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Organized by KET's V. G. Vaze College, Mulund

Editors:

Dr. Vishakha Patil and Professor (Dr.) Preeta Nilesh

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Fashion today transcends the realm of clothing and aesthetics. It is a phenomenon engrained in the cultural, social, economic, political, and technological matrix of contemporary life. The Two-Day National Multidisciplinary Conference on Fashion-I-S-T-A-S 2025, organised by V.G. Vaze College with financial support from the ICSSR (WRC) had its thematic emphasis on Fashion: Innovation, Sustainability, Trends, Avenues, Society. The conference was a timely academic intervention aimed at synthesizing the multiple dimensions of fashion into a coherent scholarly narrative. By positioning fashion at the intersection of diverse disciplines, the conference aligns with the evolving demands of knowledge production and the interdisciplinary frameworks of modern scholarship.

At its core, fashion is a powerful modality of identity articulation. It codifies and communicates individual and collective selves, rooted in ethnicity, nationality, subcultures, and philosophical affiliations, while also being shaped by socio-political hierarchies of class, caste, and gender. As such, fashion is not merely a statement of style but a socio-cultural text, legible to those trained to interpret its symbols and codes. The conceptual note of the conference, rightly emphasizes this semiotic function of fashion and foregrounds its relevance beyond the superficiality often attributed to it. The epistemological expansion of fashion studies in recent decades demonstrates its applicability across domains. From history and psychology to economics and environmental science, fashion functions as both subject and method.

The proposed conference offered a much-needed platform for deconstructing the manifold roles of fashion; as an economic engine, a vehicle of cultural transmission, and a site of ideological contestation. It invited scholars and practitioners alike to interrogate the dialectics of tradition and modernity, consumerism and consciousness, exclusivity and inclusivity within the fashion ecosystem.

A key thematic strand of the conference was the historical and political evolution of fashion. Fashion history is not linear; it is cyclical, often retrogressive, yet constantly innovating through cultural assimilation and resistance. The politics of fashion, visible in debates around cultural appropriation, dress codes, and modesty regulations reveals how garments become tools of control and resistance. In societies such as India, sartorial choices have long been intertwined with nationalist discourses, colonial legacies, and postcolonial identity formation. Examining the socio-political utility of clothing across epochs opens avenues for understanding fashion as a site of power and negotiation.

Equally important was the recognition of fashion's economic centrality. With the global fashion industry generating revenues worth trillions, fashion is not peripheral to economic discourse. The attention of the conference to retail and merchandising, consumer behavior, branding, and e-commerce reflected the critical role in global trade and employment. Furthermore, the impact of fashion tourism, where cities and regions leverage their sartorial heritage to attract consumers and tourists, adds another dimension to the fashion-commerce nexus. Such intersections merited academic analysis, especially in light of the increasing digitization and platformization of the fashion marketplace.

The inclusion of psychological and social inclusivity within the discourse of fashion is a welcome move towards a more ethically engaged scholarship. Fashion is known to influence self-image and mental well-being; the phenomenon of body shaming, sizeism, and ableism within mainstream fashion is gradually being challenged through movements for body positivity and inclusive design. By examining how fashion shaped and is shaped by psychological dynamics, the conference showed the affective power of clothing. Additionally, issues of gender fluidity and LGBTQ+ representation in fashion challenge heteronormative and binary frameworks, enabling the democratization of style were also discussed.

Among the most pressing concerns in contemporary fashion discourse is sustainability. The fashion industry is often critiqued for its role in environmental degradation ranging from textile waste and water pollution to carbon emissions. The dedicated focus of the conference on Eco-Evolution and legal considerations addressed this head-on. The environmental footprint of fashion can no longer be ignored; sustainable sourcing, circular design, ethical labor practices, and green certifications must be central to industry reform. Additionally, the legal architecture that governs intellectual property, labor rights, and environmental compliance needs scholarly attention, and the conference addressed this. Protecting designer rights while ensuring worker dignity and ecological responsibility is a complex balancing act that the conference explored.

Another innovative thematic focus is the fusion of food and fashion, and the synergy between fashion and nature, including wildlife and botanical aesthetics. These represent a novel epistemic turn in fashion studies, where culinary cultures, ecological motifs, and organic materials are not merely design inspirations but are embedded into the very philosophies of sustainable living. The exploration of edible fashion, nature-inspired textiles, and biophilic aesthetics gestures towards an emerging eco-

humanism in design thought were crucial discussions in redirecting fashion from being an extractive enterprise to one that is regenerative and mindful.

The role of technology and science in reshaping fashion was yet another important conference axis. With innovations like 3D printing, wearable tech, augmented reality (AR), and artificial intelligence (AI), fashion is undergoing a tectonic shift. AI is transforming everything from predictive analytics in design to automated journalism in fashion reporting. Digital avatars and virtual runways are redefining fashion consumption and aesthetics. The integration of STEM fields into fashion prepares the ground for fashion education that is attuned to Industry 5.0 realities. Discussions on biomechanics, ergonomics, and color science further enriched the technoscientific discourse.

The pedagogical focus on fashion education addresses a long-standing gap in curriculum innovation. Preparing students for the global fashion industry requires a holistic, interdisciplinary education that incorporates business, art, technology, and sustainability. The challenge lies in designing syllabi that are both rooted in local traditions and responsive to global trends. Fashion institutes must not only train designers but also nurture critical thinkers and change agents who can navigate ethical quandaries and technological shifts with intellectual rigor and creativity. The conference addressed these aspects as well.

In conclusion, Fashion-I-S-T-A-S 2025 was more than a conference; it was a clarion call for repositioning fashion as a serious academic pursuit. By treating fashion as a multifaceted domain that encompasses aesthetics, ethics, economics, and ecology, the event invited a paradigm shift in how fashion is theorized, practiced, and taught.

This special issue of the journal brings together diverse perspectives that examine fashion as both a cultural artifact and a dynamic force shaping modern life. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Nanda Rupnar for designing the cover page of the journal.

In Saree 2.0: Redefining Heritage and Empowerment through Fashion, Preeta Nilesh and Neeta Mehta, reinterpret the saree as a living tradition that balances continuity and change. The paper anchors the volume thematically, examining the transformation of the saree in form and meaning, from an ancestral garment to a contemporary expression of empowerment and identity. This notion of reimagining the traditional recurs in Social Networking and YouTube: Reviving the Art of Upcycled Saris and Sari Draping, an analysis by Satwant Balse of how YouTube and social media have catalysed a resurgence in sari draping and upcycling, promoting both

sustainability and creativity. Rina Puradkar's paper on the Paithani, The Saga of Mahavastra of Maharashtra: Paithani adds depth to this conversation, celebrating the elegance and regional pride embedded in one of Maharashtra's most iconic weaves.

The intersection of fashion with identity and politics forms another critical strand. In Inferring the Politics of Fashion, Shilpa Suryawanshi deconstructs the wardrobes of Indian political figures to reveal how attire becomes a tool of ideological communication. A complementary historical narrative is offered by Snehal Nagtilak. In her paper, The Suit of Power: Tracing the History of the Safari Suit in India, Snehal traces the rise and fall of the safari suit as a sartorial symbol of Indian postcolonial masculinity. Harshana Nikam further explores how fashion historically shaped ideals of femininity, focusing on 19th-century shapewear and its restrictive norms in her study titled, Constructing Femininity: A Study of Historical Shapewear of the 19th Century and Its Significance in Western Fashion.

Empowerment, particularly of women and marginalized groups, is central to several contributions. Sharvari Pendse in, Empowering Women Through Fashion, explores how fashion becomes a language of self-expression and resistance, enabling women to reclaim agency and redefine femininity. In a joint paper, Fashion Matters: Getting a Grip and Shaping Identities for the Physically Challenged, Sharvari Gupte and Preeta Nilesh turn the spotlight on adaptive fashion, emphasizing its role in empowering the physically challenged through functional yet expressive clothing. Similarly, Priyal Karania's work on flexible dress codes Understanding The Impact of Flexible Dress Codes as a New Trend at Workplace, reveals how workplaces are becoming more inclusive and accommodating of cultural and personal identity.

The volume also investigates the economic, environmental, and digital dimensions of fashion. Jui Kadvekar and Deep Pathare's study on Mumbai's thrifting culture, Threads of Change: A Historical and Cultural Perspective on Thrifting in Mumbai connects sustainable consumption with urban identity. In tandem, Snehal Chavan and Vaidehi Raut critically examine the environmental implications of textile waste and fast fashion in their paper, Reducing Fashion's Environmental Impact: A Study of Textile Waste Management, urging a shift toward circularity and responsible production. Sustainability also intersects with comfort and well-being in a joint paper by Neha Satoliya and Meera Surve. Their paper on the "comfort revolution" in fashion trends titled, Redefining Style: The Comfort Revolution in Modern Fashion Trends reflects a consumer-driven demand for ease, style, and environmental consciousness.

The idea of fashion as subtle power is explored in Understanding Quiet Luxury in Fashion by Neha Shirsat and Shilpi Sagar, where HBO's Succession becomes a lens to decode how understated, unbranded clothing signifies wealth and authority. Likewise, Sukhada Khambekar's paper on fashion tourism, Travel Destinations in India influencing Textile Trends reveals how regional textiles are not only preserved but popularized through travel and social media, further blurring the lines between culture, commerce, and couture.

Interdisciplinary approaches enrich the final section of the journal. Rajesh Mane's unique study, Fashioning Design: An Analysis of Automative Industry, draws parallels between automotive and fashion design, demonstrating how form, function, and branding converge across industries. In an adjacent social space, In their joint paper, Emerging Trend of Empowering Fitness from Home: Case Study of Habuild (India's First Habit Building Program), Neeta Mehta and Sharvari Gupte study the rise of virtual fitness platforms like Habuild, examining how digital fashion and wellness culture intersect in post-pandemic India. In yet another joint study, The Intersection of Emerging Trends, Cultural Norms and Child Sexual Abuse in India: A Critical Media Analysis, Neeta Mehta with Anushka Bhat offer a sobering perspective on the role of media in perpetuating the sexualisation of children in fashion-oriented reality shows, demanding critical accountability. In the last paper of this journal, Single-Session Therapy in the Indian Context, Ranjana Nikte explores Single-Session Therapy as providing a psychological counterpoint, reminding us that identity and self-image, often expressed through fashion, are also deeply linked to mental well-being.

This curated volume demonstrates that fashion is not a frivolous field but a complex, interdisciplinary arena where aesthetics meet politics, industry meets ethics, and personal choices reflect broader societal currents. Each paper in this issue contributes to a deeper understanding of how garments, trends, and choices are entwined to give us an idea of who we are, and who we aspire to become.

- Editors

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Dr. Vishakha was the visiting faculty for BSc Economics and B.A. LLB Courses at Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies in the subject of Political Science. She has been the coordinator and also visiting faculty at the Center for Distance and Online Education (CDOE) at the Mumbai University. She has authored books for CDOE for the Bachelor's and Master's courses in Political Science.

Her areas of research include India's National Security, Maritime Studies and Cultural Studies. She has number of publications in national and international journals of repute on topics of India's Cultural Diplomacy, National Security and Geopolitical concerns.

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Dr. Preeta Nilesh is the Principal of V.G. Vaze College (Autonomous) which she joined in 1984 as Assistant Professor. She was promoted to the post of Professor in June 2017 and has ben Principal of Vaze College (Autonomous) since 2021. She was awarded PhD for her study on Law and Social Change in the 19thc Bombay. She has been Keynote & Plenary speaker and resourced at conferences and published research papers in journals of repute. Prof. Preeta has to her credit an edited volume, Advancing Human Security: Perspectives on Global Governance. She has co-edited 'Revisiting World War 1: Centenary Hindsights' in August 2015. She also has a book on the first English medium school for girls in the Bombay Presidency, 'The Alexandra Girls' Education Institution'. Prof. Preeta also has to her credit an edited compilation of a National Conference on Cricket.

Her areas of research interest include women's engagement with law, education and civil society. She is also interested in Culture studies: festivals, fountains, food, restaurants fashion and international relations. Professor Preeta has completed a number of post-doctoral research projects funded by the University of Mumbai, UGC, The Asiatic Society of Mumbai and has also been the recipient of the Awabai Wadia Post-doctoral Research Fellowship. She was invited by the United States Department of State to participate in a four- week International Visitor Leadership Program in May 2009 during the course of which, she interacted with various members of the US Senate.

She was also invited to the Nordic Institute, Copenhagen, for a work-cum study program in 2010 and as Professor-Mentor to the Dubai College of Higher Technologies in 2010 and 2011.

Professor Preeta Nilesh has also been invited as Plenary Speaker, Resource Person and Chairperson to various national and international conferences including the University of Sacramento, California, (USA), the University of Fudan, Shanghai, (China), Mansfield College, Oxford, (United Kingdom) and the International Institute of Asian Studies, Leiden (The Netherlands) to name a few.

She has a number of publications in national and international journals of repute.

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SAREE 2.0:

REDEFINING HERITAGE AND EMPOWERMENT THROUGH FASHION

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Introduction:

The saree is not merely six yards of drape but a garment of millions of Indian women; a garment that gives and spreads happiness. It is an intergenerational thread, weaving together customs, beliefs, and aesthetics across centuries. Far from being a static garment, the saree embodies dynamism; its beauty lies in its adaptability and the myriad ways it can be draped, each style echoing the distinct regional identities and personal aesthetics of the wearer. From the graceful *Nivi* drape to the structured *Seedha Pallu* or the intricate *Eight-fold* style, each variation narrates a cultural tale, embedding history within folds (Chishti, 2018).[1]

With a history spanning over 5,000 years, the origin of the saree can be traced back to the Indus Valley Civilization, where statues and figurines suggest early forms of draped garments akin to today's sarees (Jain, 2023). Its enduring popularity, even in modern India, signifies a harmonious coexistence of tradition and transformation, where urban women may pair a saree with a crop top or belt, reinventing it with contemporary flair without severing its cultural roots (Rao, 2021). This continuity over millennia has made the saree an emblem of our heritage connecting generations and cultures through a shared sartorial.

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[1] The person credited with the creation of the Nivi drape as we know it today is Jnanadanandini Devi Tagore, a social leader and influencer of her time. She was the wife of Satyendranath Tagore, and sister-in-law of Rabindranath Tagore. During the colonial era of Indian history, many Victorian morals were being imposed on Indian society. One such moral was to be modestly dressed. The saree was considered "immodest" as the upper body was left bare, and therefore, Indian dressing changed to adapt to these new moral sensibilities. Parallelly, the Independence movement was gaining traction and marked a change for Indian attire, especially the saree. Political leaders wore the garment to distinguish themselves from the British and give the people and the movement a national identity. To create a style that would conform to the new sensibilities, Jnanadanandini Devi adapted the Nivi drape that incorporated the blouse and petticoat. The point of this style was to fit in while maintaining a distinct Indian identity.

The emotional resonance of the saree cannot be overstated. It is often linked to rites of passage such as coming-of-age ceremonies, weddings, and festivals, where it not only enhances the significance of the occasion but also becomes a cherished keepsake passed from mother to daughter. The saree thus functions both as an article of daily wear and a marker of the milestones of life, embodying continuity and joy. In this light, it is not just a garment, but a bearer of stories, traditions, and memories, a true emblem of Indian womanhood.

In recent years, the saree has witnessed a remarkable transformation, with younger generations embracing it in innovative and contemporary ways. The term "Saree 2.0" symbolizes this evolution, a reimagining of the saree in the context of modern fashion, digital media, and evolving gender norms. No longer confined to traditional settings, the saree now graces fashion runways, boardrooms, and social media platforms, becoming a backdrop for self-expression and empowerment.

Saree 2.0 challenges the binaries of tradition and modernity, merging heritage with individual style.

This paper explores the resurgence and reinvention of the saree as Saree 2.0, examining how it steers the crossroads of heritage, empowerment, and fashion. Drawing on feminist and cultural studies, it analyses how the saree serves as both a site of resistance and conformity, a symbol of empowerment and tradition. From the literary works of Kamala Das to the #100SareePact on Facebook, from the design studios of Sabyasachi Mukherjee and Ritu Kumar to the lived experiences of urban Indian women, Saree 2.0 captures a cultural moment where the past and the present coalesce in a fabric that is as symbolic as it is stylish.

The Traditional Saree: A Cultural and Historical Overview

The saree, a traditional garment worn predominantly by women in South Asia, especially in India, is a versatile, elegant piece of clothing that has been cherished for centuries. A saree typically consists of a single piece of unstitched cloth, usually about 5 to 9 yards long and 1 to 1.5 meters wide. Its beauty lies in its adaptability and the unique ways it can be draped, reflecting regional identities, cultural heritage, and individual preferences. It has a history spanning over 5,000 years, with origins tracing back to the Indus Valley Civilization. Ancient sculptures and texts depict women in draped garments similar to the modern saree.

From Banarasi silk to Kanjeevaram and Chanderi, regional sarees tell stories of craftsmanship, community, and cultural identity (Sharma, 2019). Motifs draw from folklore, flora, fauna, and even temples and Mughal art. These regional sarees are not just fashion but visual culture and history woven into fabric. Sarees are integral to Indian rites of passage, celebrations, and rituals,

symbolizing femininity and prosperity (Kumar, N. (2020). The personal preferences behind saree choices reveal an interplay of tradition, aesthetics, practicality, and self-expression.

Historically, the saree as a traditional garment, has long served as a visual marker of caste, class, and regional identity in Indian society. Different draping styles, fabrics, and ornamentation often signified socio-economic status and community affiliations of the wearer. For instance, finely woven silks like the Kanjeevaram or Banarasi were associated with wealth and high status, while simpler cotton sarees denoted everyday wear among working-class women (Uberoi, 2006; Tarlo, 1996). Even colour choices and border motifs could reflect caste norms and ritual purity, particularly among upper-caste women (Bayly, 1986). Thus, the saree has historically functioned as a potent symbol of both social hierarchy and cultural belonging.

Fashion theorists like Barnard (2014) suggest that while some view fashion as style or material, others see it as symbolic, tied to identity and communication. The saree exemplifies this view—it is not just a garment, but a narrative. Some accounts look at costumes as fashion on account of its styling, fabrics, and adornment (Kaw, 2002). Fashion, in this broader sense, transcends utility and aesthetics to become a cultural text, one that encodes identity, power dynamics, and social meaning. In the Indian context, garments like the saree illustrate how fashion can be a site of negotiation between tradition and modernity, between societal expectations and individual agency. As Kaw (2002) notes, clothing choices often serve as performative acts that reflect one's social location, including caste, class, and gender, thus transforming garments into mediums of both conformity and resistance.

The Saree in Literature and Cinema: Embodying the Feminine

The saree has long served as a potent cultural and literary symbol in India, often used to embody a woman's identity, dignity, sensuality, and resistance. Whether in fiction, poetry, or film, the saree functions as a powerful visual and textual motif that captures the evolving roles and inner lives of women. In Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, the character Ammu's draped attire reflects both her constrained social role and her internal defiance against patriarchal norms (Roy, 1997).[2] Likewise, in the evocative short stories of Ismat Chughtai, the saree becomes more than clothing, it transforms into a site of negotiation for female desire, rebellion, and class identity (Chughtai, 1994).[3] Through its textures and drapes, it becomes an extension of the

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[2] In *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, the saree is a recurring motif symbolizing the dignity and heritage of the female characters. The way the saree is draped or its type can convey a woman's social status, personal expression, and the cultural weight she carries. The protagonist, Ammu, is portrayed wearing sarees that reflects her beauty and individuality, even as she faces societal constraints and personal turmoil.

[3] In the short stories of Ismat Chughtai, the saree is employed as a metaphor for the clash between

female body; autonomy or its containment, depending on the context. The symbolism of the saree is further enriched in the poetry and prose of Kamala Das, who frequently referenced it as a garment that both adorned and restrained, reflecting her complex relationship with gender roles, tradition, and personal freedom (Das, 2009). Her writing situates the saree not only as a traditional marker of womanhood but also as a vehicle of emotional and sensual expression, an aesthetic armour in her journey of self-discovery (Ramaswamy, 2010).

In Indian cinema, the saree has visually articulated shifting ideals of femininity, sensuality, and strength. From the sensual drapes to the power-dressing sarees, the garment has evolved alongside changing narratives around women. In the golden era of Bollywood, sarees often sheer, flowing, and pastel, were used to portray romanticized and idealized heroines, balancing modesty with allure. However, as societal attitudes have evolved, so too has the cinematic representation of the saree. In contemporary films, it has been reimagined as a symbol of empowerment; donned by characters who are lawyers, police officers, or political leaders asserting a blend of tradition and authority (Gulati, 2015). For instance, actresses like Vidya Balan and Deepika Padukone have used the saree to project both elegance and professional gravitas, illustrating its ability to convey multidimensional womanhood on screen.[4]

Thus, both in literature and film, the saree functions not merely as attire, but as a layered symbol; one that speaks to the social positioning, emotional landscapes, and evolving aspirations of Indian women.

Why the Saree Needed a Resurgence

While many still revere the timeless appeal of the saree, its practicality in contemporary life has been called into question. The garment demands a level of physical management; pleating, draping, and adjusting that can seem incompatible with the fast-paced, multitasking demands of modern workspaces. As India urbanized and global fashion trends permeated daily life, Western-style clothing such as jeans, trousers, and business suits came to represent progress, efficiency, and cosmopolitanism, rendering the saree relatively outdated or burdensome for everyday use (Banerjee & Miller, 2008). This shift was especially evident among working women, for whom

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tradition and modernity, illustrating the complex role of women in the evolving socio-political landscape of India.

[4] Vidya Balan's preference for handloom sarees in films like *Kahaani* and in public appearances underscores intellectual gravitas and cultural rootedness, portraying the saree as a symbol of strength, simplicity, and quiet resilience. In contrast, Deepika Padukone's sari-clad roles in *Piku* and *Padmaavat* demonstrate its versatility; from the understated elegance of linen and cotton drapes worn by a modern working woman to the opulence of royal textiles signifying dignity and valour.

functional attire became essential to navigate both public and professional spaces. Gender dynamics further influenced this transition: while Western outfits were increasingly associated with autonomy, self-expression, and liberation from patriarchal expectations, the saree became symbolically linked to tradition, domesticity, and idealized femininity (Uberoi, 2006). As urban women sought to redefine their identities in a rapidly modernizing society, the saree's role was relegated to that of ceremonial wear, nostalgic fashion, or a symbol of cultural pride, rather than a garment of daily utility (Banerjee & Miller, 2008; Uberoi, 2006).

Saree 2.0

The resurgence of the saree, often termed Saree 2.0, reflects a dynamic cultural reimagining shaped by contemporary aesthetics, identity politics, and creative expression. As the saree began disappearing from everyday wardrobes, particularly among urban youth, many cultural commentators and designers viewed this trend as symptomatic of a larger cultural disconnection and identity dilution. The diminishing presence of the saree in public spaces was interpreted by some as a cultural crisis, one that prompted artists, influencers, and revivalists to respond with compelling visual and performative strategies. Through social media campaigns like #100SareePact,[5] (where the researchers were also participants), experimental draping workshops, and the incorporation of sarees into street fashion and performance art, the garment was reclaimed as a canvas for self-expression and resistance against homogenizing forces of global fashion (Krishna, 2020). Rather than anchoring it in rigid tradition, these movements infused the saree with new meanings; asserting it as a versatile, gender-fluid, and politically potent symbol of pride and individuality (Uberoi, 2006). This renaissance of the saree did not merely revive an article of clothing; it redefined how tradition could coexist with transformation.

Bollywood and Fashion Designers: Catalysts in the Reinvention of the Saree

The saree's reinvention in contemporary India owes much to the influential worlds of Bollywood and fashion design. Indian cinema has long dictated sartorial trends, with heroines in sarees symbolizing romance, strength, elegance, and cultural continuity. From Madhubala's ethereal veils in the 1950s to Deepika Padukone's dramatic red-carpet appearances in embroidered drapes, Bollywood actresses have sustained the saree's visibility across generations (Desai, 2021). These iconic portrayals influence audience perceptions and purchasing behavior, making the saree not just traditional attire but also a fashionable, aspirational statement.

