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# **FASHION TRENDS AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY**

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## **1. Introduction**

Fashion trends come and go; meanwhile a society's values are established and evolving characteristic to their beliefs and culture. Fashion is just not an ambitious projected image of a reinterpreted good old value to fulfill some function or agenda alike but rather a evocative and refreshing concept worthy enough to be portrayed for society's appreciation that makes us even more instinctive. In the society, the individual's appearance is the ticket to transmit non verbal communication signals such as possible cues about his / her social stature, values and lifestyle. Fashion communication has under gone a 360 degree shift in its communicable aspects staring from projecting a basic image of how we look like and how we feel like to expressing our emotional experiences through interactive implements in the dress.

The success of the fashion trend lies in the way the society interprets the fashion trend and judges it. Hence the impact is measured by the barometer of social acceptance which in turn is driven by the several motivational forces that underline the people's values and behavioral traits. Today's consumer culture is driven by aspirationalism that diminishes the gap between the rich and economically volatile sections when it comes to accepting and adopting a trend. A classical example is, a consumer in China saves her three months salary to purchase a LVMH hand bag. Further It does not stop here as the people's cash liquidity is extended by the easy provision of personal loans facilitated by both private and nationalized banks alike. This is even extended by few Brands' initiatives to offer fashion products on a credit basis with easy monthly part payment options.

## **2. Contemporary consumption behavior**

Today's youth ( 15 to 20 years) given their predictable audacity, the tendency to shop, venture out, try, experiment is high, it is they who decide the life time of a fashion trend. In a globalized world well connected by web technologies, geographical distance is no more a constraint to reach and witness the experience. The lines between buying behaviors are no more significant among young people ( youth) indeed blurring out as the common urge is get hooked on to social networks, interact across a wide section of people of with shared interests and get appreciated. In fact even companies hiring potential job seekers are verifying their social networks and appraising them.

In this context, the very idea of consumerist model of Top to down approach is hardly relevant. (Douglas & Isherwood, 1996; McCracken, 1990) theories of consumption describe a more complex picture in which fashion does more than signal social position. Rather populist models and trickle across theories help to explain the phenomenon better. A classical example is the prevalence of their attitude and lifestyle to decide about product purchase rather than merely following the cultural stars and people in lime light or the rich and wealthy people. Today's world is driven by knowledge and experience providing chance for every individual to experience and appreciates a moment which is no way decided by their monetary status. And the converse is also true that the rich are not the only ones superior in appreciating a taste or value. And knowledge being a common platform where rich and economically vulnerable alike compete on equal terms. In fact the new line is between knowledge ignorant people and people with well equipped knowledge.

(Holt 1997a) defines lifestyle as collective pattern of consumption patterns based on shared cultural frameworks that exist in social system. A recent analysis on the consumer consumption behavior by Chaudhuri and Majumdar (2006) only bears more evidence to this phenomenon.

Table 1: A Structural Analysis of Conspicuous Consumption Behavior (Source: Chaudhuri and Majumdar, 2006)

<b>Social structure</b>	<b>Primary Objects of Consumption</b>	<b>Drivers of Behavior</b>	<b>Consumers</b>	<b>Principal behavior dimensions</b>
Pre-capitalist feudal	Slaves, women and food	Military and political powers	Nobility	Pure ostentation
Modern – Capitalist	Very expensive products e.g diamonds	Social power and status	Nobility and upper middle class	Ostentation and signaling and uniqueness
Post – modern	Image and experience	Self expression and self image	Middle class and the “masses”	Uniqueness and social conformation

