

DIGITAL WAVES IN FASHION WORLD

Sumangala Talur

Associate Professor,
Adarsh Institute of Management & Information Technology,
Bangalore

ABSTRACT

Digital technology has changed literally every industry in one or the other way. The fashion industry is not an exception. Fashion trends from very early centuries are driven by many factors such as the geographical region, climate, season, movies, the professions followed by the people, prosperity in those areas etc. Fashion in India has been influenced by many dynasties that ruled and also by people from different countries who came to India as a tourist or for business. In the 21st century many designers set the trends of fashion by their creations. This paper attempts to understand the changing patterns in the cultures, societies, values, and belief and how the digital technology is influencing the fashion trends and more so on the youth and their preferences towards fashion apparel is concerned.

Key Words: *Digital Technology, Fashion Trends, Customer experience, Online purchase.*

INTRODUCTION

Digital technology has changed literally every sector in one or the other way. The fashion industry is not an exception. Fashion trends from early centuries are driven by many factors such as the geographical region, climate, the professions followed by the people, prosperity in those areas etc. Fashion in India has been influenced by many dynasties that ruled and also by people from different countries who came to India as a tourist or for business. In the 21st century, many designers set the trends of fashion by their amazing creations. Post liberalization, India has recorded an enormous growth in the ready to wear garments business. This can be attributed to many factors such as increased exports, increased consumption in the domestic markets, certain societal changes such as employment, double income families, increase in disposable income etc. On the other hand, increased penetration of internet, increase in usage of smartphones and the digital technology are changing the way business is done across all sectors. The fashion industry has many segments in it such as textiles, dyeing, printing, designing, making of ready to wear garments, jewelry, footwear, accessories etc. All these segments have been influenced by the digital technology from procuring raw materials till reaching to their customers.

Review of literature:

Digital wave in fashion world is a new phenomenon and it is going to stay here for quite some time. Very few studies are done in this area. A few of them are presented below-

Bonnie D. Belleau, Teresa (2007) in their study expressed that approximately 60 million consumers in Marketplace are young and they have different behaviour according to their age. More information is needed to satisfy their intentions towards purchasing an object. **Ka Ming, Zhi-Ming (2004)** explained the influence of mass media on initiating new fashion trends and each customer group has their own fashion trend-setters and fashion followers. Change in fashion mainly depends of combination of social trends and peer group influence. Authors say clothing and fashion are the objects to develop consumer's self-image and appearance. Young consumers who have a high tendency to behave in a particular way will adopt the fashions immediately and they are influenced by print media especially Magazines. **Lauren, Bradshaw (2009)** illustrated that today's youngsters are more likely to imitate their Role Models especially Heroes and Heroines of the Silver screen. Endorsements by celebrity from various fields have huge impact on people who wish to imitate the trend set by them. **Keller, K.L (2003)** foresee a trend where in the people are preferring ecofriendly products carefully. Due to this consumers may not prefer clothes or accessories which are not Eco-Friendly and contribute to global warming. Hence, companies are forced to consider various means which can help them to be Eco-friendly. **Sochis George (1985)** feel that the youngsters tend to be less ethical. People under the age of 25 are least likely to buy ethical fashion. 6 out of 10 say that they buy clothes that they choose without caring how they are produced. They also opined that the consumers of age over 55 are likely to give importance to the ethical issues before purchasing and women were more conscious about choosing ethical products. **Andrew Reilly (2014)** stated that the study of Fashion helps to know how people relate and interact with each other. Fashion is a medium that depicts genders, race, ethnicity, culture, and politics. Fashion and apparel will have a

