this rapid growth of production and other activities has raised several concerns and questions related to the environment. The global fashion industry has emerged as one of the most environmentally destructive forces of our time, second only to oil in terms of its ecological footprint. Accounting for an alarming 10% of annual carbon emissions and nearly 20% of industrial wastewater worldwide, the sector's environmental impact has reached extreme crisis proportions.² Using synthetic fibres, such as polyester, requires vast amounts of fossil fuels, and the production process ends up releasing harmful chemicals into waterways, damaging ecosystems.³ This degradation goes beyond just resource depletion, the fashion industry's supply chain often characterized by their inadequate manufacturing process plays a crucial role in producing greenhouse gases, land pollution, contaminating water bodies, etc. Millions of tons of clothing end up in landfills or are incinerated every year, releasing toxic substances into the air and soil leading to pollution.⁴ The growing waste crisis has also prompted concern over microplastic pollution, as washing synthetic garments releases tiny plastic particles into waterways, contaminating oceans and entering the food chain.⁵ Despite

¹ Anisha Agarwal & Ahmed Ashraf Zaidi, *The Analysis of Sustainable Fashion in India*, International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews, Vol. 6, Issue 5, pp. 4613-4641,

² *Id* at 1

³ Mishra, S., Singh, R. P., Rath, C. C., & Das, A. P. (2020). *Synthetic microfibers: Source, transport and their remediation*. *Journal of Water Process Engineering*, 38, 101612. DOI: 10.1016/j.jwpe.2020.101612

⁴ Bailey, K., Basu, A., & Sharma, S. (2022). *The environmental Impacts of fast fashion on water Quality: A Systematic review*. *Water (Basel)*, 14(7), 1073. DOI: 10.3390/w14071073

⁵ Periyasamy, A. P., & Tehrani- Bagha, A. (2022). *A review on microplastic emission from textile materials and its reduction techniques*. *Polymer Degradation & Stability*, 199, 109901.

the growing environmental crisis many global and renowned fast fashion brands still fail to take accountability for their actions. Brand accountability in this context doesn't mean corporate social responsibility alone but should encompass transparency in sourcing, responsible production practices, compliance with environmental laws and reduction in ecological harm. However, we need to understand that brand accountability is difficult in the fashion industry due to its complex supply chain characterised by multiple tiers of manufacturers, subcontractors and various global sourcing networks. The involvement of different stakeholders within the industry often obscures accountability enabling environmental violations without traceability or any legal consequences.

This present study aims to analyse how brand accountability in the supply chain functions and why brands are not held accountable for the massive amounts of environmental violation caused by them.

Existing Legal Framework for Environmental Supply Chain Management

India's environmental laws are multifaceted and encompass various factors such as pollution prevention, promotion of Sustainable Development, biodiversity conservation, etc. These laws aim to regulate industrial activities, waste management practices, land use planning, and development projects to minimize adverse environmental impacts and promote the sustainable use of natural resources.⁶ This commitment is deeply rooted and embedded within the Constitution of India mostly under the Directive Principles of State Policy particularly Article 48A⁷ and Article 51A⁸. . These constitutional mandates establish environmental protection as state's duty as well as citizen's responsibility, providing a robust framework for environmental governance. India has developed certain textile-specific environmental regulations for textile industries such as the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's Guidelines for Textile Industries. The Central Pollution Control Board has issued sector specific effluent discharge standards for textile industries. In 2011, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) took accountability measures and mandates listed companies to report on environmental, social and governance (ESG) initiatives undertaken by them for social, environmental and economic responsibilities of business⁹. SEBI has taken a significant step by

⁶ Kumar, S., Sharma, Dr. S. P., *Environmental Laws In India: Evolution, Implementation, And Challenges*, International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews (Vol. 5, Issue 4, pp. 10011–10015)