In parallel, India's leading fashion designers have played a crucial role in reimagining the saree for modern times. Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Ritu Kumar, and Tarun Tahiliani, among others, have

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[5] The **#100SareePact**, co-founded by Anju Maudgal Kadam and Ally Matthan in 2015, invited women across the world to wear and document their sarees along with personal stories.

elevated the garment through innovative designs that blend craftsmanship with contemporary aesthetics. Sabyasachi's emphasis on kantha and zardozi embroidery techniques revives regional textile traditions, positioning the saree as a piece of art rather than just apparel (Mukherjee, 2019). Meanwhile, Ritu Kumar views saree experimentation as a hallmark of neo-feminism, empowering women to embrace both modernity and tradition on their own terms (Kumar, 2020). Tarun Tahiliani's introduction of pre-stitched and concept sarees further makes the garment more wearable and accessible, particularly for younger women in urban spaces who desire style with convenience (Tahiliani, 2021).

These designers not only modernize the saree's aesthetic appeal but also make performative statements about Indian identity, global fashion, and cultural preservation. The fusion of runway glamour with deep-rooted tradition ensures that the saree remains relevant in both domestic and international contexts. Together, Bollywood and Indian fashion have become powerful agents of visual culture, giving the saree a renewed life in the 21st century.

Digital and Social Media as Facilitators for Saree 2.0

Historically, the image of the saree was curated by elite institutions including fashion magazines, Bollywood, and couture designers. Digital platforms, particularly Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, have flattened this hierarchy by offering everyday users a stage to participate in cultural storytelling. Movements such as the **#100SareePact**, co-founded by Anju Maudgal Kadam and Ally Matthan in 2015, invited women across the world to wear and document their sarees along with personal stories (Agarwal, 2020). The researchers were a part of this campaign and had worn and posted sarees with attached tales on Facebook. This campaign transformed saree-wearing into a communal act of reflection, memory, and pride. Through such initiatives, women reclaimed narrative agency, celebrating the saree beyond ritualistic or performative settings. The storytelling aspect allowed sarees to become interwoven with lived experiences rather than being relegated to symbols of tradition alone (Banerjee & Miller, 2008).

Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook have become incubators for alternative saree aesthetics. Influencers and fashion enthusiasts often post videos and reels showcasing contemporary draping styles and unconventional pairings; such as sarees with sneakers, crop tops, or denim jackets. These expressions challenge notions of how and by whom the saree can be worn. As Dasgupta and Ahmed (2021) observe, the saree is increasingly being reclaimed by younger urban women as a garment of empowerment and style, not obligation. Tutorials and visual content demystify traditional draping techniques, making the saree accessible to those unfamiliar with its nuances.

The digital resurgence of the saree has paralleled a growing interest in India's indigenous textiles. Social media has served as a conduit between artisans and consumers, offering regional weaves like Chanderi, Jamdani and Kanjeevaram direct exposure to urban and global markets. Brands such as Raw Mango, Okhai, and Suta use visual storytelling to highlight the craft, labor, and cultural significance behind each piece (Chatterjee, 2019). Artisans and cooperatives have also begun leveraging WhatsApp and Facebook for direct sales, reducing dependence on intermediaries (Mehta, 2022). This digitized engagement facilitates not only economic sustainability for weavers but also a deeper cultural connection for buyers. The digital renaissance of the saree has also made it a tool for contesting gender binaries. Influencers such as Ayush Kejriwal and others in the LGBTQ+ community wear sarees in defiance of heteronormative expectations. Such representations on platforms like Instagram serve to normalize and celebrate gender fluidity (Roy, 2021).

Hashtag challenges like #SareeNotSari, #SareeFlow, and celebrations around National Handloom Day have turned saree-wearing into viral, participatory acts. These digital events promote saree pride across geographies, engaging younger generations and diaspora audiences. As Nair (2021) notes, virality functions as a new mechanism for cultural transmission equally spontaneous and strategic. What was once viewed as traditional or outdated now gains visibility through the language of digital trends, memes and challenges.

Instagram pages, YouTube channels, and blogs such as The Indian Textile Trail or Saree Speak now act as open-access repositories for saree-related content. These platforms curate draping styles, regional histories, and interviews with weavers, thus preserving intangible cultural heritage in digital formats (Mukherjee, 2023). Hashtags like #DrapesOfIndia function as folksonomies or user-generated taxonomies that archive diverse styles and traditions.

Social media influencers have become tastemakers in the saree revival. Fashion bloggers like Masoom Minawala and Komal Pandey project the saree as glamorous and cosmopolitan, while regional micro-influencers depict the garment in relatable, everyday contexts such as local markets or college campuses (Sinha, 2020). This dual representation of high fashion and lived reality broadens the appeal of the saree, enabling it to cross class, linguistic, and geographic boundaries.

Social media thus redefines the saree not as a gendered tradition, but as a fluid, performative space for identity expression that is open to all, regardless of gender, sexuality, or age. In the process, it has allowed the saree to transition from heritage to a living, adaptive textile; one that continues to carry meaning, memory, and identity into the digital age.

Global Appeal of the Saree

The growing international appeal of the saree is a significant dimension of its digital-era reinvention. Globalization and digital connectivity have repositioned it as a global garment, embraced not only by the South Asian diaspora but also by international fashion audiences, cultural enthusiasts, and designers. This globalization is both visual and transactional, powered by the visibility of the saree on global runways, social media platforms, and e-commerce sites.

Today, the saree has transcended national boundaries to gain renewed global appeal, thanks to digital platforms that have amplified its visibility and accessibility. Social media and e-commerce have enabled diaspora communities to reconnect with heritage while introducing the garment to international audiences as a symbol of cultural fusion and identity expression (Mukherjee, 2023). Global campaigns like the #100SareePact have resonated with women beyond India, highlighting the saree not merely as ethnic attire but as a versatile, contemporary garment (Agarwal, 2020). Fashion influencers and designers have reimagined the saree in cosmopolitan styles; paired with Western accessories or adapted for international runways, thereby broadening its aesthetic reach (Chatterjee, 2019). Moreover, its presence in digital fashion discourse has allowed non-South Asians to explore the saree through tutorials, cultural narratives, and sustainable fashion movements (Dasgupta & Ahmed, 2021). This global embrace reflects not only cultural curiosity but also the adaptability of the saree as a transnational symbol of elegance, identity, and resistance to homogenized fashion norms. Saree 2.0 thus signifies more than a revival, it represents the global repositioning of a traditional textile in tune with digital modernity and pluralistic values.

One of the primary drivers of the saree's global visibility is the South Asian diaspora, which uses the garment as a means of preserving and performing cultural identity abroad. Sarees are worn at festivals, weddings, and community gatherings in countries such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and South Africa. According to Banerjee and Miller (2008), for many diasporic women, the saree becomes a tangible link to heritage especially when navigating multicultural environments where identity negotiation is ongoing. Through digital media, diaspora communities are not only consumers of saree culture but also active producers. Instagram pages, YouTube channels, and blogs curated by second- and third-generation Indian-origin individuals have helped reinterpret the saree for hybrid lifestyles—combining Indian aesthetics with Western sensibilities (Mukherjee, 2023). Such representations challenge the perception of the saree as either archaic or solely ethnic, instead reimagining it as cosmopolitan and fluid.

The saree's exposure on global fashion stages has added to its international appeal. Designers such as Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Gaurav Gupta, and Manish Arora have showcased saree-inspired

garments at fashion weeks in New York, Paris, and London. These designers often blend traditional Indian textiles with contemporary cuts, making the saree visually and structurally appealing to global audiences (Chatterjee, 2019). Western celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey, Naomi Campbell, and Selena Gomez have also been photographed wearing sarees at high-profile events, lending further legitimacy and glamour to the garment on the world stage (Sinha, 2020). Such visibility signals a shift in perception; from the saree as an exotic costume to a legitimate player in global couture.

The rise of online platforms has made sarees accessible across geographies. E-commerce sites such as Amazon, Etsy, and dedicated platforms ship globally, catering to both South Asian and non-South Asian clientele. What was once a difficult-to-procure garment outside India is now just a click away. These platforms often use multilingual content, sizing guides, and diverse models to appeal to international buyers, helping overcome barriers related to cultural unfamiliarity or logistical complexity (Mehta, 2022). Additionally, saree-focused digital marketplaces allow non-resident Indians to send sarees as gifts to family members abroad, turning it into a symbol of transnational emotional bonding.

The saree also serves as an instrument of India's cultural diplomacy and soft power. Initiatives by the Indian government, such as handloom exhibitions at embassies or "Saree Walks" hosted by consulates, promote the saree as a marker of India's civilizational richness (Roy, 2021). The global celebration of "National Handloom Day" and its amplification through social media has also contributed to an international awareness of India's textile heritage.[6]

Outside of diaspora or diplomatic contexts, the saree is also attracting the interest of global fashion enthusiasts and cultural explorers. Tutorials on how to drape a saree, information about its cultural history, and fusion looks have attracted international fashion bloggers and cultural educators (Dasgupta & Ahmed, 2021).

The saree, today, has become a canvas for cross-cultural fusion. Designers and wearers are increasingly blending Indian fabrics with Western silhouettes or using sarees in performance art, music videos, and fashion photography across cultures. This fusion style appeals to those who seek to express global citizenship while honoring cultural specificity.

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[6] The first-of-its-kind show at the Design Museum in London, entitled *The Offbeat Sari,* brought together more than 90 items loaned by designers and studios across India to tell the story of what has been called a "fashion revolution". The exhibition is a tribute to the dedication of the museum to contemporary design in all its forms, from architecture and fashion to graphics, product and industrial design. *The Offbeat Sari* exhibition delves into the saree as a metaphor for the multifaceted nature of India today, with exhibits that cover themes of history, gender equity, pop culture, innovation in materials and more. The journey of the saree mirrors the evolving relationship between design and technology.

Sustainability:

The saree aligns with sustainable fashion ideals: durability, artisanal roots, and eco-friendliness. Sustainability has emerged as a central theme in the Saree 2.0 movement, aligning traditional handwoven textiles with contemporary environmental and ethical values. As fast fashion faces increasing scrutiny, the saree, particularly when handloomed or made using natural dyes and fibers, offers a slow, sustainable alternative rooted in indigenous practices (Chatterjee, 2019). The resurgence of interest in regional weaves such as Khadi, Jamdani, and Chanderi is often framed within digital narratives of ethical consumption and artisan empowerment.

Social media campaigns by brands like Suta, Raw Mango, and Okhai emphasize transparency, showcasing the labor and craft of rural weavers, thereby encouraging conscious consumerism (Mehta, 2022). Moreover, the saree's inherent reusability—passed down across generations, repurposed into new garments, or styled in multiple ways—makes it a sustainable fashion item both materially and culturally (Banerjee & Miller, 2008). Influencers and digital storytellers play a vital role in popularizing these values, linking sustainability to authenticity and heritage rather than sacrifice or austerity (Dasgupta & Ahmed, 2021). Thus, in the context of Saree 2.0, sustainability is not merely an environmental imperative but a holistic practice that reclaims traditional knowledge systems and promotes intergenerational equity in fashion.

Saree 2.0: A Symbol of Culture, Power and Style:

Feminist discourses critically examine the saree's role as both a symbol of patriarchal conformity and a tool of resistance. While the saree has historically been associated with domesticity and idealized femininity, contemporary wearers often subvert these associations by recontextualizing it in professional, activist, or queer spaces (Roy, 2021). Scholars like Radha Mukherjee (2018) argue that the saree's meaning is not fixed but shaped by context, embodiment, and intention—thus, it can simultaneously reflect control and autonomy. The act of choosing to wear a saree today can be a feminist statement, challenging Western-centric beauty norms and asserting cultural identity on one's own terms (Dasgupta & Ahmed, 2021). Saree 2.0, therefore, emerges as a site of negotiation between tradition and transformation, where the politics of the body, gender, and self-representation converge.

For literary icon and feminist rebel Kamala Das, the saree served as a rich metaphor for womanhood, sensuality, and autonomy. In her autobiographical writings, she used the saree to symbolize both the confinement of traditional gender roles and a conscious assertion of female agency, reflecting the inner conflict between societal expectation and personal desire (Das, 2009). This ambivalence is echoed in political arenas, where female leaders have strategically employed the saree as a symbol of authority and national identity. Indira Gandhi famously used the austere, handwoven saree to project discipline and sobriety, aligning her personal image with

the developmental ethos of postcolonial (Ramaswamy, 2010). Similarly, Sushma Swaraj modernized this visual rhetoric by pairing the saree with a sleeveless jacket, transforming it into a diplomatic ensemble that conveyed both cultural rootedness and professional efficiency (Desai, 2021).

The saree, in its contemporary reimagining, transcends its role as mere attire to become a powerful medium of political expression, resistance, and identity. Activists and artists have used the saree to challenge dominant narratives around gender, caste, and cultural authenticity, reclaiming it as a site of agency and defiance (Roy, 2021). In digital spaces, individuals use the saree to articulate complex notions of selfhood by combining tradition with modernity, and rootedness with innovation (Mukherjee, 2023). Whether worn in protest marches, pride parades, or Instagram campaigns, the saree today embodies a living archive of creativity, belonging, and transformation (Dasgupta & Ahmed, 2021).

Conclusion:

"Saree 2.0" is about the transformation of the saree, exemplifying how traditional garments can be revitalized through digital mediation, emerging not as static symbols of heritage but as dynamic agents of cultural expression. Social media platforms and online communities have democratized both access and narrative control, enabling a diverse array of voices ranging from feminists and fashion influencers to artisans and diasporic users to reinterpret the saree on their own terms. Saree 2.0, thus, bridges the gap between past and present, allowing the garment to embody multiple, and at times contradictory, meanings: it is at once a marker of continuity and a canvas for experimentation, a tool for subversion and an emblem of tradition.

This paper has explored how the saree navigates the intersections of heritage, empowerment, and fashion drawing from feminist theory, cultural studies, and lived experiences to show how a six-yard textile can capture both resistance and conformity. From the literary symbolism of Kamala Das to the grassroots momentum of the #100SareePact, and from couture design houses to Instagram timelines, Saree 2.0 captures a cultural moment where identity, memory, and style are woven into a fabric that is continuously being rewritten for the digital age.

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SOCIAL NETWORKING AND YOUTUBE:
REVIVING THE ART OF UPCYCLED SARIS AND SARI DRAPING

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Abstract:

In recent years, the intersection of social networking and traditional fashion has facilitated a renaissance of cultural heritage, particularly the art of sari draping and upcycling. This study explores how social networking platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, have played a pivotal role in reviving the centuries-old tradition of sari draping while also promoting sustainability through upcycling. The sari, a symbol of Indian cultural identity, has seen a resurgence in contemporary fashion, with influencers, designers, and everyday users leveraging digital platforms to share innovative ways to wear and repurpose vintage or old saris. The concept of upcycling — transforming old garments into new, stylish creations — has gained traction within these digital communities, fostering an eco-conscious approach to fashion. Social media's visual nature has enabled sari enthusiasts to showcase diverse draping techniques, reinterpreting regional styles and integrating modern aesthetics, thereby reimagining the sari as a versatile, contemporary garment. This revival is not just a trend but a movement that intertwines sustainability with the preservation of cultural traditions. The study delves into how influencers and online communities are fostering a deeper appreciation for the sari, its craftsmanship, and its potential for reuse, while also addressing the environmental impact of fast fashion. By examining the digital narratives surrounding upcycled saris and sari draping, this research highlights the power of social networking in preserving cultural practices, promoting sustainability, and empowering individuals to redefine fashion with a more conscious and creative approach.

Keywords: Sari Upcycle, Sari Draping, YouTube Influencers, Instagram Influencers, Facebook Influencers, Sustainable Fashion, Eco Friendly Fashion, Sari Makeover Ideas, Modern Sari Draping Styles.

Introduction:

The sari, a timeless and elegant garment, has graced the Indian subcontinent for millennia. Its rich history stretches back to the Indus Valley civilization around 2800 B.C., making it one of

the oldest and most enduring articles of clothing in the world. More than just cloth, the sari is a repository of personal and familial narratives, a tangible link to cultural identity and heritage.

There are hundreds of ways to drape a sari, each reflecting a unique cultural background, personal style, and occasion. From formal gatherings to everyday wear, the sari ensemble, complete with a blouse, jewellery, a handbag, and footwear, embodies both sophistication and grace. Over time, the sari has adapted to evolving fashion trends, with distinct regional and community styles, colours and patterns contributing to its enduring versatility and status as a powerful symbol of beauty and cultural identity. (The Impact of Drape and Cut in Saree Blouse Fashion, nd), (Explainer History of the sari, n.d.)

The sari's significance extends into the realms of contemporary fashion and sustainability. Many saris are passed down through generations, gifted, or creatively upcycled into new garments or accessories. In recent years, sari upcycling has emerged as a transformative and environmentally conscious response to the growing challenges of textile waste and the fast fashion industry. This process involves reimagining discarded or old saris into unique and stylish pieces, such as clothing, home decor, or accessories. (Norris, 2008)

The modern urban style of sari draping, traces its roots to the Nivi style of Andhra Pradesh and the sari drape with blouse and petticoat by the Parsi women. The Nivi drape involves wrapping the sari around the waist, creating neat pleats at the front, and tucking it in. Traditionally, saris were not worn with a petticoat or blouse. However, according to Malika Verma and Chisti, the trend of the Nivi sari drape incorporating a matching, fitted blouse and petticoat was popularized in the 1870s by Jnanadanandini Devi Tagore, a social leader and influencer of her time. This style resonated with the evolving social sensibilities shaped by Victorian morals which considered the traditional sari drape immodest and the escalating national identity movement sweeping across India. (Saha, n.d.), (Nivi Style Saree Draping, n.d.), (Story of the Nivi Drape, 2021)

Social media and online marketplaces have become instrumental in popularizing sari draping trends and upcycled fashion. These platforms empower independent designers and small businesses by providing them with a global audience, making their upcycled creations more visible and accessible to consumers seeking distinctive and ethically-sourced pieces. Social media also fosters support for artisans and small-scale businesses committed to sustainable practices and material.

This paper examines how social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok are impacting the art of sari draping, particularly by promoting sustainable fashion practices like upcycling and reviving traditional draping techniques.

Literature Review

The articles and blogs published on the websites of fashion houses like STTYLEME, Swahlee, Vogue India, manufacturing units like Work+ Shelter; The Sandy Times- an UAE based eJournal; e-blog by Balaramsaha- an accomplished handloom sari designer have helped me to gain an in-depth understanding of the concept and journey of sari draping and upcycling through ages. Particularly noteworthy is an interview in the *South China Morning Post* of Rita Kapur Chisti, a sari historian, textile scholar, co-author of "Saris: Tradition and Beyond" and collaborator of short films on regional sari drapes and her co-creator Malika Verma; a research paper by Lucy Norris titled "Recycling and Reincarnation: the Journeys of Indian Saris" published in the *Researchgate*.

Research Objectives

The Objectives of my research paper are to-

- Briefly review trends in sari draping and upcycling during the pre- internet based Media phase.
- Explore the role of Social Media Networks and YouTube influencers in reviving the art of sari draping and upcycling.
- Evaluate the extent of influence of the current media influencers for the same.

Research Methodology

I conducted comprehensive research using a variety of online resources, including articles and blogs from platforms such as Vogue India, ResearchGate, Quora, Sandytimes, and Balaramsaha. Additionally, I created and distributed a survey using Google Forms, sharing it through multiple WhatsApp groups, Facebook, and personal messaging platforms. From the survey responses, I selected a few participants for follow-up telephonic interviews. My primary data was further enriched by extensive browsing of YouTube channels and social media networks, particularly Instagram and Facebook, where I analyzed relevant posts and trends.

Sari Draping Trends: A Digital Panorama

YouTube reigns supreme as the primary hub for sari draping inspiration, closely followed by Instagram and Facebook. TikTok, renowned for its short-form video format, has become the go-to platform for captivating sari draping reels. These dynamic videos showcase a breathtaking array of pleating techniques, with waist-centric arrangements and diverse pallu styles taking center stage.

The "gol pallu" (circular drape) and the "front pallu" or "Gujarati" style enjoy enduring popularity. The "dhoti" style, elegantly draped over pants, has also garnered significant attention. Contemporary interpretations often feature embellished dupattas or inventive layering with two

saris. Notably, during Navratri, the festive spirit saw a surge in "ghagra-like" drapes, emphasizing voluminous pleating around the waist.

The iconic nine-yard "Nauvari" sari, along with creative interpretations of the style using a six-yard sari, and Bharatanatyam costumes, frequently grace these digital platforms.

Beyond the drape itself, significant focus is placed on complementary elements. Innovative blouse designs abound, while petticoat styles have evolved to suit different sari fabrics. Lightweight saris often pair well with ghagra-style petticoats or even western-inspired long skirts crafted from net materials with delicate frills, enhancing the fabric's graceful flow.

Leading the Way: Top Sari Draping Experts on YouTube

With 2.9 million subscribers and over 10,000 videos @GLAMBEAUTYY YouTube channel stands out as a leading resource for sari draping tutorials. This channel, helmed by a petite young woman with a substantial subscriber base, boasts an impressive sari draping videos, solidifying its position as a go-to destination for aspiring saree enthusiasts. She is an expert in draping saris to resemble a bridal lehenga, with a unique flair for adapting regional draping styles. (GLAMBEAUTYY'S, n.d.)

Manju with her YouTube channel @WomenStyleUpManju has 1.14 million subscribers and created 587 videos on sari draping tutorials**.** They cover various fabrics with engaging, practical tips. Her content is tailored for beginners and those looking to enhance their draping skills with catchy titles like:

- *How to Drape a Sari to Hide Belly Fat – Easy Tips for Beginners*
- *Tips to Look Slim and Tall in a Sari*

She also shares Bollywood-style draping techniques and guides women of different body types on choosing the right sari styles. Her practical insights include:

- Managing Pallu & Pleats
- Tips to set front and pallu pleats effortlessly.
- Flattering Colors & Prints – Suggestions based on occasions and personality. (Women's Styleup, n.d.)

Mr. Bose with his YouTube channel @Life with Bose is quite a impressive dhoti style drape influencer. He has 381000 subscribers and created 509 videos. He brings a unique, classy touch to sari draping in dhoti style with creative variations, including pairing saris with pants and experimenting with different fabrics. A highlight of his channel is his heartwarming collaboration with his mother, where he helps her drape saris—making them a truly adorable and stylish mother-son duo. His sophisticated yet practical approach stands out in the sari draping niche. (Life with Bose, n.d.)

A celebrity sari drape artist, Dolly Jain is known for her elegant and minimalist draping techniques, catering to high-profile clients and upper-class aesthetics. She works with luxurious saris and ensembles, ensuring a refined, graceful look suited for mature women and elite gatherings. She has created 512 videos and her YouTube channel @DollyJainIndia has 990000 subscribers.

Her expertise extends beyond draping—she has innovated sari styling with: D'Coat (a petticoat type) – A unique concept that enhances sari draping by offering better fall and versatility, allowing it to be styled as a ghagra with a half sari or a full 6-yard drape. Dolly Jain's approach exudes class, charm, and timeless elegance, making her a go-to expert for sophisticated sari styling. She also gives the viewers suggestions on accessories required for sari draping- the pins or clips to hold the pleats and pallu in place without tearing the fabric. (Dolly Jain, n.d.)

Creative Ways to Repurpose & Upcycle of Used Saris

Upcycling has gained popularity globally, driven by both grassroots movements and high-end fashion designers. Old saris can be beautifully repurposed and upcycled into stylish new garments, blending tradition with sustainability. A delicate silk sari can be transformed into an elegant anarkali dress, a flowy maxi gown, or a chic kurta, while lightweight cotton saris make for breathable palazzos, skirts, and summer tops. Adding contemporary cuts and embellishments can give a fresh twist to vintage weaves, making them fashion-forward yet timeless. For a fusion look, saris can be reimagined as jumpsuits, dhoti pants, or even blazers, offering a unique mix of ethnic and modern aesthetics. Additionally, patchwork techniques can be used to create stunning jackets, dupattas, and embroidered overlays, preserving the intricate designs of heirloom saris. By creatively upcycling old saris, one not only gives them a second life but also embraces sustainable fashion with a touch of heritage.