### 3. Face of Everyday fashion

The phenomenon of fashion can be distinguished into elite fashion ( haute couture) and everyday fashion rather than just restricting ourselves to the concept of European or western high fashion. (Malcom barnard 1996, 2008) Everyday Fashion is an interactive process through which the aspiring individuals of the society consciously project their bodily self in a distinctive manner in the form of clothing style. it is unlike the traditional capitalist fashion system where the so called elite or rich decide the course of fashion tastes and fashion gets disseminated from the top to bottom sections of the society. This distinctive manner of style is equally drawn from the fashion trends percolated through contemporary life, style conventions, fashion code concepts developed by the designers & forecasting service providers alike and street style fashion, Appreciation of aesthetic experiences, ethnographic accounts witnessed in the social vicinity of a local population. (Malcolm barnard 1996, 2008) Relating to the beliefs and attitudes of the peers or social group these individuals belong to the Endeavour to draw a fine line between the existing patterns of style and their appearance by dressing in a trendy manner. In other words the intention is to win friends or draw appreciations by communicating their values in the form of dress and clothing as appearance is a social etiquette and effective form of nonverbal communication.

Mean while the contemporary everyday fashion echo a different pattern contrary to the traditional fashion cycle periods of Classic fashion and FAD. Rather we can say there is a change in the compositions of the elements that constitute these fashion concepts. The pattern at which the FAD accessories like sashes, armlets / wristbands, jewellery, hair bands and watches along with fashionable trims like buttons and pins are co-ordinate with classical dress shirts and trousers to complement a look rapidly changes every month. Party wear and club wear clothing trends needs no mention about this behavior. Thus other than the bare essentials of classical look namely the dress shirt and trouser / skirt, the accessories and trims which co-ordinate the look continue to evolve at a faster pace similar to FAD.

(Kawamura 2005) This is witnessed in groups including subcultures, ethnic groups, alternative lifestyles, workplace and leisure cultures, and in all the mundane places and institutions of everyday life.

### **3.1 The lure of aesthetic experience**

(I-perception 2012) As quoted in the three dimensions of aesthetic experience: fascination with the aesthetic object ( arousal and attention), appraisal of symbolic reality (cognitive engagement) and strong feeling of unity with the object: fascination and appraisal, The lure of aesthetic experience for a contemporary consumer is highly inspirational and entails specific calculations on his / her part in accepting the everyday fashion trends. Clothing behavior is determined by pragmatic criteria and situations because we do have social codes of dressing. When it comes to casual wear the preference could be for a mixture of values attributed to social themes and adventurous sports / events, in case of formal wear the preference or the more rightly the choice is to stick to the conventional dressing codes, in case of sportswear the preference is for a functional comfort and feel good factor and in case of party wear the preference is for displaying the oomph factor and prevailing iconic values. Thus consumers are clearly strongly influenced by their social context, they also have a creative agency in participating in fashion: “Consumption establishes itself as a gratuitous and creative activity inasmuch as people reinterpret and reorganize things they have bought according to a particular style which they are continuously engaged in accomplishing” (Sassatelli, 2007).

#### **4. Social agenda of fashion trends**

In fact clothing and fashion are carriers of wide range of ideological meanings. The fashion trends portray a visual culture and style of dressing that models the consumer identity in a specific environment. The social agenda of these fashion trends is to express the consumer's identity in terms of lifestyle choices and their attitude. The lifestyle choices changes from one period to another period. In other words they suggest the pattern & manner of dressing befitting an occasion that sets forth a standard. these clothing standards are in fact derived from the prevailing social values and their emotional expectations.

The Fashion trend entails design focus and details on a garment noticed at different locations of the garment namely collars and necklines, hem lines, waist lines, shoulder line, sleeve lines and hip lines. A sneak peek review of Google fashion trends report. ([Www. Thinkwithgoogle.com/spring-2015-fashion-trends-google](http://www.Thinkwithgoogle.com/spring-2015-fashion-trends-google)) tell us about the status of the trends floated by the fashion clothing articles.

There is a steady rise in the consumption of styles like waist trainer, jogger pants, palazzo pants, tulle skirt and midi skirt. While styles like white lace dress, high waisted bikini, romper, shift dress and white jumpsuit have recorded seasonal growth. Not only had they added on a new element of Elegance and natural well being to the contemporary human existence but have demystified few common fabric notions in the society like knitted stretch denim is suitable only for lounges and tulle is appropriate only for elegant party wear or Haute couture. Be it the kinematic comfort of jogger pants that meets the requirements of frail customer who would like to do away from the heavy trousers that bruises the skin or the very low weight and airy silhouette of tulle skirt or the easy to don and doff jumpsuit have all added on a renewing feature and pepped up the existing look. The agenda of each fashion trend is to enhance the look and feel of the customer.