⁷ Constitution of India, 1950, art. 48A

⁸ Constitution of India, 1950, art. 51A

⁹ Singh, A., Panackal, N., "Factors influencing legal framework of environmental accounting in Indian Industries - Overview and theoretical framework." In Nat. Env. & Poll. Tech. (Vols. 16–16, pp. 425–431)

introducing the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) framework.¹⁰ The main aim behind the BRSR framework is to improve transparency and accountability of industries by disclosing detailed information across three indicators social, environmental and governance indicators. In practice however there is a weak gap in the enforceability of this framework. A company could admit to very harmful practices in its reports, but as long as it discloses them, it still follows SEBI's rules.¹¹ Greenwashing is also another challenge, the point of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) is to ensure that companies are held responsible and accountable for their actions but if companies pretend and selectively disclose information and reports the whole purpose is lost. A classic case highlighting the issue of Greenwashing is *Reckitt Benckiser v. Hindustan Unilever* (2013)¹² wherein it was established companies might use eco-friendly messages as a marketing tool rather than causing a meaningful change.

The Companies Act 2013 is another legislature that holds companies accountable for their actions through its Corporate Social Responsibility mandate. It provides that the companies need to make disclosures besides the company's general state of affair and financial performance regarding conservation of energy and environmental protection.¹³ The concepts of CSR and sustainability have integrated the environmental, economic, and social aspects, but in different ways.¹⁴ Under Company Law, fast fashion corporations are bound by a spectrum of legal obligations and liabilities, particularly concerning Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).¹⁵ The legal compliance and governance on CSR practices within the fast fashion industry are wide and multifaceted. Consumer rights, transparency, and the influence of Company Law play integral roles in shaping the relationship between consumers and fast fashion corporations.¹⁶ Fast fashion companies are responsible for ensuring that they comply with CSR reforms. Popular brands like H&M, Zara, M&S etc come under the radar for non-compliance with CSR activities and indulge in methods within the supply chain which are harmful for the environment.

Various operations are proved to be effective, like using eco-friendly materials, product reusing

¹⁰ Diksha Sharma, *Bridging the ESG Enforcement Gap: A Legal Analysis of India's BRSR Framework*, Indian Journal of Law and Legal Research, Vol. VII, Issue III, ISSN 2582-8878, pp. 701-709

¹¹ *Id* at 10

¹² (2013) 5 AD 94

¹³ *Id* at 9

¹⁴ Thorey S. Thorisdottir & Lara Johannsdottir, *Corporate Social Responsibility Influencing Sustainability within the Fashion Industry: A Systematic Review* (2020) 12 Sustainability 9167

¹⁵ Mridula Royan, *The Legal Framework of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Fast Fashion Industry: An Analysis* Volume 12, International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT) 2320-2882

¹⁶ *Id* at 15

and eco-marketing, eco-design with the guidelines of ISO14062 standard, etc. In particular, in sustainable dyeing, methods like screen printing approach, and using dye pigments extracted from black tea, red beets, and onion leaves, are environmentally friendly.¹⁷ The Central Pollution Control Board, Delhi introduced Draft EPR Guidelines in 2022 to help achieve transparency within the Supply Chain and achieve the SDG 2030 target. Successful implementation of these regulations can transform the supply chain and ensure ethical practices, environmental sustainability and social welfare within the fashion sector. Legal provisions do stimulate greater action towards sustainability but the reality is their effectiveness faces challenges in enforcement, monitoring and proper implementation within the complex supply chain.