The internet is brimming with channels showcasing creativity in its most spectacular forms. Platforms like YouTube and Instagram have become powerful spaces for bringing innovative creations to the forefront.

Upcycling is not a new concept, but the timeless appeal of saris—available in long lengths and countless varieties—makes them an ideal choice for repurposing into stunning new outfits.

Leading Creators in Sari Upcycling

◆ **Amita Creations**: You Tube channel @AmitaCreations, 129000 subscribers, 632 videos. Amita is one of the most prominent media personalities in sari upcycling, transforming them into exquisite and customized garments. Her business, *Amita Creations*, specializes in turning saris into exotic skirts, palazzos, bell-bottom pants, jackets, tank tops, ghagras, and robes, using a

variety of fabrics and prints. With remarkable expertise in fabric drape and texture, she masterfully combines multiple saris to create truly unique pieces. Her Indo-Western fusion designs add a contemporary twist to traditional wear. Amita also has a strong presence on Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter (X.com). (AMITA CREATIONS, n.d.)

◆ **Ashi Gautam**: YouTube channel (Ashi Gautam, n.d.), 148000 subscribers, 378 videos. Ashi is another celebrated designer who specializes in upcycling used saris into lehengas, anarkalis, kurtis, palazzo sets with flowing dupattas, and gowns. Her designs maintain a strong traditional essence while being fashion-forward and size-inclusive, making them accessible to a diverse range of women.

◆ **Creative Maa Fashion Boutique** YouTube@CreativeMaa 5,51000 subscribers, 1000 videos. With an extensive catalogue of creations, *Creative Maa Fashion Boutique* is one of the most active sari upcycling designers on social media. She skilfully combines sari pieces to make them appear as fresh fabric creations. Her channel stands out for providing detailed insights into fabric types, patterns, and the age of the material, guiding viewers on how to upcycle saris effectively. She even demonstrates the transformation process step by step. (Creative Maa Fashion boutique, n.d.)

◆ **Kabir Designer Boutique**: (Kabir Designer Boutique, n.d.), YouTube -965000 subscribers, 923 videos. Based in Delhi, *Kabir Designer Boutique* focuses on elaborate traditional party wear, reflecting the vibrant and high-fashion lifestyle of the city. Their creations showcase rich, intricate designs that are perfect for festive and formal occasions.

The Power of Social Media in Fashion Upcycling

The seamless integration of Instagram and Facebook has expanded the reach of these video creators, making them widely recognized as fashion influencers. Likewise, YouTube has played a pivotal role in amplifying their work, turning their videos into viral sensations that inspire audiences globally.

The integration of Instagram, Facebook, and the Meta Business Suite provides subscribers with a seamless outreach across both platforms. Since clothing is one of the most trending topics online, videos in this niche often gain traction quickly, attracting millions of subscribers.

However, YouTube remains the dominant audio-visual platform. The higher a channel's viewership, the greater its visibility on the platform. While Facebook and Instagram videos often rely on paid ads until they gain organic popularity, YouTube offers creators the ability to build a subscriber community through membership fees.

YouTube channels, in particular, serve as powerful marketing tools for business expansion. This is evident from the engagement in the comments section, where businesses frequently receive substantial orders through their online presence.

A crucial question remains: To what extent have viral videos influenced sari draping styles and the upcycling of saris into garments among viewers? While a channel may boast over a million subscribers, what percentage of viewers actually convert their interest into inquiries or sales?

Additionally, do audiences find detailed demonstrations of different draping styles or sari repurposing practical and convenient? And do people actively search for content specifically on sari draping and upcycling?

To explore these questions, I conducted a survey. I distributed questionnaires across different age categories, starting from 18 years and above, with respondents spanning income groups ranging from ₹2 lakh to ₹50 lakh per annum. Survey was followed by telephonic interviews. In the survey, 32 women responded. To further expand my research, I conducted telephone conversations with the respondents and interviewed women who frequently wear saris and carefully curate matching accessories to create a complete ensemble.

Survey Findings

It is important to note that the number of women wearing saris on a daily basis has reduced in different age groups. One can attribute it to two main factors: one, acceptance of salwar/churidars suits across all cultures among various cultural groups in India. Earlier it was restricted to just a few communities. Two, modern lifestyle has restricted sari wear to certain occasions. Nowadays many corporate houses have made wearing the western jacket suits as part of their dress code.

Despite the decline in the percentage of women wearing saris regularly, it remains one of the most cherished and adorned garments. This enduring appeal can be attributed to its deep cultural significance, timeless elegance, and versatility. According to the survey a little over 60 per cent of women prefer saris as an outfit for special and formal occasions. It remains a symbol of tradition, grace, and identity. It is an essential part of festivals, weddings, and special occasions, where it represents heritage and sophistication. Additionally, the evolving fashion landscape has given rise to innovative draping styles and contemporary sari designs, making it more adaptable to modern lifestyles. A few videos also display how to drape sari to look like a western gown.

Moreover, many women cherish saris as heirlooms, passing them down through generations, further strengthening their emotional and sentimental value. While daily wear trends may shift, the sari continues to hold a special place in the hearts and wardrobes of women across generations.

The Nivi style with *gol* pallu, followed by the Gujarati pallu, remains the most popular sari draping styles. While numerous innovative drapes circulate online, many women found them too cumbersome to carry for long hours at events. Additionally, they were often unsure about the final look, and mastering these styles usually required assistance, which was not always readily available. The time-consuming nature of perfecting such drapes further discouraged adoption.

Among viral sari-draping influencers, Dolly Jain was the only one widely recognized as an inspiration. Respondents appreciated her styling ideas, noting that they provided variety while remaining practical and achievable without external help.

Interestingly, many women were more inclined to take inspiration from celebrities rather than social media influencers. Bollywood icons like Rekha and Deepika Padukone emerged as significant style inspirations. Movies and television shows had a stronger influence on their sari preferences than viral fashion videos.

Regarding experimentation, 33.3% of respondents tried different draping styles but largely drew inspiration from regional variations, such as the Bengali and Coorgi styles. Additionally, 54.5% of respondents turned to YouTube tutorials specifically to learn these traditional regional sari drapes.

Perceptions on Upcycling Old Saris

When asked about the best use of old saris, most women preferred gifting them rather than repurposing or upcycling. Shopping remains a popular recreational activity, a bonding experience among women, or even a special outing with their partners. As a result, upcycling does not often come to mind.

Interestingly, while many women are aware that some readymade garments are crafted from upcycled saris, they are primarily drawn to aesthetics—as long as the garments look gorgeous, unique, and stylish, they are satisfied. However, a common concern was that repurposing saris might strip them of their original charm and beauty. Silk saris, in particular, were noted for being fragile, with upcycled outfits often tearing at the seams.

Among the preferred upcycled styles, lehengas, shararas, anarkalis, stoles, and dupattas were considered more durable. Surprisingly, none of the respondents viewed kaftans or robes as viable alternatives. Many also expressed skepticism about tailors' expertise in transforming old saris into high-quality outfits. The cost of hiring a skilled tailor was often higher than purchasing a ready-made upcycled garment, where they could see the finished product and try it before buying.

Cultural and Economic Perspectives on Upcycling

Three respondents from the USA preferred traditional sari draping over upcycling, as it allowed them to stand out with a unique and exotic identity in foreign cultures. However, they acknowledged that customized repurposing of saris posed a challenge, as it was expensive, and most tailors lacked specialized skills. At best, they found tailors capable of making skirts, gowns, or robes, but these often proved unaffordable.

This raises an important question: If sari upcycling isn't widely adopted, why do so many channels promote it?

Younger respondents pointed to the monetization policies of social media platforms. Viral videos attract advertisers, prompting content creators to focus on high-viewership topics—fashion and clothing being among the most popular. For celebrity sari draping artists like Dolly Jain and boutique owners like Amita Creations, social media serves as both a business expansion tool and a source of passive income through sponsored promotions.

Some respondents viewed upcycling as a cost-saving measure rather than a creative pursuit. To them, purchasing new fabrics or readymade garments signified prosperity, making upcycling a less appealing choice.

Two respondents associated sari upcycling with environmental conservation and waste reduction. They recognized that upcycling provides an income source for rag pickers and micro-industries, contributing to sustainable economic growth.

While upcycling is gaining awareness, its adoption remains limited due to practical concerns, economic considerations, and deeply ingrained cultural preferences.

Recommendations

The convergence of social media and the sari industry has created a dynamic platform for sari draping and upcycling to thrive. While viewers may not always adopt these draping styles, the visibility they generate has led to new opportunities, particularly for women who earn passive income by leveraging their skills. This financial empowerment, combined with the promotion of creativity within traditional boundaries, has contributed to greater social acceptance.

In an era where the fashion industry faces increasing scrutiny for its environmental impact, upcycling presents a sustainable alternative. By reducing waste and repurposing existing materials, it aligns with the principles of a circular economy—extending product lifecycles, minimizing waste, and maximizing resource efficiency. (Gandhi, 2019)

Social media networks also foster inter-regional and global collaborations, enabling joint ventures that support sustainability and women's empowerment. Initiatives such as Work+Shelter, an Indo-American collaboration, and Swahlee in Northeast India exemplify this

shift by repurposing used saris into innovative garments. These ventures provide employment, protection, and skill training to women from vulnerable backgrounds, increasing their earning potential and fostering economic independence. (Designing with Upcycled Saris, n.d.), (From Bazaar to Customer, n.d.)

Upcycling plays a crucial role in fostering a circular economy, which is an economic model designed to minimize waste and maximize resource efficiency. Unlike the traditional linear economy (take, make, dispose), the circular economy focuses on reuse, repurpose, and regeneration. Upcycling transforms old or discarded materials into new, high-value products, reducing the need for new raw materials and prolonging the lifecycle of existing textiles, furniture, and other goods. Instead of sending worn-out garments, accessories, or household items to landfills, upcycling gives them a second life, helping to tackle the global waste crisis. The production of new materials requires significant energy, water, and resources. Upcycling reduces carbon footprints, water pollution, and energy consumption, promoting sustainability. Many artisans, designers, and small businesses thrive on upcycling, using creativity to repurpose materials into unique and sustainable products. This supports local economies and ethical production practices. Upcycling challenges the throwaway culture by shifting consumer focus toward durability and mindful consumption, discouraging excessive manufacturing and waste generation. (She, 2024)

Conclusion:

Collaboration between social media influencers and the clothing industry can play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable practices through upcycling. By showcasing innovative sari draping styles, influencers can help preserve and revive traditional clothing while inspiring new fabric designs suited for diverse draping techniques.

Additionally, this movement can drive the growth of support industries, including traditional jewellery, footwear, and contemporary accessories that blend heritage with modern lifestyles. The opportunities created through social media are vast, offering solutions for economic challenges such as unemployment while addressing environmental concerns like waste management.

Ultimately, social media's ability to democratize fashion and advocate for sustainability will continue to shape how we perceive traditional garments like the sari, fostering a future where artistry and eco-consciousness go hand in hand.

Questionnaire for the survey

- What's your most preferred outfit on a daily basis?
- What's your most preferred outfit during formal occasions?

- Do you wear a Sari?
- How often do you wear a sari?
- What you do with saris that you don't want to wear anymore?
- Would you consider an outfit upcycled from an old sari as new?
- Would you wear a dress of an upcycled old sari for a formal occasion?
- What would be your favorite upscaling of a sari?
- Have you or your friend/relative taken inspiration from social media/YouTube for upcycling? Please specify.
- Who in your immediate environment has inspired you in sari draping?
- Select your traditional drape styles.
- Name celebrities whose sari draping style has impressed you.
- Do you try innovative sari draping styles?
- Do you visit social networks/YouTube for sari draping ideas?
- Do you think sari draping styles create a lasting trend?
- Select the networks used by you for sari draping ideas?
- Any particular media influencer/channels who has inspired you the most?

Responses in brief

- Sari most preferred outfit for formal occasions- 60.6%
- Upcycle trend- 36.4%, give away as gift- 72.7%
- Favourite upscaling- gowns/ghaghras- 60.6%
- Searched internet sources for ideas- 39%
- Celebrities who inspired- Rekha, Deepika Padukone, Dolly Jain.
- Experimenting with draping styles- 33.3%
- Watch videos on draping styles- 54.5%
- Favourite channels- YouTube- 94.4%

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THE SAGA OF MAHAVASTRA OF MAHARASHTRA: PAITHANI

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Abstract:

Sarees are a popular and widely acclaimed women's attire that comes in a variety of colours, designs, prints, and patterns, each having its own unique look and appeal. The "Elegant, sophisticated, and enchanting" is the best description for saree. Sarees are ideal for an array of gatherings and occasions, including weddings, engagements, and receptions, as well as celebrations and formal get-togethers. There is almost no occasion where you cannot embellish a saree in accordance with the theme.

Sarees are gorgeous and ooze charm no matter who wears them or when they are worn. Their cultural and historical significance, combined with their constantly evolving charm, amazes us ladies. Over the years, the saree has grown from a simple item of clothing to one that embraces the culture, traditions, and values of those who wear it, reflecting India's shifting cultural and social norms. The saree has developed in terms of how it is worn. Historically, the saree was draped in a specific fashion based on location and cultural traditions.

In the world of fashion women can drape a saree in a numerous way, allowing them to choose the style that best suits them. One of the most significant changes in the evolution of the saree has been the emergence of new textiles and materials. The saree was traditionally made up of cotton or silk, but it currently it is using a variety of different fabrics such as chiffon, georgette, and net. This enabled designers to produce a wide range of patterns, motifs, colours, and styles. The saree is an iconic and traditional Indian garment that has captured the globe with its elegance, grace and timeless allure. This six to nine-yard piece of fabric is more than just a garment; it is a representation of India's rich cultural past. Sarees in India have a history as diverse as the country itself, with each region contributing to its evolution. In this extensive analysis of sarees, the paper focuses solely on the rich saga of Mahvastra of Maharashtra Paithani.

Keywords: Mahavastra, Deva Vastra, Paithani, Maharashtra, Motifs, Draping Style, Yeola Paithani, Vegetable Dyes, Royal Class, Class Identity, Gender Neutral

Introduction:

Sarees are a popular and widely acclaimed women's attire that comes in a variety of colours, designs, prints, and patterns, each having its own unique look and appeal. The "Elegant, sophisticated, and enchanting" is the best description for saree. Sarees are ideal for an array of gatherings and occasions, including weddings, engagements, and receptions, as well as celebrations and formal get-togethers. There is almost no occasion where you cannot embellish a saree in accordance with the theme. Sarees are gorgeous and ooze charm no matter who wears them or when they are worn. Their cultural and historical significance, combined with their constantly evolving charm, amazes us ladies. Over the years, the saree has grown from a simple item of clothing to one that embraces the culture, traditions, and values of those who wear it, reflecting India's shifting cultural and social norms.

The evolvement of the sari is a manifestation of changing times and cultural influences. From a simple garment to a garment that replicates the traditions and values of the people who encapsulate, the sari has come a long way. It continues to progress, adapting to the changing needs and tastes of the people who wear it, by preserving its timeless appeal. In the world of fashion women can drape a saree in a numerous way, allowing them to choose the style that best suits them. One of the most significant changes in the evolution of the saree has been the emergence of new textiles and materials.

The earliest reference of the sari is found in the Rig Veda, one of the oldest sacred texts, dating back to 1500 BC. In this text, the sari is described as: A garment that is draped over the body and fastened in place with a belt. In olden days sari was a simple piece of clothing that was draped over the body in various ways based on the region and its tradition. In the north, women typically drape sarees which had a tight bodice and a loose skirt, while in the south the sari was draped over the head and over the shoulders.

The word 'sari' is derived from the Pali root 'Sadi' or 'Shati' means 'a strip of cloth'. Buddhist and Sanskrit literature from the sixth century BCE mention about use of sarees. In Buddhist texts the sari is called 'Jataka' whereas in Sanskrit texts it is generally referred as 'Satika' or shatika meaning 'women's clothing' or a long, square-shaped garment The word Sari or śatikā has evolved from a set of three pieces, including Antariya, lower cloth. Uttariya; veil is carried to the shoulder or head and Stanapatta, the strip of the chest or chest band. During the passage of time colour, design and fabric, the length of the sari also differs from one sari to another, it is generally five to nine yards (approximately five and a half to eight meters); some are 6 metres and up to 9 metres, called Madisar.

The saree is an iconic and traditional Indian garment that has captured the globe with its elegance, grace and timeless allure. Sarees in India have a rich heritage that reflects changes in fashion, civilization, and cultural identity. The origins of sari's can be dated back to the Indus Valley Civilization, where weavers dye garments with indigo, lac, red madder, and turmeric to enhance their beauty. During the Vedic period, sarees were simple, unstitched cotton or silk garments. Women in the Vedic era wore these sarees, which were more resembled unstitched pieces of fabric draped around their bodies. This attire was modest and representing the simplicity of the time.

During the Mauryan and Gupta dynasties, textile manufacturing and weaving skills progressed. Women started wearing increasingly intricate sarees with ornamental borders, although the style remained relatively plain in comparison to succeeding centuries. The medieval period saw the synthesis of many cultural influences in India, which were reflected in different designs of sarees. Mughal monarchs introduced the art of embroidery, which encouraged the evolution of heavily embroidered sarees. Zari work, elaborate patterns, and costly fabrics gained popularity. Mughals of the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, well known for their love for richness and opulent apparel, which enhanced the sarees beauty with magnificent designs, gold, silver thread, and complex embroidery such as Jamdani and zardozi. Thus, sarees became a popular and everyday apparel worn by both commoners and royals in the palace.

Sarees underwent through substantial alterations throughout British colonial administration. European styles inspired fashion trends in India. British colonizers compelled Indian women to wear Victorian clothing. Many women continued to wear traditional sarees, but adopted and accommodate new fabrics and designs. In Indian culture saree is profoundly embedded. It's much more than a piece of clothing; it embodies cultural identity and rich heritage. The beauty and grace of the saree have left a permanent imprint on Indian fashion industry as well as literary and artistic creations. Here are few examples:

One little-known truth about sari is that, in contrast to today's clothing, it was once worn by both men and women and had gender-neutral value. With the passage of time, the sari has become a popular choice of women's clothing due to its delicate and feminine look. The significant evolution of history of the Indian sari reveals that women in earlier times did not wear blouses; it only emerged after the British colonial rule who introduced sari blouses during the Victorian era, when showing off one's arms and shoulders was considered as inappropriate and indecent. Soon the idea of wearing blouses gained popularity among women nationwide.

For humid and hot weather of India they introduced new fabrics such as chiffon, net and georgette for breathability and comfort. The use of new dyeing and printing techniques opened the door for designers to try out various styles, designs, patterns, and prints, is another noteworthy aspect of the history and development of sari. Sari's designs like floral prints, temple themes, and nature-inspired patterns were very popular among women of all strata of society. Women explore novel draping techniques like the nivi sari draping and numerous other sari styling methods that dominated the fashion section which led to new amazing opportunities for experimentation and creativity. As a symbol of grace, elegance, and tradition, the sari has remarkable cultural and historical connotation in India. This timeless classic garment symbolizes great India textile heritage tradition.

The type and method of wearing sari in each region of India is unique and speaks the cultural identity. The sari serves as a symbol of regional identity and pride. Like Rajasthan Bandhani, Ghagra Odhani, Bengal's special way of draping Jamdhani, Pochampally Kanjivaram in South India, Chanderi in Madhya Pradesh, Patola in Gujarat, Kutch with a reverse draping method, Ikkat in Orissa, in Kerala Dharmavaram, Temple Silk, Kashmiri embroidery, Maharashtra's special way of draping is nauvar or sahavar thus, Paithani, Narayanpeth, Irrkal sarees are also available in it. These are few instances of India's diverse regional saree weaving traditions. Different styles and patterns of sarees has a distinct story to tell. Weaving style of sarees is Maharashtra are different they used wrap and weft style, similarly has different names too, such as Lugdi, Chirdi, Patala, Pitambar, Shalu and Paithani. Among them, the Nauvari sari is very unique and elegant, and depict modesty and elegance. Early times, choli was used instead of blouses, but now the fashion of different patterns of blouses is rampant.

During the past, only on the occasion of wedding the luxurious, lavish, embroidery, zari like costly saris were gifted to the brides. But among them prestigious one is Paithani sari, which depicts the traditional and cultural heritage of Maharashtra. Paithani sarees from Maharashtra are known for its intricate peacock and parrot designs. These handcrafted silk sarees have been admired for its cultural heritage. In this extensive analysis of sarees, the paper focuses solely on the rich saga of Mahvastra of Maharashtra Paithani.

Saga of Mahavastra: Paithani

Paithani sari is known as 'Mahavastra', or 'Maharani of sari'. It is the dream of every woman to have a Paithani sari in her collection. The Mahavastra of Maharashtra has the 2000 to2500 year history; it can be traced back to 2nd century BC in Satavahana Dynasty, at that time the Paithani was made with pure gold wire, cotton and silk. The Greeko Romans were very fond of the fabric

of Paithani due to weaving style, fabric texture, colour scheme, embroidery, durability, design and delicateness, richness, elegancy, and the style of draping sarees all these things attracted them. Paithani was in great demand abroad for a long period of time.

This rich and luxurious fabric has got its name from the ancient historical city of Paithan, situated on the banks of the Godavari River. This city has cultural and religious significance. Paithan taluka is located in Chatrapati Sambhaji Nagar (Aurangabad) district of Maharashtra. Paithan is the land of saints, intellectuals and a place of learning Vedas. In ancient times, Paithan was referred by many names Pratishthan, Patan, Pattun, Potan, and Paithan, Paithani was identified as Pratishthani as its origin is in the ancient city of Pratishthan now well known as Paithan. The saga of Mahavastra of Maharashtra Paithani sarees can be trace back in ancient Hindu and Buddhist texts. Paithani is recognized as Dev Vastra (fabric of God) as this sari is drape to the Lord Vitthal and Godess Rakhumai of Pandharpur and Mahalaxmi of Kolhapur.

It is mentioned in historical texts that the manufacturing of Paithani sarees began during the Satavahana dynasty, whose capital was Pratishthan. Gautamiputra Satakarni introduced the Paithani manufacturing industry during his reign and it was at the peak. Paithani fabrics were exported to Rome and Italy in large quantities. Paithani sarees were mainly manufactured for export to foreign countries and to replenish the royal treasury with gold in exchange of Paithani saris between 200 and 400 BC. Since then, the export of fabric from India to the international market has begun. The artisans have to work hard to make a Paithani. Earlier, Paithani was rich in gold, silver, diamonds and rubies. It was crafted on a handloom with exquisite silk strands and precious gold. During that time Paithani was manufactured only in peacock blue colour. To weave six-yard Paithani takes 18 to 24 months. Generally, five hundred grams of silk thread and two hundred and fifty grams of zari thread (gold or silver) are required. Paithani's unique design is that the main saree and border are identical on both sides. Over the period of time, Paithani started being made in various colours such as red, yellow, pink, green, magenta, purple, orange, white, black and so on. Weight of one Paithani sari is 900 gm to 1500 gm.

Paithani has got demand in foreign markets even during the Yadva dynasty. It had got royal patronage during the Peshwa and Maratha Empire. During eighteen century the Paithani flourished under the patronage of the Peshwas. Madhavrao Peshwa had a magnanimity for Paithani fabrics. During this era also, Paithani sarees were preferred only by royal families. During the Peshwa era, the *pallav* (pallu) and borders were crafted entirely from pure gold, reinforced with copper. The composition included one kilogram of gold blended with one *tola* of copper for added strength. The mixture was swirl into a delicate wire, the zari. Public patronage

for Paithani was gained only after royal support. Paithani was considered as the embodiment of luck. According to a tradition, the Nizams of Hyderabad were also enamoured with the Paithani, and his daughter-in-law Nilofer added additional patterns to the border and Pallav or pallu of Paithani i.e. Parinda.