great impact on day-to-day lives locally as well as globally. Researchers use present and past situations to predict the future styles, trends, and behaviors of consumers. Most fashion professionals are not only concentrating on the present situation to satisfy their customer needs but also concentrating on their future needs. **Nithya Prakash Venkatasamy (2015)** tried to explain how fashion trends evolve as per the values, beliefs and culture of the people. Today's youth explain the fashion trends and adopt those styles that suit their values. Besides the traditional agendas of the fashion, fashion depends on the attitude of the generations that set the trends of style and self-expression. Going beyond the social structure, the modern social structure the buyers depend upon the self-image and self-expression and are more keen to express their uniqueness. **Ji Hye Kang, JiYoung Kim (2006)** found that new fashions came into existence via social gatherings, window displays. Purchase of apparel has moved from need-based to aspiration. The decisions that are taken by women consumers are influenced by comfort rather than fashion. As the mature market expands, different definitions of fashions will define the success of apparel businesses. **Catrin Jorgen's (2006)** this research aimed to add to the understanding of Ethical Fashion Intake by the consumers. Nowadays, consumers are demanding ethical responsibility from the companies and it is the chance of the buyers to sacrifice their personal needs to support ethical clothing. Ethical issues have effect on consumers fashion purchase behaviour. When it comes to purchasing of fashion products personal needs of consumers motivates to purchase the products which is not ethical. Mainly the age group of eighteen to twenty two will be influenced by such kind of activities. **Soadah Wok (2008)** felt that people preferred to look trendy and wished to wear branded apparel on important occasions. Media has influenced the younger generations towards fashion. It brings awareness about modern trends in the market through print and digital marketing.

From the literature presented above it is evident that many changes are happening in the societies across the globe. Attitude, beliefs and culture are changing very fast. What these changes mean to the fashion industry? This paper is trying to explore this less studied field.

Latest Trends in the Fashion world:

The societies are undergoing rapid changes. Many demographic and psychographic factors are driving these changes. In the Asian countries, we can observe the changes in demographics and changing customer preferences.

Firstly, in the Asia-Pacific region, the middle-class population is growing at a faster pace. It is expected to grow from 45.8% to 60.2% in the year 2024 (as per http://www.strategyr.com/MarketResearch/Sports_and_Fitness_Clothing_Market_Trends.asp). People are migrating from the rural areas to the urban areas in search of better employment opportunities. The young educated lot is preferring employment in cities than in a rural area. At the same time, there is an increasing sense of fashion among the people. People are now ready to spend more on clothes than before. Unlike earlier days, where the need-based purchase of clothes was the practice, now, people are moving towards aspirational buying. Nowadays, people buy more number of clothes and keep them for a short period and quickly they prefer to dispose of the old ones to make space for new clothes in their wardrobes. Everybody wants to sport a fashion statement.

In general, there is a tremendous increase in the income to the families and parallel to it there is an increased expenditure pattern is being observed (Refer to figure #1). The rising affluence, along with the fashion consciousness among the people is offering a huge market to the retailers. Though the spending on clothes during wedding is still the highest, other occasions such as festivals, parties and during the discount period high spending pattern is witnessed.

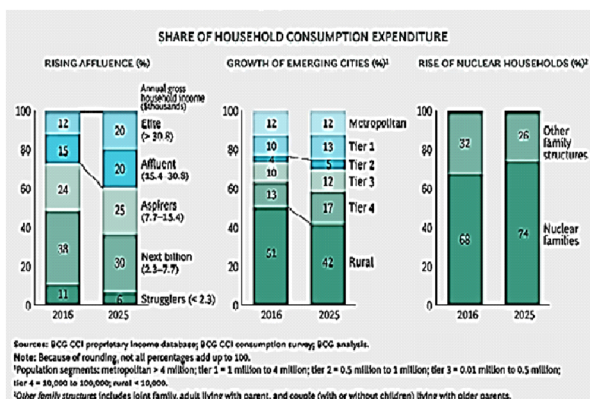


Figure 1: Three Aspects of India's Changing Shape of Consumption

Source -<https://www.bcg.com/publications/2017/marketing-sales-globalization-new-indian-changing-consumer.aspx>

Nuclear families are the universal truth in India. And Single families are on the rise. There is an increasing number of people preferring to stay single and this number is increasing very fast. This is an important change in the demography. On the other hand, in families, women are taking charge of their rightful place. Percentage of women population working is on the rise. The increasing woman workforce has boosted the demand for ready to wear, affordable, office wear. The desire to 'look good' among men and women has given a new high to the fashion industry. Gone are the days when people preferred tailored clothes and waited to get them stitched. People are ready to spend to buy a good look but they at the same time are looking for the value being delivered by the retailers in terms of quality. Many exclusive fashion houses are looking at this trend very seriously and making their collection reachable to the larger population.