Critical Regulatory Gaps in Fast Fashion Environmental Accountability

The rise of the fast-fashion industry is inextricably linked to the rise of complex supply chains overseas, and how a lack of regulations contributed to the plastic pollution crisis.¹⁸ The fashion industry is one of the many industries where accountability is still a pressing issue. Retailers source their products from thousands of suppliers throughout different countries to maximize their profit margins and efficiency. This process makes almost no retailer accountable or responsible for waste created or disposed of, creating a major environmental crisis. It is important to note that international brand sourcing from developing countries faces minimal to zero consequences for environmental violations occurring in their supply chain due to the lack of legal recourse for the victims. Governments in developing countries, where much of fashion production occurs, often prioritize foreign investment over enforcing regulations, hindering accountability efforts. That is why, fashion companies build their industries in countries that have lax environmental regulations.¹⁹ The manipulation of working conditions and environmental standards by manufacturers in the supply chain reflect the pressures on the global supply chain. Suppliers face intense pressure to reduce costs to meet the turnaround times creating a situation wherein they must cut corners on environmental compliance. While MNCs often have more structured sustainability frameworks, formal reporting mechanisms and greater resources to adapt to social compliance and eco-friendly processes. SMEs,

¹⁷ Cai, Ya-Jun, and Tsan-Ming Choi. "A United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals Perspective for Sustainable Textile and Apparel Supply Chain Management." *Transportation Research Part E: Logistics and Transportation Review*, vol. 141, 2020, article 102010

¹⁸ Emma Ross, "Overdressed and Underregulated: How the Fashion Industry's Extreme Plastic Pollution Can Be Linked to a Lack of Supply Chain Regulation." *Vermont Journal of Environmental Law*, 25(1), 1–27

¹⁹Kaur, S. & Guru Nanak Dev University. (2025). "Fast fashion and Environmental Degradation: A global legal analysis." *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research* (Vol. 12, Issue 6)

conversely show variability in performance, often constrained by limited resources, inconsistent policy adoption and lack of external scrutiny.²⁰ This disparity creates an uneven regulatory environment where enforcement of environment regulations is based more on company size and visibility rather than creating an actual environmental impact.

In India government regulatory agencies face significant issues and challenges in monitoring and enforcing the existing environmental laws and standards due to the fragmented nature of the textile industry. The regulatory architecture suffers from confusion due to large number of regulatory statutes, undermining enforcement and prioritising legitimacy over accountability.²¹ There are several; critical barriers that impede effective policy implementation which include industry resistance, corruption and obstacles to adopt mainstream sustainable practices due to the lack of profit generation. The heavy dependence on secondary sources and policy analysis with limited ground fieldwork data collection and stakeholder claims is one of the major limitations for achieving sustainability in the supply chain. India's lack of external audit requirements for ESG reports, insufficient legal liability for misleading disclosure and indirect integration of directors' duties concerning ESG all contribute to weak enforcement.²² Indian legislations such as The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 , The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, The Environment Protection Act, The Companies Act, 2013, etc are vast and contradictory in nature leading to confusion among companies resulting in lack of accountability.

One of the most glaring regulatory gaps revolves around microplastic pollution from textile production and consumption. The fashion industry generates approximately 65 million tons of plastic annually, accounting for 20% of global plastic production and 35% of environmental microfibres.²³ These microfibres infiltrate the supply chain through primary sources such as shredding and secondary sources during manufacturing causing harm and risk to air, water and soil quality. Despite the magnitude of this issue India lacks specific legal regulations and a proper legislative framework to tackle this issue. The regulatory void observed not only India but other countries as well is alarming as they don't hold corporate supply chains accountable for environmental damages. US manufacturers relocate their operations to other countries with

²⁰ Aghbari, S. A., Mohammed, A., Zubairu, N., & Rahman, N. S. F. A. (2025). "Exploring the social and environmental performance in fast-fashion supply chains: a comparative analysis between MNCs and SMEs." *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 74(8), 2932–2958.

²¹ Sumita Sikka. "Policies and Initiatives for Sustainable Fashion; A Comprehensive Global Review with Emphasis on India." In *Sustainable Fashion: Consumer Awareness and Education*, edited by Subramanian Senthil Kannan Muthu, Woodhead Publishing, pp. 175-200.