During the British period, Paithani's royal patronage gradually ended and the manufacturing business of Paithani went down. The hike in the prices of gold and silver took place due to the Second World War. Because of the industrial revolution in England India being the colony of Britishers, handlooms industries in India face a sheer set back because handlooms were replaced by machines. As a result of it, the artisans and manufacturers of Paithani gradually became unemployed. The number of customers also decreased due to high prices. The artisans of Paithani were displaced from Paithani city. Many weavers were forcibly relocated. Some were relocated to Pune, while some artisans were brought to Yeola village in Nashik district by traders and established over there, and thus, the centre of Paithani manufacturing was shifted from Paithan to Yeola. Even the business of manufacturing Paithini at Yeola city can also trace back the history of 300 to 350 years.

Paithan's Paithan is the real Paithani, the market for Paithan is seen in a larger scale in Yeola than in Paithan. The face and quality of Paithani sari differs as weavers shifted to Yeola from Paithan due to machine age. When people come to Paithan for tourism, they buy Paithan but in Yeola, they go to buy Paithan especially for weddings. There are many Paithani wevers in Paithan namely Prabhakar Dalkari of Paithan and Shantilal Bhandge of Yewala are recipient of President's Award. At present Yeola accounts for about 80 percent of the total Paithani production market in Maharashtra. Therefore, it is believed that real Paithani belongs to Yeola but it does not have significant marks of the existence of ancient culture of Paithani which Paithan has which can be discovered from the names of the streets they have Jar Galli, Tar Galli, Rangar Galli, Hatai Mohalla, Pavta Galli, Sali Wada etc.

Paithani can be categorized into three on the bases of its themes or motif, weaving, and colours.

   i)   Paithani on the bases of theme or motif:

Paithani's base fabric changed from cotton to silk since ancient time. Cotton was used for the saree's fabric, while silk was used for the borders and weft motifs. Cotton is no longer present in Paithani. Silk was imported from China at one point. Paithan and Yeola now purchase silk from Bangalore. Earlier, in simple Paithani, the pallu was 18 inches long, but now it is 36 inches long which is double. Traditionally, Pallu designs included Muthada (rows of dash lines), Barawa

panja (palm with fingers), and a peacock sitting on a flower Kunda in the centre. The pallu style has varied in response to customer preferences. Instead of traditional motifs, innovative ones are incorporated. Pallu patterns feature several styles of peacock, lotus, and Swan. Motifs of Paithani, such as the Kamal or lotus flower on which Buddha sits or stands. In Lotus brocade Paithani lotus motifs are on padar or pallu and occasionally on the border. The lotus design has mainly 7-8 colours. Reflecting motifs from the Ajanta cave murals, the lotus and swan symbolize rebirth. The lotus closes at night, sinking into the water, only to rise and bloom with the morning light, signifying renewal and perseverance. Additionally, the lotus represents royalty, beauty, purity, and the essence of life. The Hans (swan) motif, the Ashraffi motif, the Asawalli (flowering vines), which gained popularity during the Peshwa's period, the Bangadimor or the peacock in a bangle, Mor, a peacock are influence from the Buddhist paintings because of the proximity of Ajanta caves.

In Bangadimor Paithani the term Mor indicates peacock and bangadi is bangle. The pallu of this saree showcases a peacock in a bangle or a bangle style peacock. This motif is woven onto the padar or pallu, sometimes it consists of a single dancing peacock. Due to this pattern, sarees are extremely expensive. The bangle symbolizes *Saubhagya* (good fortune), reflecting the completeness of womanhood. The peacock embodies beauty, royalty, wisdom, dignity, love, and protection. Known for its ability to renew its feathers annually, it signifies energy, transformation, and wholeness.

In Muniya brocade Paithani the term muniya refers to parrot. The colour of parrot's motif on this kind of Paithani is leafy green and beak in red. It is also named as tota-maina. It represents love and passion. Its red beak represents the parched earth before rain unfulfilled desires, while its green feathers symbolize the lush, nourished land after rainfall it fulfilled joy. Rain, vital for fertility and growth, sustains the cycle of life. Without the sun, there is no rain; without rain, life cannot flourish. Parrots are woven on the padar or pallu and on the border.

Motifs on the overall sari such as Circles, Stars, Kuyri, Rui Phool, Kalash, Chandrakor, clusters of 3 leaves are in small size. Koyari symbolizes *Saubhagya* (good fortune) and holds deep significance in Hindu traditions. The mango, often regarded as the fruit of the gods, represents divine sweetness and abundance. The *Narali* and *Pankhi* are two distinct types of borders found in Paithani sarees. The coconut revered as *Sriphal* in India, the coconut is considered sacred and symbolizes selfless service, prosperity, and generosity. In Hindu mythology, the *Kalpavriksha* the wish-fulfilling tree. It is believed to grant all desires, embodying the essence of abundance and fulfilment.

Some of the unique motifs woven on the sari's border and pallu are replicas of classic motifs that are repeated in a different form to relieve the monotony in designs and as per the fashion trends in society.

ii) Paithani on the bases of weaving:

The Paithani sari is made utilizing a unique method called 'Kadiyal' or 'Cutwork'. In kad the weft is woven using single shuttle. It has a narali border and simple buttis such as Paisa and Watana all over sari which is the traditional one. In this sophisticated technique, the silk threads for the sari's body and border are weaved individually before being painstakingly connected to form a single fabric. This careful artistry produces a sari with unparalleled richness and texture. The border's warp and weft are identical in colour, whereas the body's wrap and weft are distinct.

iii) Paithani on the bases of colour:

The most popular traditional eco-friendly dyes are used for colouring the Paithani sarees such as Aboli (pale bittersweet), Firozi (cyan), Gujri (black and white), Kalichandrakala (black sari with red border), Mirani, Morphankhi (cerulean), Motia (pale pink), Samprus (green-red), Raghu is a parrot green sari, Shirodak is a pure white sari, Uddani (softer black), Vangi (aubergine purple), Neeligunji (blue), Pasla and Pophali (chrome yellow). Each color used in Paithani sarees holds a special significance: **Red** symbolizes love and prosperity, **Green** represents fertility and renewal, **Yellow** signifies spirituality and wisdom, **Blue** reflects tranquillity and depth. These colors add a deeper meaning to the saree, making it more than just a piece of fabric.

Today, zari is made up of silver thread that has been plated in gold. The borders, which consist of silk or zari, are made by using the interlocked weft technique usually in the shape of creeping vine or flower design. The Narali and the Pankhi are of two kinds of Paithani's border. The padar or pallu and the borders are woven in zari irrespective of the sarees colour. To weave the elegant inlay border paths a master weaver is required, even if the main body of the saree is weave by a very skilled weaver. The pallus of Paithani comes in two types, single (one layer) and double (two layers). The pallu and border are the main attractions of the saree, the entire saree has buttis. Traditional Paithani has 28-inch Pallu, Simpler, less intricate designs and takes comparatively less time to weave. Brocade Paithani showcases a complex Pallu design and has a 40-inch Pallu. It demands meticulous weaving due to the delicate silk threads.

Innovation, Sustainability and New Trends in Paithani

Due to actor Aadesh Bandekar's Home Minister serial on Zee Marathi Paithani has relished its golden days which inflated pride for Paithani in the eyes of women by organizing the

competition among women of neighbouring areas. In eighteen years of this show, they have distributed 5500 Paithani to the winners of Home Minister competition. Paithani, which was once primarily preferred by the royal families is now prevalent in the homes of commoners due to artificial threads, artificial silk, and machine manufacturing have significantly reduced the cost of manufacturing Paithani. The fashion industry has undergone a transformation in recent years, with inclusivity and diversity as buzzword. To achieve this inclusivity and diversity in Indian fashion industry Paithani manufacturers has adopted required changes by studying the choices of the market segments. With gender neutrality they embraced the changes and brought new segments of Pathani collection which will be affordable, sustainable but still maintain the traditional value of Maharashtrian culture in the world of fusion fashion.

Artificial zari is used for embroidery bangles, peacocks, parrots, mainas, Ajanta lotuses, kuyari (mango shapes), and akrotis. Recently, silk, brocade, tissue, and cotton threads are used to weave Paithani. Fusion Paithani's are also available in market at affordable prices such as Peshwa Paithani, Khan Paithani, Irakal Paithani, Semi Paithani, Kadiyaal Paithani (Karnataka Dhatani), Dhupachhaw Paithani, Muniya Paithani, which exhibit the elegance and timeless glamour of this iconic saree.

Conclusion:

The Paithani sari exemplifies the skill, inventiveness, and cultural legacy exhibited by traditional Indian textiles. Its journey from Paithan's looms to the fashion industry depicts the endurance of traditional craftsmanship in the face of modernity.

Fashion can be used to promote or create identities in a variety of contexts, including cultural, sexual, gender, economic, and age-based. Distinct fashion choices could be related with distinct identity choices. Likewise, people intuitively respond to fashion as 'identity statement,' which strengthens the connection between fashion and identity. Thus, ethnic clothes worn in traditional ways are significant statements about cultural identity, and they may also play an essential role in validating other identities such as gender identity or class identification.

Paithani sarees equation has transformed over the past years; it has grabbed the lead in an array of fashion segment and categories with innovation such as Paithani dresses, Paithani Kurtis, Paithani dupatta one piece, frocks, Jackets for male as well as for females, sherwani. dhoti, ghagra choli, blouse, pheta (turban), wall piece, purse, cultches tray, one piece, toran, and sky lanterns, has catch the eyes of people from celebrities to common man and also has taken an international leap by becoming gender neutral and by dissolving the class differentiation.

In the year 2000, British Airways adorned the exterior of its aircraft with intricate Paithani embroidery. This exquisite design also featured on their tickets, pens, pencils, and T-shirts. Meera Mehta played a significant role in reviving Paithani textiles. The *Asawali* (flowering vine) motif was chosen to be painted on the aircraft's tailfin. In a remarkable tribute to this traditional art, an aeroplane was once draped in a Paithani saree, thanks to Meera Mehta a proud moment for every Indian. Paithani embroidery appeared on their tickets, pens, pencils, and T-shirts. Paithani is becoming more prevalent as a fashion statement among youngsters due to its innovation because fashion is the armour to survive the reality of everyday life as stated by Bill Cunningham.

Paithani is, thus, gaining new splendour and vigour, much like a phoenix rising from the ashes. But still more efforts are required to intensify it and ameliorate the beauty of the original Paithani, which is composed of pure silk and pure gold. The creation of a range of Paithani saris with new and creative designs and other fashion products of Paithani will not only improve weavers' economic condition, which may help them to compete in the international marketplace but also will sustainably carry forth the cultural heritage in the postmodern world, which reminds the Ralph Laurn that 'I don't design the cloths but design the dreams as to have Paithani Sari is a dream of all women belonging to any class.

The famous Marathi poetess Shanta Shelke has described her grandmother's Paithani in her poem 'Paithani'.

वर्षामागून वर्ष गेली

संसाराचा सराव झाला

नवा कोरा कडक पोत

एक मऊपणाल्याला

पैठणीच्या घडी घडीतून

अवघे आयुष्य उलगडत गेले

अहेवपणी मरण आले

आजीच्या माझे सोने झाले….

अशी ही प्रत्येक स्त्रीच्या आयुष्याचे सोने करणारी, सौभाग्याचे लेणेल्यालेली महावस्त्र पैठणी ……

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INFERRING THE POLITICS OF FASHION AND THE FASHION OF POLITICAL LEADERS

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Abstract:

The past researchers consider that the 'fashion' functions as a mirror to respective eras. It is intrinsically 'political' as it is used to demonstrate patriotic/nationalistic and propagandistic purposes that are linked with culture, class, race, ethnicity, identity and gender. This paper confines its scope to fashion of clothing (dressing style) of Indian political leaders only. The fashion of clothing is a symbol of support or revolt against political ideas/issues. The political leaders wear certain clothes to stand up for something or to make a statement. This paper, while discussing dressing style of political leaders', claims that fashion of clothing is suggestive of their ideology and is a tool in politics. The political leaders are identified with their fashion of clothing, e.g. Nehruji's *achkan*, Shastriji's *dhoti*, VP Singhji's fur-cap, Rajiv Gandhiji's sleeveless fleece jackets, Arvind Kejriwalji's muffler and Modiji's jacket and *pagari* as a tool to connect and also having some message/ideology to pass on to masses. As discussed in the paper, from Father of Nation (Mahatma Gandhji), the Prime Ministers of India (Indira Gandhiji, Narendra Modiji) and the other political leaders in India (Mamataji Banerjee, Arvind Kejriwalji and Ajit Pawarji), all have tried to demonstrate 'what they believe' through their respective clothing. It helps them in asserting their philosophy/ beliefs/ ideology. Thus, it is true that the realm of fashion has always been politically charged in the context of the referred political leaders. The fashion of clothing is an influential way to express one's political ideology.

Keywords: Fashion, Political, Propagandistic Purposes, Ideology.

Introduction:

It is observed by the researchers that the 'fashion' functions as a mirror to respective eras. Most of the researchers are of the opinion that fashion is intrinsically 'political' as it is used to demonstrate patriotic and nationalistic purposes. Considering the Indian scenario, in particular, fashion of clothing (dressing style, texture, design and colour) is also used for iconographic and propagandistic purposes that are linked with culture, class, race, ethnicity and gender. Hence, internationally famed designers making clothes (i.e. incorporating politics) are hired by the

political leaders for these purposes. These designers, creators of fashion are in a sense branding the political leaders and indicating specific ideology through the dressing/clothing style - colour, design and texture of fabric.

The fashion or style of clothing in this research paper refers to a person's (political leader's) individual way of dressing and presenting themselves in public. It comprises the choice of clothing, accessories, hair, makeup, and overall aesthetics. Further, in the context of this research paper, the fashion or style of clothing of political leaders is also suggestive of expression of identity, personality, perceptions and ideology.

Fashion as a Tool/Technique in Politics:

The relationship of fashion and politics is existed throughout the history. The ancient kings and queens across the nations, have incorporated certain special elements in their clothing as a symbol in order to showcase their legacy, family and kingdom. The 'fashion' of political leaders cannot remain neutral. As it is intentionally or otherwise a tactic to bring in the consideration of the masses and promote particular ideology.

At the same time, the masses too can express their concerns and opinions regarding matters related to ideology or particular 'ism' e.g. political issues about rights in democracy, human rights, climate crisis etc., through their fashion of clothing that speaks louder than words. Consequently, fashion of clothing/ dressing style, as a code, is used to keep up particular social roles and hierarchies.

Nowadays, fashion of clothing/ dressing style is used to express new ideals of individual liberty, rationality and equality. In other words, the fashion serves an effective channel for expression e.g. activism by the Youth or some Communities like LGBTQ+ for their rights. The Indian Youth has also employed fashion of clothing in order to be vocal for political or social issues such as equality, sustainability, and LGBTQ+ rights. Thus, fashion of clothing/ dressing style gives opportunities for self-expression.

India also has witnessed the colonisation period whereby the British Raj used clothing to proclaim their hegemony and on the other hand the colonised Indian masses used to burn those clothes to revolt against the British Raj/ powers. It is well known that in the Indian Freedom Movement, under the guidance of leaders like Mahatma Gandhiji, people refused machine made foreign clothes and started wearing hand-spun *Khadi* clothes in order to show their protest against the *British Raj*/Power (as a symbol of opposition).

Thus, fashion of clothing continues being a symbol of support or revolt against political ideas/issues. The fashion of clothing is an influential way to express one's political or religious ideology. Political leader through his/her clothing style (that is repeated time and again becomes

fashion) communicates particular ideology. The renowned political leaders have their 'signature' clothing style/ fashion which intends to render a particular image. Through their clothing style/ fashion, the political leaders connect and communicate with the target audience/people across the strata of society. The political leaders, discussed successively, are seen careful about their 'signature' clothing style/ fashion. The 'signature' clothing style/ fashion of a political leader functions as a message and not just a piece of cloth.

Inferring the Politics of Fashion:

Derek Guy, popular menswear writer and commentator, is of the opinion that there exist a close intersection of fashion and politics. Further, he opines that clothing has long been a medium for expressing identity and challenging norms. He states that the clothing innovations have roots in political and social shifts. The politicization of fashion, through the dressing/clothing style of political leaders, is a form of resistance and identity.

In all, Derek Guy, concludes that the fashion is a type of social language and it reflects the power structures and tensions of the times. Thus, dressing/clothing style can reveal social aspirations and political ideals. In India, e.g. the influential political leaders (Then and Now Prime Ministers) Indira Gandhiji and Narendra Modiji have used fashion to connect with cultural heritage of India.

It is observed that there is close association of clothes with nationalism considering the fashion of clothing through the political lenses. The women's clothes are very much associated with patriotic and nationalistic purposes. In this regards, Finnane Antonia (1996) argues 'how in the Indian women's *sari* is represented India in proud sovereignty in the colonial relationship'. She also observes, in general, that the changes in the cutting of women's clothes shifted from wide to narrow and changes in the colour changed from brilliant to dark 'show an ambivalent combination of activism and conservatism'.

In view of the above, the first woman Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhiji, is seen wearing elegant and beautiful (Kanchipuram / Banarasi) *silk sarees and handlooms.* It may be showcasing Indian tradition and connecting with the craftsmen of India in particular and the people in general. She used her clothing/dressing style as an effective medium to pass certain messages. She always wore *Khadi*, a fabric that played important and successful role in the Indian Freedom Movement. She is seen wearing neatly pressed, pleated, stiff, starched hand woven *Khadi* sarees as well. The way she wore the sarees also added a touch of regality, authority and power. She has a *rudraksh* beaded necklace around her neck and a simple HMT *'Janata'* wristwatch, which helped her connecting the common people. She has proven a good

mother, wife, daughter, a style icon and the first Woman Prime Minister of India. Indira Gandhiji indeed connects fashion and politics.

The fashion of clothing of another prominent female political leader, Mamataji Banerjee, is also illustrated hereafter. Her 'signature look' consists of a white saree with a blue border and *'Hawai chappals'*. There are few female political leaders in India, like Mamataji Banerjee, who convey a message of simplicity through their fashion of clothing. Thus, in a sense, a simple white *cotton / khadi saree* with a mono-coloured blue border and wearing of *'Hawai chappals'* has become Mamata Banerjee's trademark that spoke for 'serenity' and 'simplicity' and further connects with common man. Her fashion of clothing, the starched stark-white or off-white *cotton sarees* (also named as Mother Teresa sarees) may be used to imitate the saint like attire / figure. In all, fashion of clothing emphasises how the sari-*chappal* and neat-hair image is central to Mamataji Banerjee's identity politics and projects a middle class 'Bengaliness' and in order to connect with the larger whole of West Bengal.

Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modiji's power dressing style has also helped him in presenting 'the most stylish leader'. The 'Modi Kurta and Jacket' become a fashion (brand/ trendsetter) in the Youth as well. The remarkable features of '*Modi fashion'* is the headgear i.e. use of colourful *pagari* (turbans), traditional hats or *safari hats,* he used while visiting Indian states. The reason behind Modiji's headgear is to connect with the local culture and also demonstrate his affinity with the people. The result is his authentic look and success in complying with local traditions. Further, Modiji is seen vocal for local. Amit Behki, the well-known fashion designer, opined that Modiji 'has made his own style statement because of the colours he wears, and he is most specific about it. On occasions like Republic Day and Independence Day, he always tries to wear the tricolour turban with a long cloth tail. That makes the country visible worldwide, and he tries to carry the Indian culture the best'. In all, Modiji's dressing style has become so famous that a special category called 'Modi' in the world of fashion came in and is lasting till date. In other words, Narendra Modiji dresses, the world watches and thus kurtas and jackets used by him is now a brand called as 'Modi'. We just cannot ignore the sheer elegance of Prime Minister Narendra Modiji's clothing style though we may not follow him or the politics.

We have witnessed Mahatma Gandhiji's change of clothing style from the elaborate Gujarati attire to a simple *khadi dhoti (loincloth)* and *shawl.* This change in clothing style was decided by Mahatma Gandhji in Madurai. He decided that he has to work for and work with the poor Indian people. Thus, he started using *khadi dhoti (loincloth)* and *shawl* in order to identify with the Indian people. Mahatma Gandhiji used *khadi dhoti (loincloth)* and *shawl* (not as a revolt but) to identify himself with the poor Indian people /peasants and as a sign of humility and ahimsa.

Mahatma Gandhiji has also used the portable spinning wheel i.e. charkha to spin thread and make his own clothes. In all, the simple clothing style of Mahatma Gandhiji signifies simplicity, humility, equality, and a rejection of materialistic life. Mahatma Gandhiji's use of *loincloth* i.e. to wear minimal clothes is a demonstration of his principles of simplicity, self-sufficiency, and non-violence. In other words, he demonstrated a 'minimalist approach' through his clothing style and further was successful in identifying himself with the masses.

Arvind Kejriwalji is seen dressed in loose fitting trousers and shirt in summer. He is seen in a sweater and wearing a muffler around his neck in winters. He wears flip flops. In all, his clothing style is well suited to Indian weather, economy and can connect with the masses. This clothing style is suggestive of simplicity. The clothing style also conveys a message that he is 'rooted in reality'. Arvind Kejriwalji clothing style may not be smart but is politically clever. The clothing style gives him 'understated' look of a common man /*aam aadmi*. In view of this, the renowned sociologist, Shiv Vishvanathanji opines that Arvind Kejriwalji is an "extraordinary because he's commonplace", the model of *'aam aadmi'* and his ideology.

Ajit Pawarji, used pink colour jacket while campaigning the *'Ladki Bhahin Yojna'*, (in the eve of gearing up for the Assembly Elections in Maharashtra) is the very recent example of afore said claims regarding fashion of clothing. It is well known that after winning just one MP in the Lok Sabha Elections, the Nationalist Congress Party led by Ajit Pawarji has recently given the task of promoting the Party to Naresh Arora's Design Box Company. As advised by the said company, the Ajit Pawarji Group started using pink colour to enrich the image of the Party in the campaigns, programs, banners, advertisements and on other larger platforms. Shri. Ajit Pawarji himself is seen using pink colour jackets while campaigning. It is surprising to know that the colour pink and pink jacket fashion together have successfully worked for Ajit Pawarji in the Assembly Elections in Maharashtra. Thus, the colour pink and pink jacket fashion was a part of planning a strategy for the Assembly Elections in Maharashtra.

Conclusion:

Thus, the most of the political leaders are identified with their fashion of clothing. Nehruji's achkan ('Nehru' jacket and khadi cap), Shastriji's dhoti, VP Singhji's fur-cap, Rajiv Gandhiji's sleeveless fleece jackets, Arvind Kejriwalji's muffler and Modiji's jacket can be identified with these political leaders as a tool to connect and also having some message/ideology to pass on to masses.

In all, the dressing style or fashion of clothing is very cautiously decided on the part of these political leaders as part of the 'message' and to uphold their values in society. As discussed in the paper from Mahatma Gandhji, Prime Ministers of India and the other political leaders in

India, all have tried to demonstrate 'what they believe' through their respective dressing style or fashion of clothing.

It is true that the realm of fashion has always been politically charged in the context of the referred political leaders. As observed by Desai Shraddha (2022) the fashion of clothing has the power to create a visual impact and deliver the message without saying any words. The political leaders wear certain clothes to stand up for something or to make a statement.

The discussed political leaders may not be always considered as style icons but have an image to hold and values to portray through their fashion of clothing. It helps them in asserting their philosophy/ beliefs/ ideology. The fashion of clothing of a particular political leader (e.g. Narendra Modiji in the recent times) can evoke an emotional response and connect at the masses and their culture.

As discussed, the fashion of clothing in the hands of common man is also functions as a tool to express his/her opinions without using a language. It is very well connected with identity, culture, aesthetics, and overall politics as it interacts with all the elements of society. It offers visual and symbolic platform for all within which political issues are enunciated and can be challenged.

