

# Analysis of fashion product of apparels from Consumer lifestyle perspectives: An empirical study

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**Abstract-** *In the present fast changing social environment, Designers, merchandisers and marketers tries to become proactive at every level of the industry whenever it is about the concept of fashion and fashion change. Marketer tries to analyze Consumers, product cycle and their acceptances given by the consumer are all level to position its product effectively. at every point it is discussed that “how these concepts will affect product development and its effective marketing”. The Designers, merchandisers and marketers keep themselves aware of all of the categories of apparel, particularly in their specialty area. Present research work focus on the analysis of fashion product of apparels from Consumer lifestyle perspectives. Various factors and outcome are discussed and some suggestions based on the study is also given in the study.*

**Key words:** *fashion Products; lifestyle; apparels product; consumer behavior; product positioning.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior is the study of individuals, groups or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society. It blends elements from psychology, sociology, economics and many fields like these. It attempts to understand the decision making processes of buyers, both individually and in groups. It studies characteristics of individual consumer such as demographics and behavioral variables in an attempt to understand people's need, want and desire. It also assesses influences on the consumer from demographic factors such as family, friends, society and general.

Consumer behavior study is also based on consumer buying behavior, with the customer playing three important roles i.e. user, payer and buyer. Many researchers have proved that consumer behavior is difficult to understand and predict. Relationship marketing is one factor that helps in this context slightly.

Consumer's wants and needs create a cycle of consumer demand, industry catering to that demand, and finally consumer acceptance with the purchase of merchandise in the retail market. The beginning of the paper deals with the concept of fashion acceptance and rejection. The middle section deals with the consumers' connection with the fashion cycle, how cycles relate to fashion adoption, and what factors motivate consumers to buy fashion. Towards the end of the chapter women's wear, men's wear and children's wear are discussed.

The objective of the study is as follows:-

- Discuss the dimensions of fashion/clothing
- Identify the phases and length of fashion cycles, and how they relate to consumer acceptance
- Explain fashion adoption theories in relation to consumer acceptance
- Describe buyer motivation

## 2. FASHION TERMS<sup>1</sup>

Fashion is the style or styles most popular at a given time. The terms imply three components: style, change, and acceptance.

**a)Style-** Style or pattern is any particular characteristic or look in apparel or accessories. Designers interpret fashion ideas into new styles and offer them to the public. The manufacturer assigns a style number to each new design in each collection, which is used to identify it throughout production, marketing and retailing.

A style may come and go in fashion, but that specific style remains that style whether it is in fashion or no. for example bell bottoms are a particular style, be it in fashion or no.

**b)Change** The only thing constant in life is change<sup>2</sup>. What makes fashion interesting is that it is always changing.

<sup>1</sup> All fashion executives use the mentioned terms daily to discuss various aspects of fashion/clothing

<sup>2</sup> Marketing Management, text book, ICFAI MBA part time course

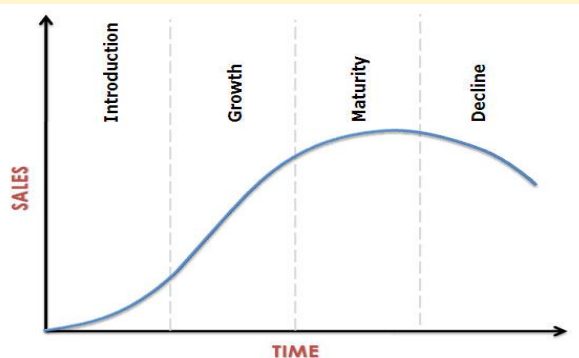
Many have even criticized the fickleness of fashion. Many say that fashion changes only to stimulate buying. To an extent this is true also. For the simple fact that if clothing pattern doesn't change, why would people buy them? However, fashion with reference to clothing is a way in which consumers express their relationship to current events and to life itself.

Fashion changes because:

- It reflects the changes in people's life and changes in the current events
- People's need change
- People get bored with what they have

As a result of modern communication, especially online marketing, the public is quickly made aware of the new patterns available in the market. Many times it has been observed that the fashion enters people's homes before it even enters the shops or retail stores.

- c) **Acceptance**- happens when consumers buy and wear a style to make it a fashion<sup>3</sup>. There is no point in making clothes if people are not going to buy it. At times acceptance in one season gives a clue that the next season will be good for what.
- d) **Taste**- is all about being able to understand that what is simple and what is not. For instance what is glamorous for Shabana Azmi may be very gaudy for Shekhar Kapoor and vice-a-versa.