²² *Id* at 10

²³ Emma Ross, "Overdressed and Underregulated: How the Fashion Industry's Extreme Plastic Pollution Can Be Linked to a Lack of Supply Chain Regulation." *Vermont Journal of Environmental Law*, 25(1), 1–27

less regulations to avoid regulatory oversight.²⁴ Similar patterns are being observed by other countries as well. The absence of federal-level plastic legislation specifically targeting textiles represents a fundamental and crucial policy gap.

Internal corporate controls such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Closed-Loop Supply Chains (CLSCs) have proven to be inefficient due to their voluntary nature. The fundamental weakness of voluntary corporate sustainability mechanisms is that they fail to create binding obligations that translate into actual improvements in the environment. The voluntary nature of these initiatives allows companies to selectively engage in sustainable practices. These practices are mostly done by these companies to enhance their public image while avoiding operational reforms. There are 12 barriers to CSR, namely “lack of stakeholder awareness, training, financial constraints, lack of consumer awareness, lack of concern for reputation, lack of knowledge, lack of regulation, standards and diversity, company culture, lack of revision, and lack of management commitment.”²⁵ Section 135 of The Companies Act, compels companies to allocate at least 2% of their profits towards CSR initiatives. However, this legislative intervention faces challenges due to the complexity of global fashion supply chains. With persistent issues of greenwashing, selective compliance and superficial engagement in CSR practices all pose challenges for CSR compliance. The implementation gap between CSR policies and environmental outcomes is profound in the fast fashion sector. Companies develop CSR policies and report but the actual implementation of these policies is very rarely applied throughout the supply chain, particularly at the design and productive stages.²⁶ Fast fashion giants such as H&M, Zara etc fall short in achieving their CSR objectives despite their public commitment to the same. The theoretical inadequacy of voluntary CSR is compounded by practical enforcement challenges. While consumers and NGOs push for eco-friendly practices, shareholders remain primarily focused on financial returns, creating tension that hinders significant sustainability advances.²⁷

Supply Chain Transparency and Traceability

India’s regulatory framework lacks comprehensive supply chain transparency creating a fundamental accountability gap allowing for environmental and social violations to remain

²⁴ *Id* at 23

²⁵ Shen, L.X.; Govindan, K.; Shankar, M. *Evaluation of Barriers of Corporate Social Responsibility Using an Analytical Hierarchy Process under a Fuzzy Environment A Textile Case*. *Sustainability* 2015, 7, 3493–3514

²⁶ Anika Kozlowski et al., *Environmental Impacts in the Fashion Industry: A Life-cycle and Stakeholder Framework*, *J. CORP. CITIZENSHIP* 15, 28 (2012)

²⁷ Nadia Olivar Aponte et al., *Fast Fashion Consumption and Its Environmental Impact*, 20 *SUSTAINABILITY* 2381871, 8 (2024)

unchecked. The absence of mandatory disclosure laws creates a loophole given the complex, multi-tiered supply chains where majority of the environmental and social implications occur. There is lack of standardised metrics and rubrics for evaluating the effectiveness of CSR activities across different fast fashion brands. Without legal requirements compelling companies to map and disclose their networks, brands can remain under the radar for information related to sourcing, efficiency and externalizing responsibility for environmental violations.

The European Union has implemented comprehensive supply chain Due Diligence legislations and initiatives like 'France's Duty of Vigilance Law and Germany Supply Chain Due Diligence Act' which establishes legal liability for companies that fail to prevent human rights and environmental violations in their supply chains.²⁸ The Fashion Transparency Index, which evaluates major brands' disclosure practices regarding their social and environmental impacts by supply chain activities, reveals a significant disparity in transparency levels, with many leading companies scoring below 50% on disclosure metrics.²⁹ The lack of transparency particularly in the Indian context where there's a high prevalence of the informal sector making surveillance and transparency difficult.