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THE SUIT OF POWER:

TRACING THE HISTORY OF THE SAFARI SUIT IN INDIA

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Abstract:

The safari suit, a two-piece attire with military roots, emerged during the British colonial era and gained popularity among explorers and urban Indians in the early 20th century. Post-independence, it symbolized power and sophistication, especially among India's urban elite. By the 2000s, its prestige declined, becoming associated with older generations. This paper explores the safari suit's journey through interviews, cinema, and fashion trends. It examines its enduring cultural significance, shifts in styling, and role in representing Indian masculinity. The study also traces its international origins—from military wear to a fashion statement by Yves Saint Laurent—highlighting its global and local evolution.

Keywords: Safari Suit, Urban, Formal Wear

Introduction:

The Safari suit is a two-piece men's attire consisting of a jacket style shirt with pockets and a straight fit pant. Its existence dates back to the late nineteenth century with buttons, epaulets and belt as part of the British military uniform in the tropics. In the early twentieth century, American leaders and British explorers popularized the safari as the dress of explorers and adventurers. During the same period, urban Indians adopted the safari from their British officers.

After independence the safari defined elegance and power dressing up to the 80s. In the 90s also, though rare, it continued to represent the educated, urban, upperclass male of India. Businessmen, shopowners and bureaucrats wore it like a uniform, every day in different colours. In the new millennium however, the safari's status came down as a commoner's attire. Powerful men took to suits and office goers were comfortable in their shirts and trousers. The Safari however did not go completely out of picture. It appears as a symbol of the older citizens.

The paper attempts to trace the history of the safari suit in the country as represented through photos and movies. Through interviews of men whose every traditional and formal wear is a safari, the paper will explore the significance of the attire in the present times. Interaction with

fabric owners and tailors will give an insight in the trends in the styling of the safari over the last few decades and also understand the shift in preference to other forms of clothing. The paper will also highlight the representation of safari in cinema.

The origin of the safari suit date back to the Second Boer War in Africa in the late 20th century. It was developed as a hybrid between jacket and suit made of heavy cotton to protect the British soldiers from the scorching African heat. Hartov (2024) By the 1930s, it became "the unofficial uniform of bushmen", western adventurers going to jungle safaris in Africa. Ruark Collection (2024) Throughout the early 20th century, the safari reigned the international fashion scenario as sophisticated style attire in the United States of America. Wells Yves Saint Laurent first introduced the safari jacket in his 1967 runway shows. He stylized it for not only as cool summer men's but also as the embodiment of the "spirit of freedom and empowerment" for women. The safari suit made its first appearance in India.

Power Dressing

The safari was stylish. What Indian men in post independent India wore was nowhere close to the British – hunter style attire of the early 20th century. It was also not as stylish as that displayed by fashion brands in Paris and Milan. Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris, It had a unique charm that enhanced the machoistic characteristics of the Indian male, accentuating the lean body type, topped with a moustache. Not all men had the moustache, but that was compensated by the hairy arms that the half sleeves of the safari exposed, almost all the times complemented with dark dense hair, that completed the look of a sturdy urban Indian male. Indian designers titled it as a 'marriage of East machoism with west style'. (A look at 71 objects that shaped India, 2018.)

Several consider, Geeta Khanna, director of a styling company, considers safari to be a 'colonial hangover'. Mishra (2019) This is also one of the reasons safaris is associated with power. All things that associated were associated with the powerful British were adopted by the Indians to portray themselves as powerful. The safari is perhaps one of them. Urban Indian educated men felt a need to distinguish their identity from the powerful village people, who derived their power from their caste identity. The safari, stripped them off of all their other identities and they could strut themselves proudly only as modern.

The fact that the intellectual class also had a special liking for the safari supplements the claim that the safari was a power dressing element of the educated urban modern men. Journalist, skilled orator, political commentator and analyst, made the play Tughlak, taking a dig at then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's tyrannical emergency regime will be remembered in his

trademark olive green safari suit. Sripathi (2016). He is representative of the class that owned safari as a symbol of their ferocity. They commanded authority.

The same features would also have made several politicians adopt it as their personal style ditching the usual Nehru jackets or coats. They had a certain Indianness to them while exhibiting an aura of eliteness. They were not core – traditional like the humble kurta nor completely western like the three-piece suit. Their style adapts to suit the average Indian man's height and complexion assigned a uniqueness to them. Natwar Singh, renowned diplomat, was a young member of a group of Indian ambassadors who visited the UN in the 1960s remembers a third of the contingency, irrespective of age or regional background was dressed in a safari. It was considered a symbol of honourable person. Subramanium (2011). Sharad Pawar, leader of the Natioanalist Congress Party in Maharashtra and late Jagmohan Dalmiya, former President of the Board of Control for Cricket in India are examples of people in power who frequently seen dressed in the safari.

Business Class

This idea of respect came to be associated with the safari also perhaps because the business class adopted it. A sharemarket broker, owner of a jewellery shop, managers and presidents of mills and companies would be seen in safaris till the 1990s. Singhal (2019) Even today, elderly owners of jewellery shops in Zaveri Bazaar in Mumbai would be seen in safari.

Commoner

It was as much of the common man as of the elite and the celebrities. Gaining the title of the official uniform of the urban educated professionals. Government officials be it in any city of the growing metropolitan cities of the 1980s were seen donning a safari carrying a briefcase to work. One of the reasons of the popularity of the safari among office goers was its combination of sophistication and affordability. The shine of the polyster based clothing gave a touch of richness to its look. With wide collars, sometimes large buttons and the carved pockets in the shirts, safari gave men a professional look.

Its affordability on the other hand was a result of the growing private textile industry of the 80s. Textile companies like Raymond, Vimal and DCM Textiles became some of the foremost suppliers in the country. They captured the growing demand for the safari and spun out affordable material. Mishra (2019).

Buddhist Community

Its intriguing to notice the conspicuous rise of the number of senior citizens in the Buddhist community adopting the safari as their regular attire. My father, Bhagwan Nagtilak, a Buddhist, wore formal shirt and pant for his entire life from being an undergraduate student till his

retirement. After retirement he started participating in the endeavours of the community more actively, he ditched his entire wardrobe of shirt and pants and stitched more than half a dozen safaris at one go. His companions of the same age group all over Mumbai, in Kalyan, Ulhasnagar and even Nashik and Nagpur, whom he came across at Buddhist kavi sammelans and religious conferences, were all dressed in safaris. Since the 1990s, the safari has become an unofficial dress code for the Boudhacharya, Neo – Buddhist equivalent of a Chirstian officiating priest. When enquired about this trend, Vinit Lawande, an active young member of the Buddhist Society of India – the central agency that formulates codes for the Buddhist community emerged after conversion along with Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, noted that there were no such rules made by the Society related to dress code of Baudhacharyas apart from white clothes. It is the formal look of the safari, that distinguishes the Boudhacharya from the groom, who also wore white formals. He also noted that it highlighted the seniority of the Boudhacharya in age and position on and off the stage of the ceremony. (V. Lawande, personal communication, December 12, 2024)

Ninad Sable, 24, Buddhist, resident of Ramabai Nagar in Ghatkopar, is a member of the political party Bharatiya Republican Paksha – Bahujan Mahasangh. He is an active karyakarta (volunteer), gathering people for public rallies of the party and writing his own slogans for whatsapp updates. Ninad notes that he has seen maximum number of senior citizens of the community in his locality in safaris. He is amused by the colourful versions though, because he prefers wearing pure white for all his political events. Ninad is not even on the stage during these events. When asked the reason for choosing the attire of the old, he responded with a proud smile, saying it is the outfit of the wise. I could not find any other Buddhist youth who shared the same views and wore a safari. (N. Sable, personal communication, November 16, 2024)

Popular Culture

Popular Culture gives several references that show the trend in use of safari from men in higher rank to lower from the 90s to the present times. In Hrishikesh Mukherjee's Bawarchi of 1972, Rajesh Khanna played the humble con servant who donned a mini version of the safari. Amitabh Bachchan in Sholay, Shashi Kapoor in Deewar and Shatrugan Sinha in the first half of Kalicharan are all seen in a safari. They are all young, simple men coming from poor families. It is not just the heroes but villains who have dazzled on the silver screens plotting heinous crimes in safari suits. The iconic deadly villain, Gabbar Singh in Sholay, portrayed by Amjad Khan, is seen in a rustic version of the safari suit in dark colours. Prem Chopra, Amrish Puri and Kader Khan, the other famous villains of the 70s Bollywood films have also appeared on the screen in the safari as rich smugglers smoking their huge cigars over sparkly bar counters. In more recent

times, the silver screen immortalized Mumbai's Don of the 80's Haji Mastan, who only wore safaris especially white, played by Ajay Devgan in Milan Lutharia's 2010 movie Once Upon a Time in Mumbai.

Even off the screen, the safari was popular among Bollywood celebrities and also sportspersons. Wardrobes of the likes of Rajesh Khanna and Sunil Gavaskar, both style icons of respective eras, were filled with safari suits in different colours. Mishra (2019). This trend phased out in the 90s. The only followers seen in the 21st century are filmmakers Abbas Mustan who are famously known as the 'Safari Suit boys'. Bhat

Enquiry of the Decline

Local men's tailors have observed the declining trend in the demand for a tailored safari suit. Since the decade, their customers for safari suit have been men above the age of 50 only. Dharmesh Chavan, 62, fourth generation owner of Chavan Tailors near Bora Bazaar Street in Fort area of Mumbai, notes that there are men between the age of 40 to 50 too, who prefer a yearly safari suit tailor made. (D. Chavan, personal communication, December 3, 2024)

The safari was a common attire in middle class weddings in Mumbai. Several Hindu Gujarati and Hindu and Buddhist Maharashtrians acquaintances shared wedding pictures of 1980s of their family members with me for this research. In 8 out of 12 such family photographs, the groom, his father, father – in – law, brothers and friends of the groom were in safaris. To compare the scenario, I went through wedding pictures of 8 acquaintances from the same background who got married in the last decade. In 5 of these, only the father of the groom or bride or another senior member of the family was in a safari.

Though declining in numbers, he notes that the demand has shifted from individuals to offices. He has received orders from corporate offices in the vicinity for safari suit tailored for their drivers and security guards. Suvarna Jadhav, assistant professor of History at the Birla College, Kalyan notes that her brother had worn a safari as his wedding day attire. She notes that the popularity of safari among urban men was also negatively affected in the early 90s by its increasing use by middle of brothels. (S. Jadhav, personal communication, December 21, 2024)

In 2023, the Bharatiya Janata Party in Jharkhand announced that they would introduce uniforms to employees working in party offices. They would be dressed in blue safari suits. Ranjan (2023). While this retrograde move of the safari exists on one side, one another side one can see revival of the safari among the luxury couture circles of the country. High end fashion designers have hailed the safari as a 'classic summer look' and suggest teaming the jacket with cotton pants to give a trendy look. Amarnath (2019). The timeless elegance of the safari still has fans in the celebrity circles too. Kamal Hasan, the Tamil superstar is seen hosting the reality show Bigg

Boss on television in colourful safaris complemented with a scarf around the neck to complete the mysterious look. Stylist Amritha Ram shared that these safaris were tailor made for him made of 100% cotton using vegetable dye. Bhopatkar (2020). Kareena Kapoor was recently seen in safari jacket at an airport. This is an international trend that was associated with the safari since its birth. It originated as an unisex apparel and debuted on the Paris runway with male and female models showcasing it in its ultra – urban form decades later. Its only in the last five or so years that women have adopted the safari in varied forms like jackets and femininely styled two – piece sets having short length shirts. Utsavpedia (n. d.)

Conclusion:

The safari is one of the examples of the Indianization of the foreign. There are cultures, cuisines, costumes, languages and practices that have seeped into the Indian region, irrespective of their mode of entry or time of entry, that have undergone this process in several millennia. Its the process where a certain thing when adopted by people on the Indian territory gets so localized that it acquires new meaning. This might be happening in other parts of the world too, but in the world of fashion, this is common phenomena related to India. Fashion trends in India related to costumes have been influenced by social standards that they convey. The safari is the only costume which has seen a trajectory of rise and fall in period of close to half of decade from the 1970s to 2020s. It is gradually disappearing from weddings and wardrobes of the business class. It still appears in a stylized avatar among celebrities. From defining the honourable status of a person to becoming a uniform of the lowest ranks of the serving class, the safari has seen it all and is here to stay.

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CONSTRUCTING FEMININITY: A STUDY OF HISTORICAL SHAPEWEAR OF THE 19TH CENTURY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN WESTERN FASHION

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Abstract:

The history of shapewear stretches back to ancient times, wherein women would use binding materials and leather belts to enhance their figures. This was primarily done to suit the beauty standards of their time. Shapewear especially became a very prominent and indispensable element of women's fashion in the 19th century. Shapewear like corsets, crinolines, bustles, and gigot sleeve supports, although worn under the garment, became the defining feature of various historical silhouettes of the 19th century. While they served to enhance women's form, they simultaneously imposed limitations on their mobility and autonomy, prompting debates about body image and societal expectations. By examining the technological advancements in garment construction and the socio-cultural context surrounding these trends, this study highlights how shapewear not only influenced physical appearance but also reflected broader social dynamics, including class distinctions, gender roles, women's movements, and self-expression. This exploration incorporates historical accounts, primary sources such as extant garments, fashion plates, medical critiques, as well as contemporary interpretations, to understand how these restrictive garments symbolized femininity, beauty ideals, social expectations, and medical concerns. Secondary sources like books, journals, and research articles provide important insights into the influence of fashion in defining, expressing, and understanding femininity. Ultimately, this paper explores the dual role of the 19th century shapewear as a tool for both expression and oppression, contributing to the ongoing discourse on femininity in fashion history.

Keywords: Shapewear, Corset, Crinoline, Femininity, Silhouette.

Introduction

19th century England witnessed a profound metamorphosis in women's fashion, marked by the evolution of shapewear that both defined and constrained the female form. Corsets, crinolines, bustles, and gigot sleeve supports weren't simply fashion accessories but instruments that shaped societal comprehensions of femininity. These garments, while enhancing the asked figure, also assessed physical restrictions, reflecting the complex interplay between fashion, societal morals,

and gender places (Steele, 2001). The 19th century was a period of profound metamorphosis in Western society. The goods of the Industrial Revolution were far- reaching, touching every aspect of diurnal life. As metropolises swelled with plant workers and new technologies surfaced, the pace of life accelerated. For women, still, these changes passed within an antithetical social frame that both limited and sluggishly readdressed their places. Shapewear surfaced as a crucial symbol within this dynamic — reflecting both the durability of patriarchal ideals and the subtle resistances against them.

The puritanical ideal of femininity emphasized modesty, chastity and form. Shapewear helped inscribe these values on the body by physically putrefying it into the figure of virtue — small midriff, accentuated bust and wide hips. These physical constraints represented moral constraints, buttressing the notion that women were to be respected but not heard, displayed but not mobile.

Methodology

This study adopts a historical methodology, drawing upon both primary and secondary sources. It integrates visual and material culture analysis of extant garments and fashion illustrations, supported by contemporary medical and artistic commentary. Theoretical grounding is drawn from feminist historiography, placing emphasis on the relationship between fashion and gender performance (Cunnington & Cunnington, 1959; Waugh, 2015). This exploration adopts a qualitative historiographical approach, embedded in material culture studies and feminist principles. Primary sources include extant garments archived in gallery collections (e.g., Victoria and Albert Museum, MET Costume Institute), 19th century fashion diurnals like Godey's Lady's Book and La Belle Assemblée, as well as medical journals and form primers. These give sapience into the construction, use and societal role of shapewear. Garments were analysed not only for their form and structure but for their socio-emblematic meanings. Corset construction ways (similar as busks, eyelets and withdrawing), the elaboration of midriff measures and accoutrements (steel, whalebone, cotton) are examined alongside pictorial representations in lithographs and oils. Secondary sources include scholarly books, journal papers and fashion exhibitions that contextualize these findings. Interdisciplinary fields — particularly feminist reviews of the body, Foucauldian discipline and postcolonial principles enable a critical lens on how shapewear worked within systems of gendered power.

Technological Advancements in Garment Construction

The Industrial Revolution brought transformative changes to garment construction. Steel boning replaced whale baleen, offering further structure while being cheaper to produce. Industrial production of corsets meant lesser vacuity across class lines, though the elite retained the most

extravagant styles (Fukai, 2002; V&A Museum). The pen crinoline, patented in the 1850s, revolutionized the lower figure by creating volume without layers of petticoats (Waugh, 2015). These changes were not simply technical but ideological. As Tortora and Eubank (2010) explain, fashion technologies were bedded with class and gender testaments. Availability increased, but societal pressures didn't lessen — in fact, they exacerbated across social groups. Technological progress was central to the development of 19th- century shapewear. The transition from hand-darned garments to machine-made pieces revolutionized availability. The Singer sewing machine, introduced in the 1850s, made it possible to mass- yield garments including corsets. As a result, shapewear was no longer reserved for the upper classes. Women of modest means could now buy factory - made corsets at department stores, adding uniformity in figure prospects across classes.

Advances in metallurgy and garment construction also introduced inventions like steel boning, making corsets sturdier yet lighter. Women's fashions and dress production changed dramatically in the 1850s due to a range of mid-century inventions. As skirts continued to grow wider still, the usual layers of petticoats were no longer sufficient, and in 1856, the crinoline surfaced as a feasible option. A steel skirt might feel like an oxymoron but it was true for a 19th century European woman. Constructed of steel loops of concentric circles, the crinoline was strong enough to support wide skirts without the need for burdensome petticoats. Crinolines replaced layers of heavy petticoats, creating massive skirts with lower weight. Eyelets and lacing systems allowed women to acclimate pressure, customizing their midriff contraction to taste or occasion. Each of these inventions converted how women interacted with their apparel, expanding the force of fashion while cementing the social influence on how bodies should look.

Shapewear and the Construction of Femininity

The corset epitomized the 19th- century ideal of deal of womanhood: disciplined, ornamental, and demure (Glasscock, 2004). An hourglass figure was considered not only aesthetically pleasing but innocently righteous. Bustles and crinolines added volume to the reverse, while gigot sleeves enlarged the upper figure, accentuating a small midriff (Arnold, 1977; Ribeiro, 1986).

Ribeiro (1986) and Ehrman (2000) argue that these inflated proportions represent confinement and domesticity. Women's fashion was less about movement and further about display frequently, literally keeping women in the private sphere by making active movement impracticable. Specific shapewear garments from the 19th century illustrate how fashion operated as a vehicle of artistic expression and control. The "Swan- bill" or "straight- frontal" corset, popular in the Edwardian period (late 1890s to early 1900s), dramatically forced the torso into an

S-curve shape, emphasizing a prominent bust and posterior while narrowing the waist. This silhouette reflected not only aesthetic preferences but also societal attitudes about female posture, behavior and sexuality.

Another case is the use of bustles between 1870 and 1890. These padded supports exaggerated the hinder profile of a woman's skirt, creating a teardrop shape that emphasized the posterior over the anterior wind. Social critics of the time saw this as nasty, while fashion journals celebrated it as the height of fineness. Surviving garments in gallery collections like the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art demonstrate the intricate engineering and materiality of similar shapewear.

Likewise, the gigot sleeve support of the 1830s used internal padding and boning to create wide, puffed arms, symbolizing both femininity and fragility. These case studies reveal how each garment was not just decorative but also ideological—embedding meaning in textile form and reinforcing narratives of gender, class, and propriety.

Societal Implications and Class Distinctions

Shapewear was deeply class-coded. Only the upper classes could afford the most fashionable and constrictive garments. For working-class women, modified versions of corsets were worn, but the emphasis was on functionality. Even so, aspirational dressing meant many endured the physical hardships of tight-lacing to appear genteel (Laver, 1969; Bradfield, 1968).

According to Gernsheim (1963), photographic evidence suggests visible class distinctions in corsetry use. The bourgeois ideal was one of elegance and frailty, reinforcing societal expectations that women remain economically dependent and physically delicate (Summers, 2001).

Health Concerns and Medical Critiques

Contemporaneous medical literature raised alarms about the health effects of corsetry. Physicians reported respiratory issues, skeletal deformation, and even organ displacement due to tight-lacing (Newton, 1974; Steele, 2001).

The dress reform movement emerged in opposition. Advocates like Amelia Bloomer championed rational dress—looser, simpler garments that did not inhibit the body. Mackenzie (1990) notes that while reform gained traction in the 1880s, mainstream fashion was slow to change. This illustrates the tension between medical modernity and entrenched aesthetic values. The use of restrictive garments had profound health implications for women during this period.

Medical professionals raised concerns about corsetry practices leading to respiratory issues due to constricted rib cages and digestive problems from tightly laced waists. The physical toll these garments took on women often contradicted their intended purpose of enhancing beauty.

Reformists claimed that lifelong corset-wearing had a variety of health risks. Obstetricians of this period connected lifelong corset-wearing to the difficult births that many Victorian women experienced. This public health outcry led to the development of the pregnancy corset by Roxey Ann Caplin, who consulted her husband, a physician and anatomist, to create more anatomically forgiving corsets for a variety of situations, including maternity

Shapewear as a Tool of Expression and Oppression

The paradox of 19th-century shapewear lies in its dual function. While it constrained physical freedom, it also allowed women a form of expression. Elaborate embroidery, color, and lace often hidden under garments became a private language of taste and self-worth (Summers, 2001; Ehrman, 2000). Pickleball, croquet, horseriding, boating and later even tennis and cycling were other activities, all accomplished by women wearing variations of a corset. What we would perceive today as constraining attire was actually a taste for freedom and better mobility for late 19th century women, with a shorter skirt, which showed a scandalous amount of ankle but considered acceptable nonetheless due to the sportswear aspect of the dress.

Steele (2001) suggests that corsets could also serve as a symbol of control—over the body, and by extension, over one's identity. Yet this agency was limited by pervasive norms. Fashion acted as both a medium of self-fashioning and a mechanism of social control (Rothstein, 1990; Koda & Martin, 2001). Shapewear not only shaped physical appearances but also reflected broader social dynamics regarding gender roles and class distinctions. The ability to afford elaborate garments like crinolines or corsets often indicated social status; thus, clothing became a marker of identity within various social strata. The findings reveal that 19th-century shapewear served dual purposes: it was both an instrument for self-expression among women seeking to conform to societal beauty standards and a source of oppression due to its restrictive nature. While these garments allowed women to embody ideals of femininity prevalent at the time, they also imposed limitations on mobility and health.

Moreover, this study highlights how shapewear mirrored broader cultural shifts regarding gender roles as women began advocating for greater autonomy in society during this period. The tension between aesthetic ideals and practical realities is evident in contemporary discussions about body image and fashion norms. Beauty is pain, but beauty is also power. Delicate femininity belied a steel core and this study shows women in the 19th century went to great lengths and endured physical stress to achieve the desired figure. Hence, this brings into question the assignation of females being the weaker sex and shapewear becomes a witness of feminine strength, resilience and pain tolerance. For a 19th century European woman, steel and tight bindings were par for the

course, hence, femininity was constructed through modern innovations of the time, strength and the willingness to embrace the pain and beauty of fashion.

Contemporary Relevance and Legacy

Today's fashion industry is replete with echoes of 19th-century shapewear. The resurgence of corsets as fashion outerwear, popularized by celebrities and influencers, highlights how body-contouring garments have been rebranded from oppressive to empowering. Shapewear brands like Spanx and Skims market their products as enhancing confidence, yet they continue to sell idealized silhouettes rooted in the same aesthetic values that shaped 19th century fashion.

Fitness trends such as "waist training" also draw direct inspiration from Victorian tight-lacing, albeit with modern materials and marketing strategies. On social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok, women document their body modification journeys, sometimes medically unregulated, in pursuit of hourglass figures. This perpetuates a culture of self-surveillance and performance, reminiscent of the moralistic gaze women faced in earlier centuries.

Critics argue that these modern iterations of shapewear, though framed as choices, are embedded in a consumerist logic that exploits insecurities. At the same time, others highlight how individuals reclaim such garments for identity expression, including in LGBTQ+ communities and alternative fashion scenes. Thus, shapewear today remains a potent symbol of the complex intersections between gender, body politics, and cultural power.

Conclusion:

The findings of this study point to the contradictory nature of 19th century shapewear. On the one hand, these garments reflect conformity to prescriptive gender roles. They molded women's bodies to fit a visual ideal that symbolized moral virtue, social respectability, and economic status. The corset, especially, became a symbol of self-regulation—visibly rewarding discipline and punishing deviation with social disapproval or medical harm.