### 3. FASHION EVOLUTION<sup>4</sup>

Fashion cycles<sup>5</sup>

- a. **Introduction** Mostly new styles are introduced at a high price level. Designers who are respected for their talent may be given financial backing and allowed to design with very few limitations on creativity, quality of raw materials or amount of fine workmanship. They create new apparel and accessory styles by changing elements like line, shape, color, fabric, and details and their relationship to one another. Production costs are very high and very few people can afford the resulting

garment. Production in small quantity gives a designer more freedom, flexibility, and room for creativity.

- b. **Growth** When a particular style is seen on Television, magazine and newspaper, it attracts the attention of the general public. Viewers or readers may wish to buy them but cannot afford them.

Many popular designs are then copied by the local manufacturers to make them available to the general public. For instance there was a movie that came with the title "Mujhe Kuchh Kehna Hai". It was directed by Satish Kaushik. In the same movie Kareena Kapoor was seen wearing hosiery chudidars. With the time, these chudidars became a hit.

Similarly the jeweler designs used in the movie Jodha Akbar have become a craze and Kundan work has become a mandatory accessory.

- c. **Maturity** This is the phase that comes in the life of fashion when it has been accepted by people and is being manufactured. Manufacturing is such that the produce is copied or made by many manufacturers. Regarding this we can take the example of the latest attire worn by ladies i.e. anarkali suits.

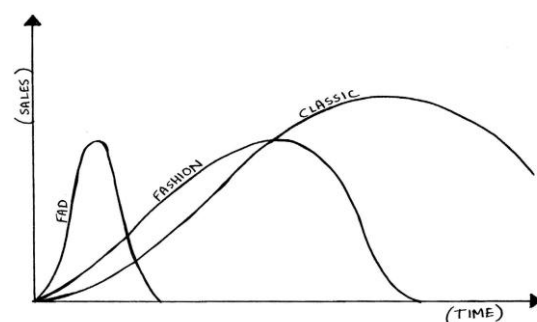
We must not ignore one aspect that there is a very thin difference between "knock-offs" and adaptations.

- d. **Decline** Eventually, this is one phase when people get tired of wearing the same color and pattern. More so over, many people are wearing the same stuff. This is when the decline factor gets introduced. We may take the example of oxidized jewelry. It was a craze in late 1990s. Eventually it faded to that extent that nobody wears them now.

- e. **Rejection** This phase comes post decline. There was a time when the collar blouse<sup>6</sup> or kurtis were very much in fashion in India. But with due passage of time it was rejected and considered obsolete.

#### Length of cycles

Although fashion follows the same cyclical pattern, there is no measurable timetable for a fashion cycle. Some fashions take a short time to peak in popularity, others take longer some decline slowly and others swiftly. Some styles last a single selling season, others last several seasons.



Certain fashions fade quickly others never completely disappear.

<sup>3</sup> Ritu Kumar's interview done by Saeed Naqvi for NDTV

<sup>4</sup> Generally fashion change evolves gradually, giving time to consumer to become accustomed to new looks.

<sup>5</sup> Marketing Management, by Philip Kotler, Product Life Cycle: Introduction, growth, Maturity, Decline

<sup>6</sup> Feature film, Bunty aur Babli by Yashraj Productions

### Classics

Some styles never become completely obsolete, but instead remain acceptable for an extended period of time. It is simple to be worn by many people for longer time. For instance, Sari, the Indian National Attire, was a classic, is a classic and will remain so.

### Fads

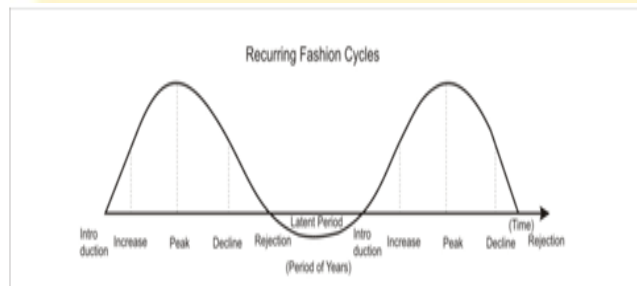
Short lived fashion or fads, can come and go in a single season. For instance, Bell bottoms were introduced for ladies as a part of the traditional ladies suits. It was not accepted by many and it got lost.

### Cycles within cycles

Jeans is the best example in this context. It was introduced in the market in 1960s. Till today it is considered a fashion and style symbol. Many designs have come, gone and stayed over the period of time.