An innovative tool to ensure transparency and sustainability within the fashion sector is the emergence of the Digital Product Passport (DPP). The Digital Product Passport (DPP) emerges with the purpose of enabling and accelerating the transition to a circular economy. The European Commission is deploying this tool and intends to facilitate sharing of product information related to circularity and value retention practices amongst stakeholders. The DPP aims to (1) boost material and energy efficiency, (2) extend products lifetimes, and (3) optimizing design and manufacturing, (4) inform consumers to make more sustainable choices, and finally (5) help to verify compliance.³⁰ This method addresses the problem of information asymmetry within the fashion sector. Findings have revealed that enhanced data governance, transparent certification and collaborations among different brands along with third-party verification are crucial components for DPP successes. In the Indian context adopting DPP presents both opportunities and obstacles. Digital tracking systems will create a sense of consciousness among the suppliers and ensure accountability. It can create standardized,

²⁸ Veychuk, Oksana, "European Union's Legal Framework and Sustainability in the Fast Fashion Supply Chain: An Effective Way to Go?" (Master's Dissertation), NOVA School of Law

²⁹ Aggarwal, N. and More, C, "Fast fashion: A testimony on violation of environment and human rights." International Journal of Policy Sciences and Law, 1(3), pp.1277-1304

³⁰ Maria do Carmo Paes de Vasconcelos, 'Redefining Transparency in the Fashion Industry: A Study into the Role of Digital Product Passport in Shaping Producer Practices and Consumer Behaviour', MSc Dissertation, Wageningen University, Netherlands

verifiable records that overcome the disconnect with the Western certification standards and the Indian realities. The other side of the coin reveals that DPP requires substantial technological infrastructure, cross-stakeholder coordination and digital awareness which might be a challenge considering the fragmented nature of the Indian textile industry mostly dominated by small and medium scale enterprises who lack in these resources. The European Union's push to implement the DPP under the Ecodesign for Sustainable product Regulation has set a benchmark that can influence India's policy development related to Sustainable Fashion.

A critical disconnect exists between local implementation and Western-developed certified standards with regards to India. Various compliance benchmarks were perceived as unrealistic by many manufacturers since these criteria did not consider the local circumstances of India. In fact, it has been reported that on many occasions, manufacturers lose out on orders because the compliance requirements are not always compatible with the local conditions and resources available in India.³¹ Due to this loss in profits many manufacturers forge and falsify documents to meet these certification standards rather than complying with them. There is now symbolic compliance by manufacturers, who manipulate data and falsify certification reports.³² This compliance gap reflects a broader failure of environmental regulation to help India develop indigenous and country-specific standards and frameworks taking into account India's textile heritage and manufacturing capacity. With the rise in technological innovations, a path towards transparency and traceability can be envisioned however, in India these innovations face significant barriers. Blockchain technology enables creation of tamper-proof recording as products move through the supply chain. This technology addresses the pressing issue of document forgery and data falsification making it compulsory for manufacturers to adhere to the guidelines. Although it demonstrates several challenges such as energy consumption concerns and universal adoption in a fragmented industry if implemented properly it can ensure supply chain transparency. Another innovative technology adoption would be Radio Frequency Identification System, which provides real-time visibility into product movement and management of inventory. Zara use Radio Frequency Identification System (RFID), combining RFID technology with cloud computing and artificial intelligence.³³ Product tracking, data identification and interchange, real-time inventory updates, and even real-time customer

³¹ Kiran, P. "Barriers to sustainable transition in the fashion industry: Insights from India." *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy*, 21(1), 2466286.

³² *Id* at 31

³³ M. Liu in the *International Journal of Computer Integrated Manufacturing*, Volume 8

feedback on inventory and logistics are all possible with wireless signal identification.³⁴ However, due to limited assessment of scalability among lesser known brands, high capital investment and advanced technical expertise RFID remains sceptical in the eyes of most manufacturers.

Achieving meaningful transparency necessitates comprehensive reforms establishing mandatory disclosure requirements, investments in technology and reforming existing laws focusing mostly on the supply chain can help India bridge the current gap it has between transparency rhetoric and the realities of the supply chain.