However, these same garments offered women tools for participation in visual and social economies. By mastering fashionable silhouettes, women could negotiate their place in society—asserting status, expressing personal style, or signaling modernity. For some, shapewear was aspirational; for others, it was obligatory. This duality complicates any binary judgment of historical fashion as either oppressive or empowering.

Moreover, the widespread popularity of these garments—despite public health warnings and feminist critiques—suggests that fashion must be understood as a site of agency and constraint. Women did not passively receive fashion dictates; they interpreted, altered, and embodied them. In doing so, they actively participated in the production of gender norms.

Understanding 19th-century shapewear requires acknowledging its capacity to harm and to empower. This ambivalence is central to the politics of fashion, then and now. The construction of femininity through shapewear in 19th-century England exemplifies fashion's capacity to both empower and subjugate. Corsets, bustles, and crinolines were not mere garments but embodiments of cultural ideals surrounding beauty, morality, and class. Technological innovations made these garments widespread, but their symbolic weight remained firmly tied to restrictive ideals of womanhood.

Understanding the history of shapewear is crucial to deconstructing ongoing narratives about the female body, fashion, and agency. As modern shapewear re-emerges in new forms, the legacy of these Victorian garments persists, reminding us of the enduring complexities in the relationship between clothing and identity.

The historical analysis of 19th-century shapewear reveals how fashion functioned not merely as an aesthetic concern but as a socio-political language. Shapewear garments like corsets, bustles, and crinolines were more than accessories; they were instruments that shaped the body, behavior, and beliefs of women. These garments performed the ideological work of the time—scripting femininity through physical form, simultaneously offering visibility and imposing control.

The legacy of these garments persists in contemporary fashion, where body-shaping apparel is both embraced as empowerment and critiqued as commodification of insecurity. While modern shapewear claims to offer freedom of choice, it often echoes historical patterns of conformity to gender ideals. By interrogating shapewear through lenses of feminist theory, material culture, and visual analysis, this paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how clothing articulates cultural values.

In conclusion, studying historical shapewear offers valuable insight into the entangled relationship between the body, identity, and power. It reminds us that fashion history is not only about trends, but about people—especially women—who navigated, resisted, and shaped those trends in pursuit of autonomy and expression.

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A RESEARCH PAPER ON EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH FASHION

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Abstract:

Fashion is an art that allows individuals to express themselves. Today, fashion has been significantly contributing to the growth of the Indian economy. It has been a powerful tool for female empowerment throughout history, allowing women to express themselves authentically, challenge stereotypes, and redefine what it means to be feminine and empowered. The concept of women empowerment is also considered in this paper. Women Empowerment in Fashion refers to a movement within the fashion industry that aims to empower and celebrate women through clothing and style. This concept goes beyond trends and aesthetics, focusing on promoting confidence, self-expression, and equality. This research paper will study the change in the perspective of society towards fashion. The rising need of fashion in the lifestyles of people has impacted the market forces and contributed towards the birth and evolution of the fashion industry. The study will consider two aspects - the changing attitude and approach of society towards fashion and the role of Fashion or the fashion industry in empowering and uplifting society by unlocking a huge platform for showcasing the entrepreneurial skills. The research will draw conclusions by assessing three case studies or success stories concerning the need, purpose and prospects for fashion, and on the other hand, its impact on the economy.

Keywords: Fashion Perspective, Empowerment, Entrepreneurial Skills.

Introduction:

Today's world is witnessing a revolution for creating a more just and equitable society for women, where they can be at par with men in all aspects and where they will be seen, heard, and valued. However, to successfully achieve this result, various elements need to be looked into, including women's empowerment. Women empowerment is defined as "an active, multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life" (Devi,1998 as cited in Krim, 2023). Women empowerment is a part of the 5th

Sustainable Development Goal and is also a part of the World Bank Gender Strategy 2024-2030 (Women's & Girls' Empowerment, 2023).

While various mediums can help achieve women's empowerment, one of them that can play a key role is Fashion. Fashion, which is defined as the styles of clothing and accessories worn by groups of people (Steele & Major, 2018), can certainly help women to express themselves, enable them to feel confident, and, most importantly, can serve as a tool for self-liberation. In fact, by challenging traditional beauty norms and embracing diversity, fashion is said to be empowering women to embrace their unique identities and celebrate their inherent beauty, regardless of societal standards. (Empowering Women through Fashion - JD School of Design, 2024).

With this backdrop, it becomes necessary to delve into how fashion can empower women. It becomes imperative to understand how fashion acts as a tool for challenging societal norms and empowering women. This paper thus attempts to analyze the role of fashion in women's empowerment.

Objectives

1. To evaluate the role of Fashion in empowering women, especially in the context of Economic and Social Empowerment.
2. To study the changing attitude of society towards fashion.
3. To study the role of fashion in showcasing women's entrepreneurial skills.

Research Methodology

The case study method has been adopted to study the role of fashion and its impact on the economic and social empowerment of women. Three case studies have been identified. The social entrepreneur in all these case studies is a woman. This was purposely selected to further highlight the "by women for women" approach.

Review of Literature

The world of fashion has undergone significant changes since its evolution; however, it continues to remain a vital aspect of human existence as it influences how humans present themselves in the world and communicate their identities. In fact, Fashion is said to be an important tool for expressing one's identity. It is said to influence social norms and shape identity. (Kausher, 2023) It is acknowledged that the history of fashion cannot be separated from the history of women empowerment (Titton, 2019). Fashion has served as a tool for women's empowerment on various fronts. According to Entwistle (2000), fashion serves as a symbolic form of empowerment, enabling women to navigate complex gendered expectations and project

a particular social image. Fashion can also serve as an economic empowerment tool. McRobbie (2015) highlights how fashion industries, especially in developing countries, have provided women with opportunities for financial independence through work in garment factories, design, and entrepreneurship. Studies have also explored how women in fashion-based entrepreneurial activities can gain economic independence and challenge patriarchal structures, and secure their way towards financial empowerment. (Powering the Economy with Her: Women Entrepreneurship in India, 2020) Moreover, a study by Maryam *et al.* (2021) reveals that the fashion industry generates job opportunities for all types of workers, qualified and unqualified, skilled, or unskilled people, all over the world. Besides, fashion can also contribute towards social empowerment. The desire to conform to mainstream beauty standards can sometimes limit women's freedom, but recent shifts in the fashion industry towards body positivity have enabled greater acceptance of diverse body types. Miller & Carels (2021) note how including plus-size models promotes diverse beauty standards is challenging societal norms.

A holistic study conducted by Krim (2023) believes that fashion enables women empowerment through freedom of movement, symbolism of power, and expressing feminist values.

However, the role of fashion in women's empowerment is still quite unexplored, and as the fashion industry continues to evolve, there is a need to undertake studies to explore its impact on holistic women's empowerment.

Case Studies

1. **Pabi Bags**

- **Know about Pabi Bags**

Pabi bags were launched in the market by Pabiben Rabari. The Community to which Pabiben Rabari belongs banned the embroidery in the late 1990s, but to the contrary, Pabiben, along with other women, had mastered this art, and she was determined to keep the art alive. In this process, a new form of embroidery named Hari Jari, which could be done with the help of a sewing machine, took birth. It was an amalgamation of hand and machine application of readymade elements

This art is called as Hari Jari and created shopping bags which were named as 'Pabi Bag. The products are sold at Pabiben.com which is an 'E-commerce marketplace.

- **Products**

At Pabiben.com a wide range of products are being displayed- Shoulder bags, Clutches, Stoles, trays, Dupattas, Tote bags, Slings, Shawls, Cushion covers, Pouches, Mobile cover cases,

Passport covers, and Sarees. Pabiben.com also provides the option of buying specialized products made by other Artisans.

● **Role in Women Empowerment**

i.   The website allows other female artisans to sell their products, enabling the products to be identified through their artisans.

ii. Pabiben.com provides women artisans a platform to showcase their artistic talent. It has helped female rural artisans become entrepreneurs by creating business models.

iii. Pabiben Rabari started working with 5 women under her. Today, she has provided job opportunities to around 300 women. (Preserving the Traditional Rabari Embroidery and Giving Scraps of Clothes a Conscience Is Pabiben from Gujarat,)

iv. The annual income generated by selling Pabi Bags is around 30 lakhs in 2021 and has customers from within as well as outside India. (Sharma,)

2. The Pink Moon

● **Know about The Pink Moon**

The Pink Moon is a clothing brand from Karnataka founded by Divya Goenka. Divya Goenka follows the "For Women from Women" ideology in building and developing her brand. (What's New? 2025) The Pink Moon was founded on the principle that beauty is not restricted to a specific body type. It offers trendy and stylish clothing options for women from (L to 6XL). It is an organization that supports and uplifts women by boosting self-love and positivity. The organization applies sustainable production processes by using eco-friendly materials.

● **Products**

The Pink Moon offers a variety of products in different categories: Tops, Bottoms, Dresses, Jackets, and other sets. The collection is also categorized as per the needs, which are named Gym edits, Denim edits, Office edits, Party edits, Holiday edits, Cotton edits, etc.

● **Role in Women Empowerment**

i.   The Pink Moon has a "Women-led team" of All Women employees. The Pink Moon has 11 employees as of November 24. The total employee count is 37.5% more than what it was in November 23 (Tracxn, 2021).

ii. This brand, which is being successfully run by a female entrepreneur, has experienced a revenue growth of 719.22%, i.e., 4.8 million revenue (Tracxn, 2021). This is an indicator of successful female entrepreneurship.

iii. The organization promotes fashion especially for plus-size women for all body types and contributes to promoting Self-expression and Self-love. Getting clothes for plus-size

women can be challenging. The brand has enabled plus-size women to handle wardrobe challenges. The diversity of clothing specially designed for plus size women is channel to provide them the strength, confidence, and autonomy to make decisions about one's life.

iv.   Today, the brand has more than 10,000 Happy customers and over 4,200 followers on social media like Instagram and Facebook. Moreover, their plus-size models used for advertising is a testament of the fact that plus-size women are now beginning to feel a part of the fashion industry.

3. Nish Hair

● **Know About Nish Hair**

Nish Hair is India's first online company for Hair Extensions. It is the brainchild of well-known actress Parul Gulati. It was founded with the idea of creating a Hair Fashion that will boost confidence and transcend beauty. Nish Hair is a hair extension brand that makes premium and best-quality hair extensions handcrafted out of 100% authentic human hair. Nish Hair was started with a small team locally, which has now grown globally, serving women with different lifestyles.

● **Products of Nish Hair**

At Hish Hair, they provide hair extensions ranging from classic to premium, Hair strands, Clip-in Bangs, and Curly hair. They have Lace and silk-based Hair Toppers. Nish Hair is a one-stop destination for different concerns like volume, length, coverage, style, and color. They also provide Wigs, ponytails, Hair Accessories, Hair Tools, and Products for Hair care.

● **Role in Women Empowerment**

i.   Nish Hair has all women employees. Till October 2024, there was an increase in the number of women employees by 42.9% from October 2023.

ii.   The Brand, along with creating a Hair Fashion, aims at catering to the issue of Hair Loss, Hair thinning, and Damaged hair due to cancer, alopecia, and other such reasons.

iii.   As of September 2023, the customer base has increased locally as well as globally. The brand has over 5 lakh followers on Instagram.

iv.   The Brand's Net worth of around 50 Crore indicates the success of Women's Entrepreneurship and has created scope and generated employment opportunities in the Fashion industry.

Observations

I. Financial Empowerment

i. Women have started all the fashion brands mentioned in the case studies. This, in turn, enables women to have financial independence. This not only enables them to generate income but also aids in building wealth. Such initiatives have helped women entrepreneurs break free from traditional employment structures and gain more control over their work schedules.

ii. A majority of employees in these brands are women. Since all these fashion brands have women as their team members, they are thus proving to be an important source of livelihood for their women employees. Such opportunities enable these women employees to be economically independent and support themselves and their families.

iii. The case studies also highlight the contribution that these fashion brands have been making towards enhancing the technical skills of their women employees. The technical know-how and skill-based training that is provided to the employees can certainly help in opening doors for various career opportunities in the fashion industry. Moreover, these trainings can certainly empower women by enhancing their technical skills and expertise.

II. Social Empowerment

i. The case studies have revealed how fashion can contribute in changing the perception of society and recognize that beauty comes in all shapes and sizes. The 'Pink Moon" case study, in particular, has demonstrated that wearing stylish clothing is no longer limited to skinny women. It is the right of every woman, irrespective of their size. Such ventures can certainly contribute to eliminating societal stigma and stereotypes regarding body size. Such initiatives will surely empower women to embrace their bodies and express themselves without the fear of being judged.

ii. Moreover, the "Nish Hair" case study has shown how women can express themselves freely through aesthetic changes and gain a sense of 'self-control' over their image. Experimenting with their looks can enable them to feel empowered to adapt their appearance to different situations.

Conclusion:

There is no doubt that fashion serves as an important tool for women's empowerment. It certainly enables women to achieve economic independence, break free from societal taboos, express themselves more openly, challenge existing norms, and most importantly, feel strong and

confident to embrace themselves. It is thus important for the Fashion industry to make further inroads in the field of women empowerment and act as a driving force to change.

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FASHION MATTERS: GETTING A GRIP AND SHAPING IDENTITIES FOR THE PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED

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Introduction:

Fashion is not merely a medium of aesthetic appeal or consumer behavior; it is a powerful social and cultural tool that enables individuals to communicate identity, belonging, and agency (Davis, 1992; Kawamura, 2005). However, the fashion industry has historically overlooked the sartorial needs of persons with disabilities, thereby marginalizing a significant population from full participation in cultural and aesthetic self-expression (Pullin, 2009; Harpur & Stein, 2019). The emergence of adaptive fashion seeks to bridge this gap by addressing both the functional requirements and expressive desires of people with disabilities. As global discourses around inclusion evolve, adaptive fashion presents itself not only as a tool of accommodation but also as a catalyst for psychosocial empowerment and identity affirmation (Kabel *et al.,* 2016; Slater & Liddiard, 2018).

Despite growing conversations around inclusive design, awareness about adaptive fashion remains relatively low, both among consumers with disabilities and within mainstream fashion circuits (McKinney & Shin, 2020). This limited visibility restricts both market potential and social integration. Moreover, while adaptive clothing has made significant strides in functionality, through features such as magnetic closures, easy access openings, and sensory-friendly fabrics, many designs still fall short in reflecting the personal style, age, or cultural identity of their users (Woodward, 2021).

Literature Review

The evolution of adaptive fashion has primarily cantered on addressing the functional needs of individuals with disabilities, focusing on aspects such as comfort, accessibility, and ease of use. Systematic studies on adaptive fashion have been taken up in the 21st c and point to the fact that while adaptive apparel has progressed in meeting practical requirements, there remains a significant deficiency in exploring its influence on self-concept and body image.

Kabel, McBee-Black, and Dimka (2016) discussed apparel-related participation barriers, emphasizing that inadequate clothing options can limit social engagement and contribute to the disablement process. Their research called for innovation in design and distribution to enhance accessibility and inclusivity, highlighting the need for clothing that supports both functionality and personal expression.

Freeman, Kaiser, and Wingate (2018) investigated the role of clothing in workplace participation for individuals with disabilities to conclude that inappropriate or non-adaptive clothing can exacerbate feelings of stigma and hinder professional engagement; that the lack of suitable clothing options not only affects physical comfort but also impacts psychological well-being and social integration.

Kosinski (2019) identified both design and social barriers in adaptive clothing emphasizing that mainstream fashion often overlooks the aesthetic and expressive needs of individuals with disabilities, leading to a lack of inclusive designs that resonate with their identities. This oversight, according to the study contributes to a sense of exclusion and reinforces societal stigmas associated with disability.

Focusing on adolescents, the study by Brown (2021) revealed that adaptive clothing positively influences social participation, self-esteem and social engagements of adolescents. However, the study also pointed out the limited availability of fashionable adaptive clothing options for younger demographics, suggesting a gap in catering to their unique preferences and needs.

Chae (2022) examined gender differences in adaptive clothing needs by applying the Functional, Expressive, and Aesthetic (FEA) model and summarized that, while functional needs are often addressed, expressive and aesthetic considerations are frequently neglected, particularly for women indicating a gender disparity in adaptive fashion offerings.

The reviewed literature reveals several critical gaps in the field of adaptive fashion. Notably, there is limited exploration of the psychosocial dimensions of adaptive clothing—particularly regarding its role in shaping identity, enhancing self-esteem, and facilitating social integration for individuals with disabilities. Despite the centrality of clothing to self-presentation and identity formation, few studies have examined how individuals with physical disabilities experience and negotiate these processes through fashion. Moreover, existing research tends to prioritize the perspectives of designers and manufacturers, often marginalizing the lived experiences and voices of disabled individuals themselves. The present study seeks to address these omissions by centering the narratives and insights of people with disabilities in the context of adaptive fashion.

Research Objectives and Methodology:

This paper examines the evolution of adaptive fashion and highlights the increasing significance of functional design in promoting accessibility and inclusivity within the fashion industry. It offers an overview of the various types of adaptive clothing available globally, with particular attention to how these garments address the diverse needs of individuals with physical disabilities.

The study traces the development and current landscape of adaptive apparel and accessories in the Indian context. The study goes on to explore four interlinked questions: (1) What is the current level of awareness regarding adaptive fashion among people with disabilities? (2) Where does mainstream fashion intersect with adaptive design? (3) Beyond functional use, does adaptive clothing serve psychosocial functions such as identity expression and self-presentation? (4) Is self-expression through adaptive fashion a critical measure of its value?

To explore these dimensions, the study draws on oral narratives and first-person accounts from individuals with disabilities. These narratives provide rich insight into how adaptive fashion facilitates personal agency, challenges normative fashion standards, and enables individuals to navigate societal expectations with greater confidence and acceptance. In doing so, the paper contributes to a more inclusive understanding of fashion, one that centers lived experience and redefines the boundaries of style and identity.

Fashion and Identity in History

The relationship between fashion and identity has always been significant, with clothing serving as a representation of social status, profession, and religious beliefs. In ancient civilizations, intricate attire often signified wealth and authority. During the Renaissance, clothing became a means of self-expression, signifying personal identity while the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution saw ready-to-wear garments and mass production reflecting broader societal changes. In the 19th century, Victorian clothing served not just as garments but as symbols of moral and social virtue and by the 20th century, fashion began to reflect modernist ideas and social upheavals. The mid-20th century saw fashion used by subcultures; punks, mods, hippies, as a form of rebellion and identity construction, reflecting collective ideologies and generational dissent. By the late 20th and early 21st centuries, globalization and postmodernism shifted fashion toward fluidity and hybrid identity with designers began embracing multicultural aesthetics and challenging binary norms of gender and beauty (Kawamura, 2005).

A pivotal development in the 21st century is the growth of adaptive clothing—designed for people with disabilities—to enable comfort and style without compromising function. This

movement is rooted in the broader disability rights and design justice movements (Kabel, McBee-Black & Dimka, 2016).

History of Adaptive Wear

The history of adaptive clothing is rooted in inclusion and creativity, reflecting evolving perspectives on accessibility and the rights of people with disabilities. In the 19th century, individuals with physical limitations often depended on tailors for bespoke garments tailored to their specific needs. These garments were utilitarian but lacked widespread availability and standardization (Mallon-Michalove, 2020).

Following the World Wars, the demand for adaptive solutions surged, particularly as soldiers returned with physical disabilities. This period marked the beginning of accessible hospital gowns and other adaptive clothing. In the mid-20th century, the emergence of adaptive clothing for the general population became more widespread, especially after the polio pandemic, when there was a growing need for clothing that could accommodate braces and wheelchairs (Jones, 2021). Advocacy from disability rights groups also fuelled interest in creating functional and fashionable apparel.

The 1980s and 1990s saw the rise of specialist adaptive apparel manufacturers catering to the elderly and those with restricted mobility. Fasteners such as Velcro replaced buttons and zippers, and garments were designed for ease of use while seated.

In the second decade of the 21st century, adaptive wear became more prevalent in mainstream fashion, with prominent companies and designers launching adaptive collections. Tommy Hilfiger was among the first major fashion brands to offer a comprehensive adaptive clothing collection, featuring magnetic closures and accessible necklines (Mallon-Michalove, 2020). Innovations in textiles, such as elastic and breathable fabrics, further enhanced the comfort and style of adaptive clothing (Mercado, 2020).

Adaptive clothing is now a key part of the broader inclusion movement within the fashion industry. Runway shows, including New York Fashion Week, have featured adaptive collections, and major brands like Nike, Zappos, and Target have embraced adaptive fashion. Features such as hidden access points for medical equipment (e.g., insulin pumps or catheters), wheelchair-compatible trousers, and sensory-sensitive textiles for individuals with autism have become increasingly common (Jones, 2021).

Adaptive Fashion in India

According to the 2019 Disability Report by the National Statistics Office, approximately 2.2% of India's population—equating to around 26.8 million individuals—live with some form of

disability (Mallon-Michalove, 2020). Despite the enactment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act in 2016, which formally recognizes 21 categories of disability, the Indian fashion industry continues to exhibit limited engagement with this demographic. Engagement is often superficial, with charity fashion shows serving as the predominant mode of involvement (Mallon-Michalove, 2020).

In India, adaptive clothing commonly features modifications such as Velcro fastenings, side zippers, magnetic closures, elastic waistbands, and garments designed for ease of use, such as open-back tops or extended crotches in trousers. These elements support greater autonomy and dignity for persons with disabilities.

Upasana Makati, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor and founder of White Print, India's first English lifestyle magazine in Braille, critiques the prevailing narratives that frame disabled individuals either as charity cases or sources of inspiration (Mercado, 2020). She observes that most fashion brands engage with disability only in the context of social responsibility campaigns, rather than acknowledging persons with disabilities as viable consumers with distinct aesthetic and functional preferences.

Several Indian adaptive fashion initiatives have emerged from lived experiences with disability, either by individuals themselves or their caregivers. For instance, Shalini Visakan's Suvastra Designs produces adaptive garments tailored for wheelchair users, including saris that can be worn like nightgowns and trousers designed to accommodate adult diapers (Jones, 2021). National para powerlifter Arham Ganatra highlights further barriers, such as the absence of mannequins representing disabled bodies and the general lack of inclusive sizing and comfortable designs in mainstream retail (Mallon-Michalove, 2020).

Importantly, adaptive fashion is not simply a matter of scaling existing designs. It requires specialized knowledge of body mechanics and thoughtful pattern cutting to accommodate varied physical needs. Furthermore, entrenched cultural stigma around disability often limits both the development and visibility of adaptive fashion. As Ganatra asserts, "We need to get rid of the notion that disabled folks don't enjoy wearing colourful, sexy clothes. We want to look our best and flaunt our powerful disabled bodies in public" (Mallon-Michalove, 2020).

Adaptive Fashion: Awareness and Accessibility:

Awareness is a critical determinant in the mainstream integration and acceptance of adaptive fashion. To examine this dimension, along with broader aspects of adaptive apparel, the researchers conducted qualitative interviews with 15 individuals living with disabilities, including those with neurological, musculoskeletal, orthopaedic, sensory, congenital, and

developmental impairments. Respondents, aged 25–54, represented diverse gender identities and socio-cultural backgrounds from urban contexts, and were engaged in a range of professional fields.

Half of the participants reported partial independence in dressing. Notably, only nine had prior awareness of adaptive fashion—primarily through online forums, support groups, rehabilitation programs, or social media. Of these, just five owned at least one item of adaptive clothing, and even fewer reported regular use. These findings underscore a persistent lack of public and industry awareness, which limits access, stifles innovation, and curtails market growth (McKinney & Shin, 2020).

Participants revealed that adaptive garments were often reserved for specific circumstances—such as periods of physical fatigue—rather than integrated into daily wear. Desired functional features included magnetic closures, elastic waistbands, Velcro fastenings, and adjustable elements like easy-access side openings. Seamless and tagless designs were preferred to prevent skin irritation, and some respondents highlighted the importance of temperature-regulating fabrics due to sensory sensitivities. However, concerns remained about aesthetics; many noted a lack of variety in cuts, colours, and styles, which rendered adaptive garments clinical or outdated in appearance.