From the user search behavior patterns, it is clearly evident that many fashion trends have bulldozed the issue of class entirely, and instead follow patterns of "personal identity" dictated by psychographic parameters based on age, race, gender, sexuality, leisure activities, and various sub-cultural allegiances. This is a classic example of how contemporary fashion cycles operate differently from purely top-down models (Crane 2000).

And trends themselves are in fact rolled out by the forecasting services following thorough ethnographic studies. As the living conditions, the environment and the cognitive engagement in the life of a person changes simultaneously the attitudinal expressions also change. And in an era where the construction of personal identity assumes absolute importance for an individual, the fashion designers and forecasters alike float their agendas to cater to these special emotional needs driven by lifestyle and values.

Clothes are never a frivolity; they are always an expression of the fundamental social and economic pressures of the time (Laver 1968). WGSN Executive Vice President Leticia Abraham also shares the same view that fashion is one of the most evident and prolific places for individual and social expression and is a means of communication but not a revolution in itself ([www.wgsn.com/blogs/trends-and-fashion-theyre-not-dead-and-never-will-be](http://www.wgsn.com/blogs/trends-and-fashion-theyre-not-dead-and-never-will-be)). Another example is the rise of street style which proves fashion is an essential mode of self expression.

## **5. The attitude of youth towards fashion trends**

Attitudes serving a value-expressive function (i.e., value-expressive attitudes) help people communicate their central beliefs, attitudes, and values to others through their possessions (Katz 1960). And fashionable garments and accessories are such possessions that help people communicate who and what they are. In this context, do all people have a penchant to adore fashion trends are to be looked into in close proximity? The answer is definitely no except one exceptional section of the population: the youngsters. The youngsters comprising of adolescents (12 to 17 years), teens and young adults allocate more time for their public appearance than to studies. The peer influence, hero worship which becomes part of adolescent identity creation is the primary reason why adolescents aspire for more fashion concerns than any other age group. Colleges generally project the picture of current trend in fashion. Therefore it is normal for a college student who is in the identity creation stage of Erikson's psychosocial development to look for trendy dress choices (1968).

When a particular style of dress comes in vogue or used by film stars and models, it is blindly followed by college students (Pathak, 2013). Fashion trend today does not give precedence to comforts and practicality. Sometimes the dress, that goes beyond modesty and simplicity, which

does not allow someone to sit or walk properly, is attracted by youth. Untidy, shabby looking hair-styles, which are trendy, attract Generation X youngsters. Rather it reflects the deconstructive style preferences prevailing in post modern consumerist society.

## **5.1 GENERATION Z**

Generation X style characteristics can be inferred from a few signature style looks: metro sexual or grunge characterized by Untidy, shabby looking hair-styles, which are trendy. By far for many youngsters the prevailing style is jeans, cool sneakers and messy hair for men and jeans, cool sneakers and neat hair for women. But Generation Z youngsters who in fact wish to express their own style in an anonymous manner as per the view shared by the Director of youth insights of Futures co ([Www.nytimes.com/2015/19/20/fashion](http://Www.nytimes.com/2015/19/20/fashion)). Generation Z is also nicknamed Digital natives, just because they can simultaneously create a document, edit it, post a photo on instagram and talk on phone.

We do see a few elements like rave look, pop art style skirts printed with giant coco cola logo, tie-dyed maxi dresses and rainbow chokers barring resemblance to Generation X. ([Www.Teenvogue.com/gallery/spring-summer-2015-beauty-trend-report](http://Www.Teenvogue.com/gallery/spring-summer-2015-beauty-trend-report)) While 2015 spring beauty trend report of Teen Vogue speak about vintage patty smith style shag haircuts and ripped fishnets era scarlet lipstick as trends, the youth style bloggers are catching upon anonymous styles pertaining to smaller sub groups and sub cultures, for example: self defined laundry-day look that comprises of oversize sweaters, base ball caps and jogging pants ([Www.nytimes.com/2015/19/20/fashion](http://Www.nytimes.com/2015/19/20/fashion)). Thus there is no one single acclaimed and sought after signature look mimicking pop stars and cultural stars. This is no strange behavior in the current scenario given the incidences of “Selfies” as they are quick and efficient way to increase one’s social media presence.