Proposed Legal Reforms and Way Forward

The proposed legal reforms for supply chain accountability should be understood as a compilation of systematic legal transformation. The laws should move just beyond being mere words and become an enforceable instrument for restructuring transparency and corporate behaviour across the global supply chain. There ought to be mandatory supply chain mapping and public disclosure requirements. Adopting measures like EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) which legally requires companies to

- (1) integrating due diligence into policies and management systems;
- (2) identifying and assessing adverse human rights and environmental impacts;
- (3) preventing, ceasing or minimising actual and potential adverse human rights and environmental impacts;
- (4) monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of measures;
- (5) communicating;
- (6) providing remediation.³⁵

This directive aims to move beyond voluntary compliance and reporting by mandating public disclosure. Legal reform must embed mandatory third-party verification and audit obligations to ensure that disclosures made by companies are properly assessed rather than self-certified. Inspiration should be drawn from emerging international standards while taking into account India's unique textile industry. Case studies like EU's imposition of multibillion-euro fine on Google is a perfect demonstration on how turnover-based penalties can disrupt entrenched corporate practices and force compliance. For fashion industry environmental violations,

³⁴ Ruoqia Li, Wenxin Liu & Sunwen Zhou, "Digital Transformation of Supply Chain Management in the Fast Fashion Industry: A Case Study of Zara" (2024) SHS Web of Conferences, Vol 181, 04019.

³⁵ Directive (EU) 2024/1760

penalties should be calculated similarly creating a direct financial consequence on the brand. The proposed penalty structure should encompass various violation categories, for supply chain disclosure failures penalties should begin at 2% of the brand's annual revenue, for frequent environmental violation penalties should start from 3% and onwards.

India's traditional textile practices offer environmentally sustainable, culturally rooted alternatives that modern regulatory frameworks should actively try to promote. Indian fashion brands should embrace traditional Khadi fabric methods fostering minimal environmental impact. Integrating traditional practices requires concrete policy mechanisms. Tax incentives should be offered to handloom and khadi production units and finished products which ultimately reduces prices of these garments allowing them to compete with fast fashion brands. Export promotions for traditional textiles can position India as a global leader in sustainable fashion rooted in cultural heritage.

The European Union's emerging regulatory framework for fashion sustainability provides important precedents for India's reforms. The EU's new binding legal framework represents an effective pathway towards sustainability in fast fashion supply chains through comprehensive approaches addressing production, consumption and disposal phases while targeting human rights and environmental impacts. The key components that India can adopt include the EU's Sustainability Due Diligence Directive requiring companies to identify, prevent and remedy any adverse human rights violation and environmental impact throughout the supply chain of that garment, the EU's Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textile establishing comprehensive standards for durability, repairability and recyclability and the Ecodesign for Sustainable Product Regulation mandating environmental performance standards and digital product passports. In the United States the proposed New York Fashion Act would require fashion companies to map their supply chains and disclose any environmental and social impact created by them. The act also establishes science-based emissions reduction targets align with Paris Agreement goals. India's framework should incorporate material-specific regulations addressing synthetic fibres, microplastic pollution and chemical management.

Legal incentives must drive systematic change by fundamentally altering the economic incentive, competitive dynamics and operational requirements governing fashion industry operations.

Conclusion

India's fast fashion industry operates within an inadequate regulatory framework that allows firms to indulge in systematic environmental degradation and social exploitation. Critical gaps spanning from microplastic pollution to stakeholder accountability demand for comprehensive legal reforms. Only binding legislation establishing mandatory disclosure requirements, independent verification mechanisms, deterrent penalties proportionate to corporate revenues and multi-stakeholder governance can help achieve sustainable transformation within the supply chain. India must adopt the best international practices considering India's cultural heritage and unique supply chain. The path forward requires political will to prioritise long-term sustainability over short-term expediency recognising that economic growth should go hand-in-hand with genuine environmental stewardship.