Another social trend, which is on the rise, is health and fitness consciousness among the people. The increased awareness about the lifestyle-related health issues has catalyzed this phenomenon. We are witnessing an increased number of health clubs and the sports events being organized (Refer to figure # 2). The media coverage of the same is advancing it further. This trend has a huge marketing opportunity for sports apparel companies. There are very few companies competing in this area and it is felt that, is under-served. Recently, many companies are gearing up to cater to this segment.

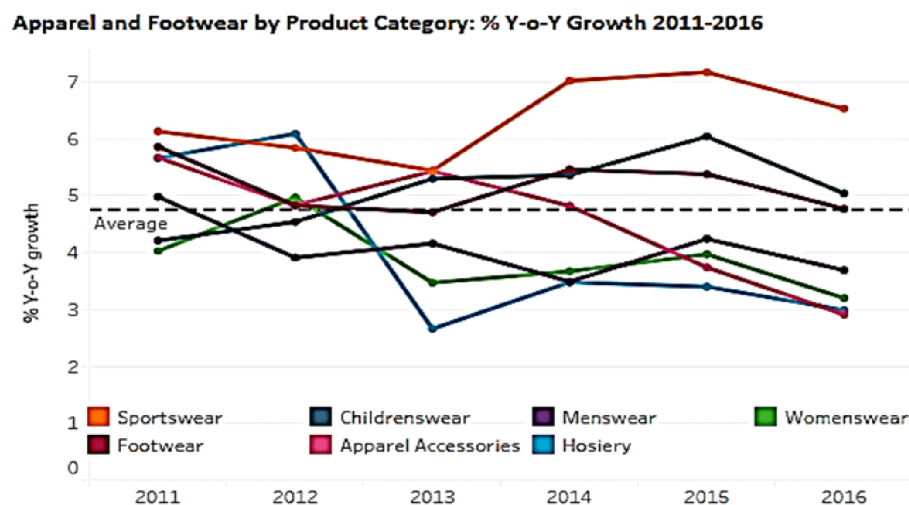


Figure 2: Apparel and Footwear by Product Category: % Y-O-Y Growth 2011 – 2016

Source - <http://blog.euromonitor.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Apparel-and-footwear-by-product-category.png>

All the above mentioned demographic and psychographic factors such as life style related health issues, increased awareness about the health issues, interest among the people to stay healthy, increased sports activities etc. along with the new digital technology are shaping the current fashion markets today. The factors such as easy and affordable access to the internet and smartphones have drastically changed the scenario in almost every sector including fashion industry too. The changing family structure has left the people with time poverty. This crunch of time has led to many services required by the people as they have to do more activities in lesser time period. As a solution to this problem of people, online shopping has emerged. This will save the people from spending a lot of their precious time on visiting the shops/malls and also to avoid parking problems in the crowded cities. The online shopping is increasing also because the companies are working relentlessly to address the concerns of the customers with regard to security, quality, delivery, returns, and refunds. These factors have strengthened the confidence of the customers in the system.

The Influence of Digital Technology on Fashion world

The digital technology is offering a very dynamic platform to the people not only to access pre-purchase information but also for opinion seeking from their family and friends circle. People use this social media to instantly get in touch with their friends to seek their opinion and approval on their purchase decisions. The influence of this digital media is growing rapidly and going forward the researchers are predicting that by 2025, the expenditure through online purchases will go up by 10 folds (Refer to Figure # 3). Hence the retailers have to consider this important factor while designing their strategies. Since India is a growing market, retailers look at it as a massive opportunity. Indian market is growing at 12% and it is much greater than the global average growth of 5%.