### Interrupted cycles

This fact usually goes for the seasonal aspect of the apparel and textile production. There is no point is



expecting or buying cotton clothes in winter. Wool is the preferred form of cloth. Similarly who will buy woolen clothes in summer? So, the point is simple, apparel is selling, but season wise. "Let the monsoon come for selling umbrellas more".

### Recurring cycles

After a fashion dies it may resurface. For instance the bell bottoms that were introduced for ladies suits were very much in fashion in early 60s. It took a turn in mid 1990s. Same for the concept of mix and match styles for ladies attires. It existed till early 2000s and now is back again since 2012.

## 4. CONSUMER IDENTIFICATION WHILE PURCHASING OF CLOTHES

The generations and the gap between them play a very vital role. For example youth, age group between 15-25, will prefer clothes as per the fashion trend and would prefer not to adopt a fashion that is not "in". Then is age gap between 25-35, they will prefer clothes which is "neutral" i.e. neither fashionable nor obsolete. Later comes the age group from 35-45, they prefer to follow the use the trend or fashion that they are most comfortable in.

To quote an example, in Indian market, adidas, since eight years have been introducing a winter wear for men in grey and red combination. The combination remains the same and grey is the dominant color. This particular sweater is bought majorly by the age group 25-35.

To conclude for this part for the paper one may easily identify that the concept of "demand-pull" is what is being referred to.

When we talk about customer identification while purchasing of clothes we just need to observe by the kind of shop they visit the most. By this we mean is, we need not observe the individual customer but the age group, things will be very easy to target.

## 5. ADOPTION OF FASHION BY CONSUMERS<sup>7</sup>

There are three variation of fashion adoption process:-

- Traditional adoption
- Reverse adoption
- Mass dissemination

The distribution of fashion has been described as a movement, a flow, or trickle from one element of society to another. The diffusion of influences from center to periphery may be conceived of in hierarchical or in horizontal terms, such as the trickle-down, trickle-across, or trickle-up theories.

### a. Traditional Adoption (Trickle-down theory)

Let us understand it with the help of a flowchart<sup>8</sup>:-



<sup>7</sup> It is important to understand how new fashion ideas are disseminated, or spread, and how they are adapted to the tastes, life styles, and budgets of various consumers.

<sup>8</sup> Interrelationship of the fashion cycle, the traditional adoption theory,, the fashion press and manufacturing.



The oldest theory of distribution is the trickle-down theory described by Veblen in 1899. To function, this trickle-down movement depends upon a hierarchical society and a striving for upward mobility among the various social strata. In this model, a style is first offered and adopted by people at the top strata of society and gradually becomes accepted by those lower in the strata. This distribution model assumes a social hierarchy in which people seek to identify with the affluent and those at the top seek both distinction and, eventually, distance from those socially below them. Fashion is considered a vehicle of conspicuous consumption and upward mobility for those seeking to copy styles of dress. Once the fashion is adopted by those below, the affluent reject that look for another.

b. Mass dissemination (Trickle –across theory)

Proponents of the trickle-across theory claim that fashion moves horizontally between groups on similar social levels. In the trickle-across model, there is little lag time between adoptions from one group to another. Evidence for this theory occurs when designers show a look simultaneously at prices ranging from the high end to lower end ready-to-wear.

c. Reverse adoption (Trickle – up or Bottom-Up theories)

The trickle-up or bubble-up pattern is the newest of the fashion movement theories. In this theory the innovation is initiated from the street, so to speak, and adopted from lower income groups. The innovation eventually flows to upper-income groups; thus the movement is from the bottom up.

Examples of the trickle-up theory of fashion distribution include a very early proponent, Chanel, who believed fashion ideas originated from the streets and then were adopted by couture designers. Many of the ideas she pursued were motivated by her perception of the needs of women for functional and comfortable dress. Following World War II the young discovered Army/Navy surplus stores and began to wear pea jackets and khaki pants. Another category of clothing, the T-shirt, initially worn by laborers as a functional and practical undergarment, has since been adopted universally as a casual outer garment and a message board.

Thus how a fashionable look permeates a given society depends upon its origins, what it looks like, the extent of its influence, and the motivations of those adopting the look. The source of the look may originate in the upper levels of a society, or the street, but regardless of origin, fashion requires an innovative, new look.

## 6. MOTIVES FOR CONSUMER BUYING

There was a time when people bought clothes only when the need aroused. But now days the trends have changed. Following are the reasons for why people buy clothes

- a. To look attractive: This factor highlights a consumer's need to show off his/her physical attributes. Generally they are the clothes that are more flattering.