The primary challenge cited was the difficulty in sourcing adaptive clothing locally, compounded by the high cost of online options. Participants also expressed dissatisfaction with poor fit and design, emphasizing that functional clothing should not come at the expense of personal style (Pullin, 2009). These perspectives reflect a broader sentiment: individuals with disabilities should not have to choose between usability and aesthetics.

Increased awareness among emerging designers can fuel demand, diversify product offerings, and ultimately enhance affordability and accessibility. Without such awareness, adaptive fashion risks being relegated to the margins—as a token gesture rather than a legitimate expression of inclusion and personal autonomy.

Few respondents could recall encountering any advertisements for adaptive fashion. When such campaigns were remembered, critiques focused on their narrow representation—typically centering on wheelchair users while excluding individuals with invisible disabilities or limb differences (Wentzell & True, 2018; Woodward, 2021). Participants called for authentic storytelling that reflects the diversity of the disabled community in terms of age, ethnicity, condition, and style (Kitchin, 2000; Slater & Liddiard, 2018; Ellis-Hill, Payne, & Ward, 2008).

Such representation is vital to dismantling stereotypes and broadening public understanding of disability.

To avoid marginalization, fashion brands must embed adaptive collections within their core offerings, rather than treating them as niche or philanthropic initiatives. This includes integrating adaptive fashion into mainstream advertising, catalogues, runway shows, and influencer collaborations. Marketing strategies should reflect genuine diversity in body types and abilities, helping to normalize adaptive fashion as both a functional and fashionable choice. Collaborations with disabled models, designers, and advocates can further reinforce a brand's commitment to inclusive design. As one participant aptly noted, real stories showcasing how adaptive fashion transforms lives would render campaigns more impactful and relatable. By foregrounding lived experiences, brands can position adaptive fashion not merely as a necessity, but as an empowering lifestyle choice.

Adaptive Fashion: Identity and Empowerment

Adaptive fashion serves not only to address the functional requirements of individuals with disabilities but also to facilitate self-expression, style preferences, and the articulation of personal identity. The capacity to personalise one's wardrobe is closely linked to psychological well-being, as the ability to exercise stylistic autonomy significantly contributes to self-esteem and social inclusion (Kabel *et al.,* 2016). Historically, fashion has functioned as a powerful medium through which individuals convey aspects of their personality, cultural identity, and values (Davis, 1992). However, for many individuals with physical impairments, mainstream fashion often excludes options that are simultaneously accessible and expressive.

Adaptive fashion mitigates this exclusion by offering garments that prioritise comfort and accessibility without compromising on aesthetic appeal. Among the respondents interviewed, approximately half reported an increase in self-esteem upon finding clothing that fit well and projected a sense of style. One participant shared, "It empowers me, makes me feel confident, and I look presentable when in the midst of people." For several individuals, fashion became a means of reclaiming agency and reconstructing self-image following the onset of disability. In such contexts, clothing evolved beyond mere functionality to serve as a tool for psychological empowerment and social affirmation.

Nonetheless, not all experiences were uniformly positive. Some respondents voiced dissatisfaction with current adaptive fashion offerings, noting that available designs often failed to reflect their age, lifestyle, or identity. One participant remarked, "Most of what I find is either too plain or makes me feel older than I am." The scarcity of contemporary, trend-conscious

designs led some to feel alienated from mainstream fashion culture, even when their functional needs were addressed.

There was general consensus among participants that adaptive fashion holds significant transformative potential. When garments successfully merge functionality with individuality, they challenge pervasive stereotypes that conflate disability with invisibility, dependence, or diminished agency. In doing so, adaptive fashion fosters greater cultural visibility and affirms the rights of individuals with disabilities to express themselves authentically and stylishly.

Ultimately, adaptive fashion is not merely about accessibility—it is a vehicle for dignity, representation, and the assertion of identity. By facilitating creative self-expression, it contributes meaningfully to a broader societal shift toward inclusivity and recognition of diverse embodied experiences.

For Me, For Us: Fashion that Understands; Fashion that Empowers

The emergence of adaptive fashion has largely been driven by lived experience and personal advocacy. Designers and entrepreneurs often initiate adaptive fashion ventures in response to the unmet needs encountered by themselves or their loved ones, transforming personal challenges into inclusive design solutions (Mallon-Michalove, 2020; Mercado, 2020). This experiential foundation ensures that adaptive clothing is not merely functional, but also empathetic, reflecting a deep understanding of the diverse realities of living with a disability (Pullin, 2009).

Roxy Murray, a queer individual living with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), exemplifies how fashion can serve as a medium of empowerment for those navigating such layered identities. Diagnosed in 2014, Murray's experience with MS introduced significant mobility limitations and exposed her to entrenched societal biases regarding disability and non-normative identities (National Multiple Sclerosis Society,). In response, Murray engaged with fashion as an affirming and expressive practice, actively constructing a visual identity that embraces both her disability and queerness. Her discovery of adaptive apparel and mobility aids through digital platforms marked the beginning of a transformative journey. Murray now advocates for broader representation of queer, disabled individuals within the fashion industry and underscores the imperative for adaptive garments that are not merely functional, but also stylistically relevant (Mercado, 2020).

In the Indian context, the emergence of adaptive fashion has largely been driven by lived experience and personal advocacy. A recurring pattern among Indian adaptive fashion entrepreneurs is the impetus of direct engagement with disability—either as individuals with disabilities or as caregivers. For instance, Soumita Basu, diagnosed with psoriatic arthritis, established Zyenika in 2019 in response to the dearth of clothing that combined functionality

with aesthetics. Her innovations include buttonless kurtas, wraparound saris, and specially designed mastectomy gowns that accommodate physical constraints while honouring personal style (Mallon-Michalove, 2020).

Similarly, Shalini Visakan, a Chennai-based designer and alumna of the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), founded Suvastra Designs after witnessing the sartorial challenges experienced by her wheelchair-using husband, a polio survivor. Her collection integrates modifications such as elongated crotch areas for use with adult diapers, extended zipper loops for ease of grip, and saris reimagined as nightdress-style garments, thereby redefining traditional attire for enhanced accessibility.

In another case, designer Ikareth and his wife Murielle established Move Ability in Kottayam in 2015, motivated by the needs of their daughter Tilotama, who was born with a brachial plexus injury—a condition affecting the spinal cord. Their venture exemplifies how adaptive fashion in India often evolves from personal caregiving experiences into entrepreneurial innovation aimed at addressing a systemic gap in inclusive design (Mallon-Michalove, 2020).

These narratives point to the critical importance of insider perspectives in the development of adaptive fashion. They also reveal how fashion, when informed by empathy and inclusive intent, can transcend functionality to become a form of agency, resistance, and social participation. Collectively, these efforts signal a growing shift in fashion discourse—one that recognises disability not as a limitation to be hidden or pitied, but as a valid identity deserving of aesthetic expression, commercial inclusion, and cultural celebration.

Conclusion:

The increasing integration of individuals with disabilities into the workforce has fostered greater economic autonomy, enabling them to assert more informed and nuanced consumer demands (Wehmeyer *et al.,* 2020). However, the fashion and retail sectors continue to exhibit a significant gap in recognizing and responding to these needs through adaptive design (Lamb & Malkin, 2017). Addressing this disconnect requires a foundational shift beginning with education. Design institutions must embed disability-inclusive modules within their curricula to sensitize future designers to the principles and practices of adaptive fashion (Kallio & Poutanen, 2021). Such early exposure fosters more empathetic, innovative, and user-centered design approaches.

Simultaneously, established fashion brands must be encouraged to launch adaptive capsule collections not as niche offerings, but as integral components of their mainstream lines. Where these initiatives exist, they should be actively promoted to normalize adaptive fashion within broader consumer culture and reduce its association with medical or charitable paradigms

(Harpur & Stein, 2019). Retail environments, both physical and digital, must also be reimagined to accommodate diverse bodies and abilities, ensuring a seamless and empowering shopping experience for all (Wehmeyer *et al.,* 2020).

Beyond functionality, fashion serves as a potent medium of identity, expression, and visibility. For individuals with disabilities, access to stylish, comfortable, and inclusive clothing is not merely a matter of convenience—it is a right linked to dignity, autonomy, and cultural participation. Ultimately, embedding inclusivity across fashion education, design, and retail is not only a question of accessibility, but a critical step toward reshaping public narratives around disability, agency, and representation.

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UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF FLEXIBLE DRESS CODES AS A NEW TREND AT WORKPLACE

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Abstract:

Flexible dress codes are increasingly popular in modern workplaces, shifting from traditional, formal attire policies toward approaches that emphasize comfort, inclusivity, and self-expression. Historically, dress codes reinforced professionalism and conformity; today, organizations are moving towards policies that allow employees to dress in ways that reflect their personal and cultural identities. Research by Peluchette and Karl (2007) indicates that allowing casual or expressive attire can enhance employees' comfort and positive self-perceptions, which may, in turn, improve their engagement and morale. Similarly, Karl, Hall, and Peluchette (2013) found that perceptions of dress impact employees' sense of professionalism, competence, and approachability, highlighting the role of attire in shaping workplace dynamics and psychological well-being.

The current study examines the impact of flexible dress codes on employees' comfort, psychological well-being, and engagement in Indian context. Using a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews will be conducted with employees from diverse industries to understand their perceptions of flexible dress policies. The sample will include employees across different age groups, roles, and industries to capture a broad range of experiences. Data will be collected using a semi-structured interview guide, enabling insights into how flexible dress codes influence workplace morale, inclusivity, and employees' sense of being valued.

The findings aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the social and psychological effects of flexible dress policies, positioning them as a key element of inclusive organizational culture. Ultimately, this study highlights flexible dress codes as a strategy to support employee satisfaction, retention, and a positive workplace environment.

Keywords: Flexible Dress Codes, Employee Autonomy, Perceived Comfort, Workplace Happiness, Personal Expression, Inclusivity, Qualitative Study, Organizational Culture, Morale, Engagement, Well-Being.

Introduction:

As workplaces continue to evolve in response to societal changes, many organizations are rethinking traditional dress codes and embracing more flexible policies. Historically, rigid dress codes were implemented to uphold professionalism, reinforce workplace hierarchy, and establish a uniform corporate image. However, such policies often left little room for individuality, creating environments that felt impersonal and, at times, restrictive (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997; Rafaeli *et al.,* 1997). Employees were expected to conform to a set standard of appearance, which, while fostering uniformity, often failed to accommodate diverse personal and cultural identities.

In contrast, many modern organizations now recognize the importance of allowing employees to dress in ways that align with their personal comfort and cultural backgrounds. Flexible dress codes have been linked to a greater sense of authenticity, psychological safety, and workplace satisfaction (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). When employees feel comfortable in their attire, they are more likely to experience lower stress levels, higher self-confidence, and greater engagement in their work. Beyond personal comfort, these policies contribute to a more inclusive work environment by acknowledging and respecting the diverse ways in which people choose to express themselves.

Moreover, flexible dress policies reflect a broader shift toward workplace autonomy and trust. By allowing employees the freedom to make appropriate dress choices, organizations demonstrate confidence in their workforce's ability to exercise good judgment. This shift is particularly relevant in industries that prioritize creativity, innovation, and employee well-being over rigid formalities. Additionally, a relaxed dress code can improve organizational culture by fostering a sense of openness and approachability, breaking down traditional power dynamics, and encouraging more authentic interactions among employees at all levels.

However, it is important to recognize that implementing flexible dress codes requires a thoughtful approach. Striking a balance between personal expression and maintaining a professional image is key. Organizations must establish clear guidelines that provide employees with the freedom to dress comfortably while ensuring that attire remains appropriate for the workplace context. This balance helps prevent potential misunderstandings and ensures that professionalism is upheld even in a relaxed environment.

This study aims to explore the impact of flexible dress codes on employee well-being, engagement, and inclusivity in the Indian workforce. By examining how employees experience these policies and how organizations implement them, the research seeks to provide valuable

insights into the broader implications of dress code flexibility. Ultimately, understanding these dynamics can help organizations create work environments that are not only professional but also adaptive, inclusive, and supportive of diverse identities.

Literature Review

Organizational dress codes have historically symbolized corporate values, roles, and expectations. Uniform attire was linked to credibility, professionalism, and respect, reducing distractions and fostering a sense of belonging (Woodard, 1999). Formal dress codes reinforced professional conduct and a cohesive image to clients (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997). However, strict policies often limited self-expression, impacting job satisfaction and creativity (Peluchette & Karl, 2007). Employees restricted by formal codes experienced reduced morale, which could hinder innovation and collaboration (Rafaeli *et al.,* 1997).

Emergence of Flexible Dress Codes: A Shift in Workplace Norms

In response to inclusivity demands, organizations are adopting flexible dress codes. Allowing casual or culturally representative attire enhances comfort and fosters positive self-perceptions (Peluchette & Karl, 2007). Flexible dress codes improve employee competence, professionalism, and approachability (Karl *et al.,* 2013), facilitating better interpersonal interactions. In India, flexible dress codes embrace cultural diversity, blending traditional and modern styles to promote inclusivity (Goswami & Gautam, 2011). This reflects a shift toward global norms while respecting local traditions, fostering a sense of belonging among employees.

Psychological Impact: Comfort, Autonomy, and Engagement

Flexible dress codes enhance autonomy, psychological comfort, and engagement. Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory emphasizes autonomy as vital for well-being and motivation. Freedom in attire signals organizational trust and boosts engagement (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Flexible policies also correlate with higher retention rates and satisfaction (Casper & Buffardi, 2004). Younger employees value these policies for promoting autonomy and inclusivity, aligning with their workplace expectations (Goswami & Gautam, 2011). Comfortable, self-expressive attire fosters positive work environment perceptions, enhancing satisfaction and loyalty (Karl *et al.,* 2013).

Redefining Professionalism and Reducing Hierarchy

Relaxed dress codes are redefining professionalism, fostering a more collaborative workplace. Formal attire often reinforces hierarchy and status distinctions, while casual policies reduce barriers and encourage open communication (Johnson *et al.,* 2002; Smith, 2018). Employees in inclusive workplaces feel empowered to share ideas and innovate, improving morale and

collaboration (Goswami & Gautam, 2011). Flexible dress policies thus contribute to a supportive and dynamic workplace culture.

The Indian Context: Modernization and Cultural Adaptation

In India, flexible dress codes signify a balance between modernization and cultural respect. Historically, formal attire symbolized authority, but globalized companies now blend traditional and casual styles, enabling employees to express their identities (Twenge *et al.,* 2010). Millennials and Gen Z prioritize authenticity and inclusivity, expecting workplaces to reflect these values (Smith, 2018). Organizations supporting flexible dress codes benefit from increased engagement and loyalty, especially in diverse workforces.

Methodology:

Aim

The primary aim of this research is to investigate the effects of flexible dress codes on employees' comfort, professionalism, and workplace dynamics.

Objectives

1. To explore employee attitudes and perceptions towards flexible dress codes and their impact on job satisfaction.
2. To identify challenges and benefits associated with implementing flexible dress codes in different workplace settings.
3. To assess the impact of flexible dress codes on workplace inclusivity and employee self-expression.

Research Design

This research utilizes a qualitative research design, which is suitable for exploring complex social phenomena and gaining in-depth insights into personal experiences and perceptions. Qualitative research is ideal for understanding the nuances of how flexible dress codes are perceived by employees and how these perceptions influence workplace interactions and productivity.

Data Collection Tool: Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method for this study. Interviews provide an opportunity to engage with participants in-depth and explore their individual experiences, beliefs, and attitudes towards flexible dress codes. A semi-structured format was used to allow for flexibility in the conversation while ensuring consistency in the topics covered across interviews.

Sample Selection

The sample consisted of employees from organizations that have implemented flexible dress codes. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure they had direct experience with the policy. A total of 30 participants were selected for interviews from a range of industries, including technology, healthcare, finance, and retail.

Results:

Flexibility in Dress Codes

Flexibility in dress codes emerged as a key theme across industries, positively influencing comfort, satisfaction, and productivity. Employees in creative fields, such as marketing and design, valued relaxed dress codes for promoting self-expression and aligning with informal work environments. For example, a marketing professional noted, "Expressing myself through attire helps me feel confident when pitching ideas," a sentiment shared by 73% of respondents in this sector.

In contrast, traditional industries like finance, law, and retail emphasized the importance of formality during client interactions, with 62% of respondents appreciating practices like "Casual Fridays" for balancing professionalism and relaxation. Respondents in education and healthcare highlighted the practicality of flexible attire, such as lighter fabrics, for enhancing comfort during interpersonal roles. Similarly, 55% of those in physically demanding professions, like retail, stressed the need for comfortable and functional clothing, including breathable fabrics and suitable footwear.

- **Role-Specific Needs**: Variations in dress code requirements based on job roles were widely discussed. For example, 58% of respondents from physically demanding sectors emphasized the need for breathable fabrics, while 64% of educators appreciated lightweight clothing for teaching in warmer climates.
- **Casual Fridays**: Widely appreciated across sectors, casual Fridays were seen as a middle ground between professionalism and relaxation, mentioned by 79% of participants in industries like finance, retail, and law as a positive initiative to foster a more open and less hierarchical atmosphere.

Professionalism vs. Comfort

Striking a balance between professionalism and comfort was another dominant theme. Employees in client-facing roles, such as corporate law, insurance, and finance, expressed that while formal attire is necessary for establishing credibility, it often felt restrictive for internal tasks. A corporate lawyer remarked, "Mandatory suits add professionalism but feel unnecessary

during internal team discussions." This discomfort with formality was noted by 60% of respondents in formal sectors, where employees often felt constrained by rigid dress codes. On the other hand, individuals in creative and informal roles found strict dress codes often hindered productivity and confidence. A graphic designer stated, "Mandatory formals make us less confident as we can't dress according to our preferences," echoing the feelings of 65% of those in creative fields.

- **Self-Expression**: Many respondents, particularly in creative fields, reported that restrictive attire stifled their sense of identity. A marketing intern shared, "Wearing neutral tones every day makes me feel like I'm hiding my personality." This sentiment was shared by 71% of creative professionals, who valued the opportunity to express themselves through their attire.

- **Psychological Impact**: Several participants noted the emotional toll and alienation caused by rigid dress policies. One respondent shared that "appearance was prioritized over performance," which negatively affected morale, a sentiment shared by 45% of respondents in formal industries, such as finance and law, where attire was often seen as more important than comfort or personal expression.

Impact on Motivation, Team Dynamics, and Inclusivity

Flexible dress codes were linked to improved motivation and engagement, with participants associating autonomy in attire with reduced stress and enhanced creativity. A mental health professional noted, "Flexibility in dress codes keeps me motivated by balancing professionalism and comfort." The positive effects on team dynamics were particularly noted in collaborative environments, with 68% of respondents indicating that relaxed dress codes contributed to more open, approachable, and creative work environments.

On the other hand, rigid dress codes were seen as fostering formality and hierarchy, which could potentially hinder collaboration. An HR professional commented, "Rigid dress codes create a formal environment that stifles team dynamics," a view shared by 55% of respondents, particularly in managerial roles.

- **Cultural Inclusivity**: Flexible policies allowing for cultural attire were seen as fostering a sense of belonging and inclusivity. One corporate lawyer remarked, "Flexible dress codes promote inclusivity by accommodating cultural diversity." 63% of respondents emphasized that a relaxed dress code could help accommodate cultural differences, especially for employees from diverse backgrounds.

- **Accessibility**: The importance of accommodating employees with unique physical needs, such as those with prosthetics or ergonomic clothing requirements, was mentioned by 35% of respondents. A participant noted the difficulty of finding comfortable yet professional attire that could meet specific physical needs, which was a significant barrier in implementing truly inclusive dress policies.

- **Workplace Hierarchy Perception**: Dress codes were often associated with hierarchical structures. Many participants noted that more formal policies reinforced a top-down structure, with stricter codes seen as a signal of less approachable leadership. This perception was cited by 48% of respondents working in corporate or traditional sectors.

Influence on Perception of Company Culture and Retention

Dress code policies significantly influenced employees' perceptions of organizational values. Flexible dress codes were often viewed as indicative of progressive, employee-friendly cultures, while strict policies were often associated with more traditional, rigid work environments. An IT professional remarked, "A relaxed dress code reflects a progressive and employee-focused company culture." This perception was shared by 56% of respondents, who valued flexibility as a reflection of an organization's approach to modern workplace culture.

Retention was also impacted by dress code flexibility. Many participants noted that the ability to dress more comfortably contributed to job satisfaction and long-term engagement. However, others emphasized that while appreciated, dress codes were secondary to more critical factors such as work-life balance and career growth. A finance professional shared, "Flexibility in attire is important, but retention depends more on career growth and work-life balance."

- **Onboarding Experiences**: Participants noted that flexible dress codes helped ease new employees into the organization, with 59% of respondents mentioning that a relaxed dress code made them feel more welcome and at ease during their first days.

- **Generational Preferences**: Younger employees, particularly millennials and Gen Z, expressed a strong preference for flexible dress policies, viewing them as reflections of modern values. In contrast, older employees expressed a preference for traditional dress codes, viewing them as essential for maintaining discipline and respect. 64% of younger employees in the study favoured casual or flexible dress codes, while 48% of older employees felt that traditional attire upheld professionalism and respect.

Industry-Wide Adoption and Challenges

Most participants favored flexible dress codes across industries, highlighting benefits like enhanced comfort, creativity, and inclusivity. However, maintaining professionalism and

defining "appropriate" attire remained key challenges. A pharmaceutical professional noted, "Flexibility attracts diverse talent, but clear guidelines are essential to maintain professionalism." This balance was important to 74% of respondents, especially in client-facing industries.

Cultural and societal norms posed barriers in some contexts. A writer remarked, "Implementing flexible dress codes in India is challenging due to societal judgments about attire." Similarly, 45% of participants from global roles acknowledged difficulties in aligning local cultural expectations with company policies.

- **International Adaptation**: Many employees navigating global or multi-national workplaces noted the difficulty of balancing local cultural expectations with company policies. One respondent shared, "Navigating local expectations while adhering to company policy was initially overwhelming." 61% of international employees indicated that their companies offered support in adapting dress policies for different cultural contexts.

- **Defining Professionalism**: The need for clear guidelines to manage the diverse interpretations of appropriate attire was another challenge mentioned by 56% of respondents. Clear guidelines were seen as essential to prevent misunderstandings and ensure consistency across diverse employee groups.

Discussion:

The findings highlight the intricate balance between flexibility, professionalism, and cultural context in shaping perceptions of workplace dress codes. While formal attire remains crucial in traditional and client-facing roles, the increasing demand for flexibility signals changing workplace dynamics. Flexible dress codes are linked to enhanced employee comfort, motivation, and inclusivity, particularly in creative and collaborative environments. However, in fields such as law and finance, where professionalism is paramount, formal dress codes still play a vital role in establishing credibility and authority.

A balanced approach, considering the unique needs of different roles, industries, and cultures, is essential. Organizations should develop role-specific dress codes that meet the functional requirements of various positions while fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment. For example, casual Fridays and the accommodation of cultural attire can promote inclusivity without undermining professionalism.

Moreover, gender-specific and cultural considerations are pivotal when developing dress code policies. Recognizing the diversity of employee needs—whether related to physical accessibility, cultural expression, or psychological comfort—can help organizations create an equitable and

respectful environment. Clear guidelines, regular policy updates, and open communication about dress code expectations can further mitigate misunderstandings and promote an inclusive culture.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were a key part of this research. All participants were provided with an informed consent form detailing the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to confidentiality. Participation was voluntary, and participants had the option to withdraw at any point without any negative consequences. Data was anonymized to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

Limitations

The study's qualitative design means the findings may not be generalizable to all organizations. The sample size is relatively small, and the experiences shared by participants may be influenced by factors such as organizational size, industry, and workplace culture. However, the in-depth insights provided by the interviews allow for a rich understanding of the impact of flexible dress codes in the workplace.