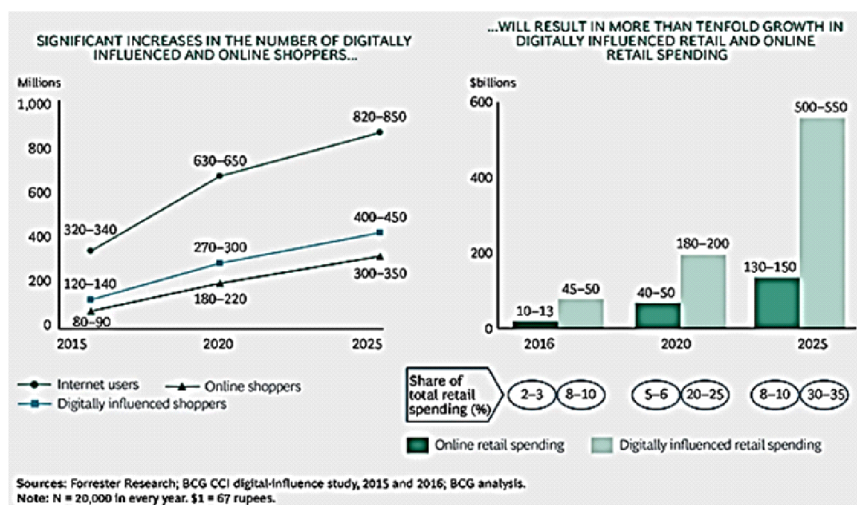


Figure 3: Digital Influence will far surpass Online /spending

Source: <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2017/marketing-sales-globalization-new-indian-changing-consumer.aspx>

Research Methodology:

This study is *aimed* to explore the factors driving fashion and the influence of digital technology on the fashion trends. Also, an attempt is made to record the changing perception about fashion among youth in Bangalore which will help the fashion houses to get future ready. A survey was done in Bangalore to explore the same.

A total of 243 usable and complete responses were received from the respondents. The data for this study was collected by Ms. P Yamini Bhargavi, Management Student, AIMT, Bangalore.

The following were the outcomes of the study –

- Majority of the respondents were from the age group 15 to 20 and 21 -25. The sample consisted of 68% of males and 32% females.
- 86% of the respondents were of the opinion that they do follow the fashion trends and are conscious about their 'look'. The respondents, though not always, did feel sometimes, that they seek the attention of others.
- They do take care that they should look 'cool' among the peers and at the same time they gave importance to the comfort also.
- However, the important thing to note is that 83 respondents did not want their peers to follow their fashion. They want their fashion to remain unique and do not like to be copied by others (Refer table 1). 204 respondents also agreed that their clothes reflect their personality.
- The 39% of respondents indicated that they spend around rupees 1001 – 3000 every month to purchase clothes. A good 19% of them spend between 3001 & 5000 rupees. This indicates the demand for affordable clothing by the youth (Ref Table 2)
- There is a clear indication that the influence of the social media on the purchase decisions is powerful. The Television and Peer groups have been the second highest influencers on the fashion trends (Ref table 3).
- Though in India, online shopping is growing rapidly, people still prefer to visit the shops and malls to shop (Ref table 4). This could be attributed to the apprehensions of people towards online shopping (Ref table 5). People visit the shops to touch and experience the product. Lack of the touch and feel is still making people uncomfortable (Ref table 6). However, a new trend observed is that people visit store for the touch and feel experience and wish to purchase the product online to avail the exciting discounts being offered by the online stores

CONCLUSION

It is very clear that the preferences of the consumers are undergoing a huge transformation. The changing social patterns, values, beliefs, cultures along with the changing patterns of income and expenditure are shaping the fashion trends today. The business firms have to closely monitor these change agents and are future ready. They have to strive to offer trendy, affordable, high-quality products and at the same time, they should ensure that the products are eco-friendly and ethical. Since it is expected that the online shopping is going to grow extensively and also going to stay for long, the brick and mortar stores have to supplement the decision making the process of the consumers. They should focus on the conducive store design and in-store experience of the consumers. They need to be more agile and have to focus on both global as well as local trends to survive and sustain.