## **6. Communication and cognitive engagement**

Fashion communication, unlike verbal communication, messages transmitted through fashion symbols are often emotional impressions or, what Hoffmann (1984) called "illusions". In other words they reflect the clothing attitude of the person. The perceiver examines a fashion statement "not for a new message, but for an old one fixed by convention" Fashion symbols and their



effectiveness in communicating culturally defined Categories. Principles and processes emerged through human interaction not only speaks about their existence but also their consciousness. The human consciousness in appreciating a cut and shape of silhouette is as legitimate as any other appreciation of Art. In fashion the evocation of a Trend pertaining to a historical period has to be immediate yet not necessarily correct in its aspects; visual impact and easy reading of the design take preference over historical accuracy in material or shape. Today, Is silk an representation of purity, royalty and does wearing a denim trouser with distressed effects speak about the emotional traits of the person who he is, can only be explained by the symbols that establishes the visual core concepts in fashion.

Today the manufacturing of fashion clothing has been affected by technological advances. (Alicia Kennedy & Emily Banerjee Stoeberl with Jay Calderin 2013), The abilities of the high-tech fabrics to stretch to over-whelming sizes or change their structure according to temperatures inspire clothing designers and blur the lines between fashion and industrial design. The Italian firm Corvo Nove has designed a shirt woven with titanium that reacts to shifts in temperature. Wrinkles in the fabric are released when the shirt is exposed to hot air. The changing face of communications is also influencing trends & styles of the future.

(Trending, Sunday magazine, The Hindu, September 20, 2015) The Selfie is the buzz word today, as it communicates a message or two about the person across their friends, colleagues and foes alike instantaneously through digital platforms. According to Oxford Dictionary a selfie is a photograph that one has taken of oneself, usually with a smart phone. And why not is elected as the “International word of the year 2013”. The mode of selfies has come a long way from days of Vincent van Gogh who first painted a self portrait to the days of Triple self portrait painted by Norman Rockwell which features a mirror selfie. The interesting thing to note is people wish to go by their own style that is evident from the plethora of selfies posted across the web. A poll by American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery indicated that one in three cases requested for surgical procedures to improve their look.

## **7. Conclusion**

Attitude is an expression of the feelings and values are their motivating forces or directional forces that help the consumer to make a decision. In case of a value-expressive attitude toward a product, the consumers are motivated to consume it as a form of self-expression (Snyder and DeBono 1985). This growing trend of self awareness for one's look has influenced every aspect of Generation Z individual behavior and is reflected in every sphere starting from social media platforms to real life purchase decisions. This phenomenon of emboldened self expression and preference for no holds barred anonymous style has challenged the core social agenda of forecasting agencies. Thus it has pushed the forecasting agencies to reconsider the parameters of forecasting ushering in a new environment for modeling. The most befuddling is the unpredictable nature of selfie composition patterns leaving behind only the function of expression that is to increase one's social media presence and carve a niche for himself or herself. So the trend of the day is self expressive anonymous style that tends to remove social prejudices about fashion in the society. The lenience is towards flaunting what is theirs in spite of mimicking others rather going all the way to savor and appreciate what they and their close knit friends in the group engage and unravel upon. Further today's anonymous style trends opens up the societal expressions unheard and unseen ever before just evocative of the spirit of our moments that does not bother whether the content is worth artistic and meaningful which could give a hint or two about the individuals real existence and real needs.

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## Tables:

1. Table 1: A Structural Analysis of Conspicuous Consumption Behavior (Source: Chaudhuri and Majumdar, 2006)