- b. To be fashionable: This is connected with the point of "Frenzy". Many people buy clothes from the Fresh Arrival section only because they are the latest. They might even discard them or stop wearing them just because it is not in fashion anymore yet wearable.
- c. To impress others: Every consumer wants to project a successful image. They may even want to exhibit their taste level or income level through clothing. Expensive brands have ever served as a status symbol.
- d. To be accepted by peer group: Many Muslim women wear abaya because they wish to be accepted by their peer groups in a certain form. After all individuals need to get back to their personal lives.
- e. Emotional need: Wearing what is in trend and fashionable and new gives many a sense of confidence. This confidence is the result of the 'feel good factor' that the new trend or fashion gives them.

There are more factors that influence the consumer buying decision for clothes/fashion. Practical considerations while buying clothes are:-

- i. Price: Price is the major player while buying clothes. People for obvious reasons, look for their budget and the worth to be spent on a particular garment.
- ii. Comfort: People buy cotton clothes stay cool in summer. People buy warm clothes stay warm in winter. People buy quick drying clothes during monsoon. To be precise this is the reason why the fabric "spandex" is so popular.
- iii. Appropriateness: It is important that the purpose with which the clothes are bought, bought clothes should serve that purpose too. It's not just one's workplace or profession that decides their choice of clothes but it's also the personality, complexion and body shape that one considers while buying clothes.
- iv. Fabric Performance and Care: Many fabrics these days are of low maintenance. This means they are all machine washable. For instance many clothes made by MAX retail, are hand washable. They cannot be machine washed. Hence it is very stressful for many to dry-clean and hand wash clothes.
- v. Quality: Consumer demand for quality has risen in the recent years. The designer or bridge customer considers clothing as an investment and may not mind paying more for the lasting qualities of fine detailing and workmanship. Some consumers may look for a particular brand or name on the basis of a reputation for quality. For instance the "Arrow" shirts are low maintenance shirts. They can be hand washed without too many efforts and can be ironed easily.

## 7. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Preliminary Studies of the Research Motivated by the idea that consumer behavior and market of life style product specially appareland fashion design productds is very dynamic and may have different success proposition. It would be appropriate to develop measures for fashion product from consumer behavior point of view to position

the product effectively. The goal of the study is to **Analysis of fashion product of apparels from Consumer lifestyle perspectives in Lucknow area.** For this purpose, a structured questionnaire was designed and piloted on a predetermined sample of 138 respondents of Lucknow from different demographic characteristic. After collection of data it was analysed and some important findings and appropriate conclusions were drawn. Able 1 gives the shopping frequency of the customer

Table 1: number of times people buy clothes-*Fashion*

Shopping frequency	
Once in a year	53
10 times in a year	46
twice /month	25
5 times in a month	13

53 out of the 138 surveyed shop once in a year. The occasions mentioned were Holi and Diwali the most. The clothes that are bought on these occasions are generally the ones wore by them on special events like weddings and parties. 46 people shop for about 10 times in a year. This was majorly seen in the 15 years and above category. Twice in a month was the preference of the people above 50 years of age the most. Maximum of them were through with their family responsibilities and had started enjoying life.

Table 2: Sources that inspire people to buy new clothes-*Fashion*

Inspiration from	
Friends	13
Family	43
Celebrities	13
People around	13
Magazine	14
Style at store	29
Others	13

Majority of the sample taken takes inspiration to shop from Family members. Style at store is the next factor that influences one to shop. Celebrity fashion style, friends and magazines are the third factor that inspires people to shop. Gone are the days when people around affected one's decision to buy clothes. People around are the least inspirational factors that affects the purchasing of consumer.

Table 3:

Preferred weather to shop	
Summer	42
Winter	42
Spring	17
No preference	37

Since summer season consumes more clothes that's why maximum number of people shop during this time. Winter is the second best season when people shop for clothes the

most . Winter season was mostly opted by the ones who wish to not just buy rather invest in clothing for about 5 years. Spring was the least preferred season. 37 people did not remember about when they shopped the most.

Table 4: Per year expenditure on clothing

Amount spend on clothing in a year	
>1000	16
>5000	59
>8000	32
Depends	31

Majority of people invest about Rs.5000 and less - in a year on clothing. The people who went by timings and need were just one number less. Least number of people who invest less than Rs. 1000 on clothing was mostly the students or the ones who were unmarried & were living with their parents.

Table 5: Online shopping of clothes

Online shopping	
25%	23
0%	115

The result is obviously and clearly visible. Majority doesn't buy clothes online. The mentioned 23 people are the ones who are working at corporate. Their experiences are tried tested. Their friends are the major reason behind them shopping this way.