REFERENCES

- [1] Belleau, B. D., Summers, T. A., Xu, Y., & Pinel, R. (2007). Theory of reasoned action: Purchase intention of young consumers. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 25(3), 244-257.
- [2] Ming Law, K., Zhang, Z. M., & Leung, C. S. (2004). Fashion change and fashion consumption: the chaotic perspective. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, 8(4), 362-374.
- [3] Keller, K. L. (2003). Brand synthesis: The multidimensionality of brand knowledge. *Journal of consumer research*, 29(4), 595-600.
- [4] Nam, J., Hamlin, R., Gam, H. J., Kang, J. H., Kim, J., Kumphai, P., ... & Richards, L. (2007). The fashion?conscious behaviours of mature female consumers. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 31(1), 102-108.
- [5] Reilly, A. (2014). *Key concepts for the fashion industry*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- [6] Saravanan, D., & Nithyaprakash, V. (2016, April). Fashion Trends and its Impact on Society. In *International Conference on Apparels and Fashion, Tamilnadu, India*. Retrieved (Vol. 30).
- [7] Nam, J., Hamlin, R., Gam, H. J., Kang, J. H., Kim, J., Kumphai, P. & Richards, L. (2007). The fashion?conscious behaviours of mature female consumers. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 31(1), 102-108.
- [8] Joergens, C. (2006). Ethical fashion: myth or future trend?. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, 10(3), 360-371.
- [9] Wok, S., & Mohd, S. (2008). The impact of TV and magazine on fashion and dressing of urban women of different ages. *Jurnal Pengajian Media Malaysia*, 10(1), 157-170.
- [10] <http://www.livemint.com/Industry/FhE2TWrRXvqAZ9RYAlljgM/Apparel-brands-see-50-growth-in-womens-western-wear.html>
- [11] <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/succeeding-in-tomorrows-global-fashion-market>
- [12] <http://www.technopak.com/Files/fashion-retail-scenario-in-india.pdf> <http://www.livemint.com/Industry/QWzIOYEsfQJknXhC3HiuVI/Number-of-Internet-users-in-India-could-cross-450-million-by.html>
- [13] <https://www.statista.com/topics/2157/internet-usage-in-india/>
- [14] <http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/in.htm>
- [15] <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rachelarthur/2016/12/19/8-tech-trends-that-will-shape-the-future-of-fashion-and-luxury-retail-in-2017/#74442d3a7615>
- [16] <https://www.digitaldoughnut.com/articles/2017/february/a-guide-to-amazing-tech-trends-boosting-fashion>
- [17] <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rachelarthur/2016/12/19/8-tech-trends-that-will-shape-the-future-of-fashion-and-luxury-retail-in-2017/#2b3504057615>
- [18] <http://www.technopak.com/Files/fashion-retail-scenario-in-india.pdf>
- [19] <http://blog.euromonitor.com/2017/01/new-apparel-and-footwear-research-category-overview-sportswear-maintains-momentum.html>
- [20] <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2017/marketing-sales-globalization-new-indian-changing-consumer.aspx>
- [21] http://www.strategyr.com/MarketResearch/Sports_and_Fitness_Clothing_Market_Trends.asp
- [22] http://running.competitor.com/2016/02/shoes-and-gear/why-womens-apparel-companies-are-on-the-rise_144107

ANNEXURES

Table 1: Important factors to follow the current fashion trends

	To be centre of attraction	Follow trends to look unique among peer groups	I want my friends to follow my Fashion	To introduce latest fashions to my peer groups	I look cool	I look Matured	I look Comfortable
Never	41	32	83	63	18	16	9
Rarely	61	73	52	70	44	56	32
Sometimes	107	87	75	76	103	100	77
Always	34	51	33	34	78	71	125

Table 2: Amount spent on purchase of clothes (In rupees)

0-1000	80
1001-3000	95
3001-5000	47
5001-10,000	13
10,000&above	8

Table 3: showing the influence of media on the fashion trends:

	Television	Magazine	Brand ambassadors	Social Media	Friends Circle	Others
Most Influential	78	43	62	86	78	51
Influential	57	76	70	59	56	41
Neutral	65	70	51	44	58	81
Not-Influential	19	36	33	21	31	31
Least Influential	24	18	25	33	20	43

Table 4: Preferred place for purchase of apparel

Place preferred	No of respondents
Shopping Malls	131
Boutiques	41
Online shopping	90
Individual Shops	155
Others	55

Table 5: Opinion of respondents on online shopping for purchasing apparels

	Display of apparel is very good	It will be risky to shop online	I am not comfortable to shop online	lack of touch and feel makes me uncomfortable	There will be misplacements of our purchases
73	62	54	47	74	56
105	95	80	78	87	98
50	61	71	71	57	65
9	13	22	31	14	16
6	12	16	16	11	9

Table 6: Preferred shopping destination

Malls	131
Boutiques	41
Online Shopping	90
Individual Shops	155
Others	55

Table 7: Apprehensions about online purchasing

	Amount spent on shopping has increased	The Frequency of shopping has gone up	The ease of access is very high	More payment methods are available	The time require to shop is very less	I get more options to choose from
Strongly- Agree	52	58	64	71	77	73
Agree	98	104	105	128	104	105
Neutral	69	61	61	33	37	46
Disagree	20	14	7	7	17	14
Strongly-Disagree	4	6	6	4	6	5