Table 6: Criteria for shopping

Criteria for shopping	
Quality	34
Price	9
Comfort	29
Style	17
Color	3
Material	6
Brand	40

Majority of all the age groups are Brand conscious. They believe if there is a brand name involved all the mentioned factors will automatically be there. Only 6 less i.e. 34 were more towards quality and not brand conscious. 29 were not inclined towards any other factor and keen over their comfort the most. Least was the people who were color conscious. The people who mentioned color were all males. Either it was the blue color that they were crazy about or the white T-shirt.

Table 7: Criteria for shopping

Purchases	
Planned	79
Impulse	59

The difference between the two was of only 20 people. 79 said that they plan and then invest. 59 said they prefer Impulse shopping.

Table 8: Clothes bought when on sale

"Sale" Criteria	
25%	82
50%	46
75%	10

Majority of the people said 'yes', 25% of the clothes that they wear are bought when on sale. 46 said that 50% of the shopping they do is generally bought on sale. Least was the people who bought clothes when on sale. These "10" people were the college going students.

Table 9: Consciousness about matching

"Matching" conscious	
Yes	79
No	59

The difference has been low between the two. Else the ratio is 50:50. But if go by the rule then majority of the consumers are matching conscious. By matching the purpose was their inclination towards accessories and footwear. For instance the jeans that people buy are generally blue in color. They club matching T-shirts with the same. Same kind of equation goes for the footwear as well.

Table 10: The company consumers keep while investing in clothing

Shopping with	
Alone	34
Friends	18
Family	61
Partner	18

The decision to buy clothes of the consumers is affected by the family the most. This majority confessed that no matter what they have to go back home. When the 15 years and above genre was asked this, especially the girls studying in girls' college did confess that they do wish to wear different kinds of clothes. But to come to college wearing the same they have to wear it at home and then move out-that is a challenge.

Next biggest influencers are the consumers themselves. Today's consumer is exposed to many sources that they can judge themselves about the clothing. For instance Jabong.com has the facility of delivering clothes by their own courier service. If the product is not liked by the consumer he/she can easily return that.

Friends and partner is the least percentage carrier of them being the influencer in terms of people buying their clothes.

Table 11: Celebrity label and decision making

"Celebrity" label conscious	
Yes	38
No	100

Majority of people are not celebrity conscious. But to about 38 people it did affect.

Table 12: Way of shopping or buying clothes

How shopping is done	
Same shop everytime	49
Window display	10
New shop	21
Search first	42
Special offers	16

Be it any age group or any phase of life, maximum of the consumer goes to the same shop every time. Post being the regular customer of the same shop, people prefer to search first and then invest. Third is the choice of trying a new shop for the consumers. Special offers and the window display do play a role but does not influence the buying decisions of clothes made by the consumer today.

Table 12: Motivators

Motivation to buy "fashion" comes from	
Celebrities	20
Friends	27
Family	46
Partner	10
Some event	20
Others	12

The biggest motivators while buying fashion are the family members. For instance the latest "Anarkali" pattern is a hit amongst ladies of all age groups. On the very same lines, colored pants are very inn right now. They are bought by males of all age groups.

Friends are the second big motivating factor in terms of buying fashion and clothes. It is more noticed amongst boys. Of the 27 mentioned here, 15 boys confessed that their friends are the reason behind them buying a specific style of clothing. Out of 138 only 10 mentioned their partners being the reason behind them shopping/buying fashion.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Fashion has three properties: style, acceptance and timeliness. Change makes the fashion world go round. New styles are introduced, rise in popularity then decline into obsolescence. Some styles remain fashionable longer than others. Some come back into fashion after a latent period. Because fashion, is a product of change, a sense of timing is an important attribute at all levels of the industry. Consumers can be identified with the stages of the fashion cycle, fashion leaders, a very small percentage of population, buy and wear new styles at the beginning of the cycle; other consumers imitate. The majority of consumers are followers, which facilitates the mass marketing of fashion. Fashion may shift down from the original ideas of high fashion designers to reappear at lower price levels. Other styles are either adapted "up from the streets" or are disseminated quickly through mass marketing of fashion. Consumers buy clothes for many reasons, including the desire to be fashionable, attractive,



impressive, accepted or emotionally fulfilled. Considerations in fashion selection include color, texture, price, fit, appropriateness, brand, fabric, performance and workmanship. Consumer acceptance is a major influence on styling and merchandising decision. The fashion industry responds to consumer needs with a variety of size, ranges many more aspects as such. Yet it doesn't cater too many.

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