Conclusion:

Fashion is evolving faster than ever, driven by technology, changing consumer tastes, and a growing awareness of sustainability. Innovations like artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and e-commerce have reshaped how people experience fashion, making it more accessible and personalized. At the same time, sustainability has become a central concern, with brands focusing on eco-friendly materials, ethical production, and circular fashion models. More than ever, consumers are making thoughtful choices, opting for brands that reflect their values. This study found that many shoppers actively prefer brands committed to sustainability, and digital tools have significantly improved customer engagement, boosting both sales and brand loyalty.

However, there are still hurdles to overcome. Fast fashion continues to have a serious environmental impact, labor rights remain a pressing issue, and inclusivity needs further progress. While consumers support sustainable fashion, affordability and accessibility still pose challenges. Additionally, as technology shapes the industry, ethical considerations must remain at the forefront to strike a balance between innovation and responsibility. Future research could dive deeper into the long-term effects of digital fashion, the role of blockchain in making supply chains more transparent, and how sustainability initiatives can truly reduce waste. By blending creativity with ethics, the fashion industry has the potential to become more inclusive, sustainable, and consumer-focused than ever before.

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THREADS OF CHANGE:

A HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON THRIFTING IN MUMBAI

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> *Anna Wintour, "Clothes should be cherished, re-worn and even passed on to the next generation"*[7]

The tradition of hand-me-downs, passing down clothing, jewellery and other accessories, has a long history in India (G. R. Chaithra *et al.,* 2002). The origins can be traced back to the ancient barter system, where goods, including clothing, were exchanged for survival and resource optimization. This early practice of reusing and exchanging items laid the groundwork for what would evolve into a sophisticated culture of second-hand commerce. Over the centuries, the thrifting culture evolved alongside societal needs and economic structures. From medieval fairs in Europe where used goods were sold to support the lower classes to the organised charity shops of the 19th and 20th centuries in the West, thrifting gradually shifted from a necessity to a conscious lifestyle choice. This paper examines the history of second-hand clothing and thrifting in India.

Thrifting culture, characterized by the reuse and repurposing of pre-owned clothing, has gained considerable momentum in Mumbai over the last decade. However, its roots and implications stretch far beyond modern-day practices, weaving together threads of history, societal norms, and a growing global emphasis on sustainability. This paper will also explore these growing trends (in the thrifting culture of Mumbai) while placing them within the broader context of sustainable fashion.

The methodology encompasses both primary and secondary sources, including surveys of adults who have engaged with thrift stores in Mumbai, interviews with store owners, and a comprehensive literature review. Interviews with thrift store owners were also undertaken to understand their perspectives. The literature available on this subject includes interviews, newspaper articles, online articles, and research articles published by various authors. Thus, this

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[7] https://ww.fashionnetwork.com/news/Love-your-clothes-and-pass-them-on-says-anna-wintour,1162732.html#:~:text=Clothes%20should%20be%20cherished%2C%20re,less%20of%20a%20throwaway%20culture. (Accessed on January 18, 2025)

paper will analyse the various perspectives of consumers and store owners alike to explore the consumption patterns of sustainable (second-hand) fashion in the city.

Historically, garments were revered as valuable heirlooms, meticulously preserved and passed down through multiple generations. Textiles, handwoven with meticulous care and dyed in natural colours, were crafted to endure for decades. These cherished hand-me-downs held sentimental value, symbolizing familial bonds and heritage. For example, sarees were frequently repurposed into quilts or handed down to daughters and granddaughters, embodying a sense of continuity and respect for resources. In this context, clothing transcended its material value, becoming a vessel of memory and tradition. Furthermore, the practice of reusing clothing was intertwined with spiritual and ecological philosophies, where material possessions were treated with reverence and wastefulness was discouraged. This ethos was evident in community-driven efforts, such as shared weaving and mending practices, which further emphasized the importance of resource conservation.[8]

Despite this rich history, the notion of second-hand clothing has not always been embraced uniformly. Throughout much of India's recent socio-economic history, wearing pre-owned garments carried a significant social stigma, particularly within urban and middle-class contexts. The traditional notion of "purity" that once stigmatized pre-owned garments is being systematically challenged by younger generations, driven by intersecting forces of economic pragmatism, environmental consciousness, and social mobility. This transformation represents a deeper sociocultural exploration of identity, where consumption practices are being explored as expressions of individual agency rather than predetermined social constraints.[9]

The Western world's approach to second-hand clothing, however, particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries, followed a different trajectory. Second-hand clothing bazaars were a feature in Elizabethan England, where people across the country donated to the Wolverhampton Society for the Blind in Staffordshire, and the proceeds from the sale of these donated items went to the visually impaired.[10] In the United States of America, foundations like Goodwill and the Salvation Army began in the early decades of the 20th century. They aimed to collect discarded or second-hand clothing for poor immigrants or people in need.

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[8] Ibid

[9] https://homegrown.co.in/homegrown-voices/has-indias-thrifting-revolution-shifted-how-we-perceive-class-caste-dynamics (accessed on January 20th, 2025)

[10] https://www.trvst.world/sustainable-living/fashion/history-of-second-hand-thrift-shopping/ (accessed on January 15th, 2025)

The emergence of thrift shops in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom was initially tied to charity organisations and churches, which sold donated goods to support their causes. During the Great Depression and later World War II, second-hand clothing became a practical necessity for many. By the mid-20th century, however, thrifting began to take on its own cultural identity, often linked to counter-cultural movements that rejected consumerism and embraced individuality.[11] Industrialisation, leading to the production of machine-made fabrics and clothing, over the last century led to over-consumption.

The rise of fast fashion has further intensified these environmental challenges. It is driven by the demand for cheap and trendy clothing and encourages the overproduction and overconsumption of garments, resulting in excessive waste, resource depletion, and pollution. Factories producing these items often rely on fossil fuels, contributing significantly to climate change. In 2018 alone, the fashion industry contributed nearly 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, releasing 2.1 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent.[12] Additionally, the industry's reliance on synthetic materials like polyester, which are derived from petroleum, increases the environmental burden by releasing microplastics into waterways and taking centuries to decompose.

Thrifting disrupts this unsustainable cycle by extending the life of clothing and reducing the need for new production. It addresses the excessive waste created by discarding garments deemed out of style, irrelevant, or unattractive. By diverting clothing from landfills, it reduces the accumulation of textile waste, which currently makes up a significant portion of global landfill content. Furthermore, it lowers the demand for virgin materials and the energy-intensive processes required to produce them. By choosing second-hand clothing, consumers can directly reduce the fashion industry's contribution to climate change and advocate for a shift away from the disposable culture perpetuated by fast fashion. Thrifting provides a critical solution to the environmental damage caused by the fashion industry, a sector that ranks as the second-largest polluter globally after oil.

As globalisation accelerated, the ideas surrounding thrifting and second-hand fashion began to permeate urban centres like Mumbai. The city's transformation into a hub of sustainable fashion, however, is a more recent phenomenon. Since the early 21st century, environmental concerns and growing awareness of the waste generated by fast fashion have led to a global shift toward

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[11] https://www.trvst.world/sustainable-living/fashion/history-of-second-hand-thrift-shopping/

[12] McKinsey & Company and Global Fashion Agenda, Fashion on Climate Report, 2020. Also mentioned in
https://www.platform-mag.com/fashion/thrifting-in-india.html (accessed on January 20, 2025)

sustainable living. Mumbai has emerged as an essential centre where sustainable fashion practices are not just adopted but reimagined.

The rise of thrift stores in Mumbai over the past decade is a testament to this change. Small businesses and online platforms have cropped up, offering curated selections of pre-owned clothing that cater to a diverse clientele. Stores like "Bombay Closet Cleanse" and "Vintage Laundry" have gained traction, combining affordability with the appeal of unique, high-quality pieces. These initiatives are often driven by young entrepreneurs who recognize the dual benefits of sustainability and fashion accessibility. Social media has also played a pivotal role, with platforms like Instagram and Facebook enabling thrift stores to reach wider audiences and normalize second-hand shopping among the youth.

For this paper, interviews were conducted with two thrift store owners, All Things Preloved and Vintage Laundry, both of which were established in 2020 during the pandemic. While All Things Preloved ceased operations in 2023, Vintage Laundry is thriving in its fifth year. Both stores have maintained an online presence with social media and websites in addition to hosting physical pop-ups in various city locations. The owners indicated they might explore opening a physical storefront in the future. The interviews revealed that their primary customer base consists of adults aged 18 to 35, suggesting that younger generations are increasingly embracing thrifting.

The store owners noted a gap in the market for affordable, unique second-hand luxury and vintage items that are often hard to find in traditional retail. They set out to cater to an urban clientele interested in sustainable fashion. When discussing the shift in attitudes towards second-hand fashion, both respondents pointed to a growing acceptance of thrifting and pre-loved items. However, they observed that shoppers in Mumbai primarily limit their purchases to clothing. The importance of curating their stores with select items sourced from old stores, donations, or local networks was emphasized. They also engage in upcycling, transforming quality pieces like old sarees into trendy shirts or co-ord sets. The contemporary thrift culture aims to challenge outdated perceptions regarding second-hand clothing.

The respondents strive to promote quality craftsmanship and support those eager to foster the thrifting movement in Mumbai. Both business owners expressed satisfaction with the positive response their brands have received in under five years. There is a notable interest in sustainability and eco-conscious fashion choices among (young) consumers. However, they believe that this shift is just the beginning, and a broader acceptance of thrift culture is still ahead.

A survey was also conducted of the consumers and respondents for this study comprised adults aged 18 to 40. Among the 54 participants, 38 reside in Mumbai, while the remainder are spread across India, with a few, living abroad but having thrifted from Mumbai-based stores. The questionnaire examined their shopping frequency, preferences, and modes of thrift shopping (online or offline).

Findings revealed that 44.4% of respondents thrift a few times a year, 37% rarely thrift as they are new to second-hand shopping, and 16.7% engage in monthly thrifting. In terms of items, 77.8% thrift clothing, 42.6% purchase handbags and accessories, 37% opt for vintage or designer pieces, and only 20% buy shoes. Minimal interest was shown in thrifting decor, furniture, activewear, lingerie, homeware, or beauty products.

Regarding shopping modes, half of the respondents prefer in-person thrift stores, 20.4% shop online, and 30% use both avenues. When asked about specific store types, 61% prioritize stores offering good deals, over 30% favour traditional brick-and-mortar or vintage stores, and slightly over 20% also prefer international online platforms such as Depop, ThredUp, or Instagram stores delivering to Mumbai.

The motivation of respondents for thrifting varied from saving money, finding unique vintage items, practising sustainability, avoiding fast fashion, to supporting small businesses. Some also enjoyed the thrill of discovering specific brands or unique pieces. Despite these positives, challenges included limited size availability, disorganized stores, and issues with item quality or pricing.

Participants indicated they would thrift more often if stores were better organized, offered transparent sourcing and sustainability practices, and featured a wider range of sizes and curated quality items. Future trends identified by respondents include more in-person stores, increased upcycling, and pre-loved clothing fostering unique personal styles. Many expressed an enthusiasm for the resurgence of 70s and 90s fashion trends and emphasized the importance of creating inclusive thrift spaces that support diverse fashion, comfort, and gender expression.

The growing popularity of thrifting in Mumbai also reflects a broader shift in societal attitudes. Increasingly, the stigma around wearing pre-owned clothing is being replaced by an appreciation for its environmental and economic benefits. Young consumers are driving this change, valuing thrifted items for their individuality and lower carbon footprint. What was once perceived as a marker of financial limitation is now celebrated as a conscious lifestyle choice, aligning with global trends that prioritize sustainability and ethical consumption.

This evolving perspective is evident among millennials and Gen Z, who increasingly view thrifting through multiple lenses: as an economic strategy, a sustainable fashion choice, and a

statement of individual identity that transcends historical social demarcations. Social media has further democratized fashion consumption by creating spaces where the origin of clothing becomes less about social stratification and more about personal style and ethical choices.

The need for sustainable fashion has never been more urgent. The fast fashion industry is one of the largest contributors to environmental degradation, with enormous amounts of water, energy, and labour exploited to produce garments that are often discarded after minimal use. By embracing thrifting, consumers in Mumbai and beyond are challenging the disposable culture of fashion and advocating for more mindful consumption practices. Thrifting not only reduces waste but also extends the life cycle of clothing, making it a practical and impactful response to the environmental crises of our time.

Looking ahead, the thrifting trends in Mumbai are likely to evolve further. Community-driven initiatives, such as clothing swaps and pop-up thrift markets, could become more prevalent, fostering a sense of collective responsibility for sustainable living. Additionally, collaborations between thrift stores and designers might lead to innovative upcycling projects, blending traditional Indian craftsmanship with modern aesthetics. The integration of digital technology and artificial intelligence in thrifting platforms could further revolutionize the industry, offering personalized recommendations and efficient resale logistics. Moreover, as global fashion brands begin to incorporate second-hand sections into their offerings, Mumbai might see a rise in hybrid retail models combining new and pre-owned merchandise.

In the coming decade, sustainability trends in fashion are poised to grow beyond thrifting. Concepts like circular fashion—where garments are designed, produced, and disposed of with reuse and recyclability in mind—are likely to gain traction. Mumbai's fashion landscape could also witness a resurgence of traditional techniques such as patchwork, hand embroidery, and dyeing, reimagined to cater to contemporary aesthetics. Educational initiatives promoting sustainable practices, both among consumers and industry professionals, will be pivotal in shaping a more environmentally conscious market.

In conclusion, the thrifting culture in Mumbai represents a confluence of historical practices, changing societal norms, and a growing commitment to sustainability. It is a movement rooted in tradition yet driven by the challenges and aspirations of the modern world. As more individuals embrace the idea of second-hand fashion, Mumbai stands at the forefront of a transformative shift, proving that style and sustainability can indeed go hand in hand.

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Appendix 1

Survey Questions (For Thrift Store Owners)

1.　Name of the store

2.　Name of the Store Owner

3.　Year of Establishment

4.　Location

5.　Do you have an online store?

6.　For those who have only an online store, would you consider opening a boutique/shop/physical store?

7.　How would you define "thrifting" in the context of India? Do you see any cultural differences between thrifting in India and other parts of the world?

8.　What do you think attracts people to shop at thrift stores, particularly in India? Is it the affordability, sustainability, or something else?

9.   What is the age bracket that you usually interact with as consumers?

10.   Can you tell us a bit about your journey into opening a thrift store in India? What inspired you to start this business?

11.   Have you noticed any shift in attitudes towards second-hand goods in recent years? If so, what do you think is driving this change?

12.   Are there any particular trends or items that have seen a surge in demand in recent months or years?

13.   Do you source your items from specific communities or local networks, and how do you ensure that your practices are sustainable and ethical?

14.   How do you manage the perception that second-hand goods might be "lesser" or "inferior" compared to new items?

15.   What do you think the future holds for the thrift store industry in India? Do you see it growing in popularity, and if so, why?

16.   How do you personally feel about the role of thrift stores in shaping consumer culture and encouraging sustainability?

17.   Is there anything else you'd like to share about the thrift store culture or your journey that we haven't covered?

18.   Would you like to share customer testimonials if you have any?

Appendix 2

Survey Questions (For Thrift Consumers)

1.   Name

2.   Age

3.   Residence

4.   How often do you shop for second-hand fashion (clothing, shoes, accessories)?

5.   What types of fashion items do you typically purchase when you thrift? How do you prefer to shop for second-hand fashion?

6.   What are your primary motivations while shopping for second-hand fashion?

7.   Which sustainable fashion practices do you try to incorporate into your shopping habits?

8.   How satisfied are you with your overall experience shopping for second-hand fashion?

9.   What challenges do you encounter when shopping for second-hand fashion?

10.   Do you prefer shopping at a specific type of second-hand store or platform?

11.   What would encourage you to thrift more in the future?

12.   What are the upcoming trends that you would want to see in the thrifting culture?

REDUCING FASHION'S ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

A STUDY OF TEXTILE WASTE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract:

India is a rapidly developing nation and plays a significant role in the global textile industry both as a manufacturer and exporter. While the textile sector substantially contributes to economic growth, it faces several challenges, especially in handling post-consumer textile waste. Globally, Textile Industry is a major source of waste generation causing harmful and dangerous effects on the environment. Addressing this issue requires a combination of actions, including the establishment of textile recycling infrastructure, promoting sustainable consumption practices, and enforcing policies such as extended producer responsibility. The environmental impact of the clothing industry extends beyond the production phase and includes the entire lifecycle of textiles, from raw material extraction to disposal. This growing concern has led to increased public awareness of the need for sustainable practices in the textile sector. The innovative management of textile waste is crucial to promoting sustainability and circularity, although such innovations can be costly and difficult textile waste management innovations. This review contributes to decision making by synthesizing strengths and sins of the inventions in Textile Waste Management.

Keywords: Textile Waste Management, Environmental Sustainability, Circular Economy, Extended Producer Responsibility, Post Consumer Textile Waste Management.

Introduction:

Textile Waste can be interpreted as any undesirable or discarded piece of fabric or apparel that's unfit for its original purpose. Principally, Textile Waste can be classified into three broad categories namely, pre-consumer waste, post-consumer waste and post-industrial waste. Wastes generated during any manufacturing process or processing of fabrics such as fabric scraps, rejected defective, imperfect products are considered as Pre-Consumer Textile Waste. Whereas Post Consumer Textile Waste comprises of textile products, clothing, curtains, bedding used and are discarded before or at their end of life. On the other hand, Post Industrial Waste is generated

by other industries that use textiles as inputs or outputs, which generally includes discarded medical fabrics, packaging fabrics and even automotive fabrics.

It is important for us to understand that all above different textile wastes has caused a negative impact on environment and given rise to several economic and social problems. Textile Waste serves as a contributor in soil pollution and contamination, water pollution, noise pollution, greenhouse gases, occupational health hazards to the workers and waste of resources.

Review of Literature:

Several key players in the textile industry have initiated programs to address textile waste management. Notable examples include:

- **Patagonia's Worn Wear Program:** This initiative encourages consumers to buy used clothing, trade in old items, and repair worn-out garments, promoting a culture of durability and sustainability. Patagonia's commitment to circular fashion has positioned it as a leader in textile waste management.

- **H&M's Garment Collecting Program:** As one of the largest fast-fashion retailers, H&M has implemented a program where customers can drop off used clothing in exchange for store vouchers. Although critics argue that this is a form of "greenwashing," the initiative does contribute to diverting textiles from landfills.

- **Levi Strauss & Co.'s Water<Less Initiative:** Levi's has reduced water consumption in denim production through its Water<Less technology. The company has also launched a program for recycling old denim into new products.

These companies demonstrate that the textile sector is gradually adopting more sustainable waste management practices. However, challenges remain, particularly in scaling up recycling technologies and minimizing the industry's overall environmental impact.

Research Objectives:

1. To assess the current state of textile waste generation.
2. To analyze existing waste management practices within the textile industry.
3. To examine the environmental impact of textile waste.

Research Methodology:

This research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative component focuses on understanding the sources of textile waste through secondary research, including studies, reports, and articles. The quantitative component involves the analysis of data on textile waste production and disposal methods. Data was

collected from various secondary sources, including academic research papers, industry reports, and governmental publications.

Recommendations:

Given the rapid growth of the textile industry, there is a pressing need for more effective waste management practices. The following strategies are recommended:

1. **Increased Collaboration Across the Supply Chain:** Industry players, policymakers, and consumers must collaborate to foster more sustainable practices.

2. **Investment in Recycling Technologies:** Companies should invest in advanced recycling technologies to reduce waste and enhance material recovery.

3. **Promotion of Sustainable Consumption:** Consumers should be encouraged to adopt more sustainable consumption habits, such as buying less, reusing, and recycling.

Prospects of Textile Industry in India:

According to the Indian Textile Journal, over 1 million tons of textile waste are generated annually in India. Key findings from the primary research include:

1. **Production of textile waste annually**

The study found that textile waste production in India ranges from 5% to 20% of the total textile produced each year. In 2014, approximately 92 million tons of textile waste were generated globally, with only a small fraction being recycled. The rest ended up in landfills or incinerators (Akter *et al.,* 2022).

2. **Percentage of textile waste thrown down**

The most common and easy way to treat textiles waste which is followed at a large scale in India is just throwing away in the scrap without bothering what dangerous impact it's causing to the terrain. A significant portion of textile waste in India is discarded without proper disposal methods. Approximately 40% of industries dispose of all their textile waste, while 40% dispose of 50% and donate the remaining 50% to NGOs for reuse. The remaining 20% dispose of 20% of waste and donate 50%.

3. **Annual Production of Garments / Clothes**

In India, 71 billion square meters of cloth were produced in the fiscal year 2019, decreasing slightly to 63 billion square meters in 2020.

4. **Methods for Reducing Textile Waste**

Common methods to manage and reduce textile waste includes recycling, donating, swapping, upcycling, repairing, buying less and making items last
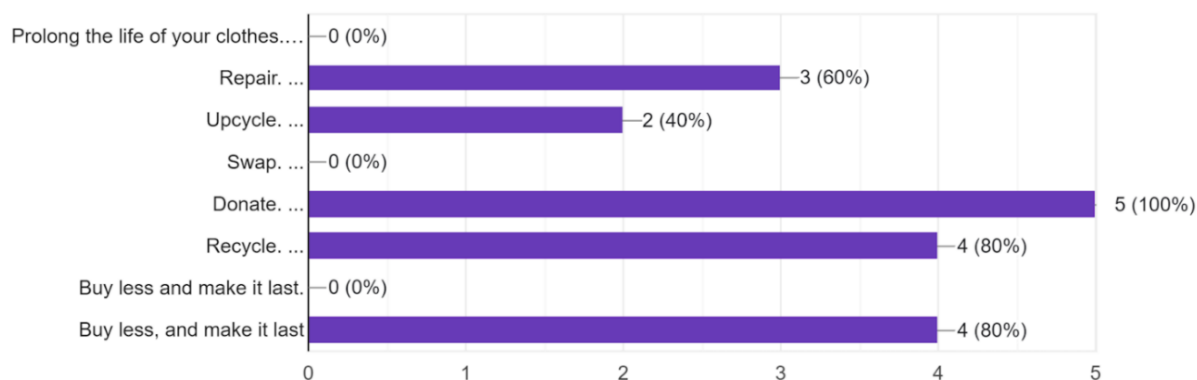
Textile Waste Management Practices

These practices vary depending on the region, company size, and regulatory environment, but several strategies are currently used to minimize textile waste as enumerated below:

1. **Waste Minimization and Reduction**

Companies optimize fabric use during the design and manufacturing stages. Lean manufacturing practices streamline production processes and reduce excess material consumption, leading to lower waste generation and eliminating inefficiency.

2. **Recycling of Fabric and Materials**

Discarded textiles are collected, processed, and repurposed into new products. For example, fabric scraps can be converted into cushions or insulation materials in post-industrial recycling.

3. **Chemical Waste Management**

Closed-loop water systems are being adopted by certain companies to treat and reuse water used in dyeing and finishing processes. Effluent treatment plants (ETPs) are also used to neutralize harmful chemicals before releasing wastewater.

4. **Upcycling**

It involves taking waste materials or unwanted textiles and turning them into new products of higher value. This is often done by creative designers who turn fabric scraps into fashion items or home decor.

5. **Eco-Friendly Packaging**

Reducing packaging waste is initiated by the companies. Instead of plastic, companies are shifting to biodegradable, recyclable, or reusable packaging options, such as paper, cardboard, and fabric bags.

6. **Textile Waste Collection**

Brands and organizations are setting up collection programs for old garments that can be recycled or even donated. A Collection center is set up for textile waste around set ups like

traditional tailoring units, boutiques, and others in the textile value chain, which helps to recycle it.

7. Closed-Loop Recycling Technologies

- Mechanical Recycling: Involves breaking down fabric mechanically into fibers that can be reused to produce new textiles.

- Chemical Recycling: A more advanced process that involves breaking down fibers chemically and then rebuilding them, enabling the recycling of complex fabric blends like polyester-cotton mixes.

8. Sustainable Textile Fibers / Biodegradable Fibers

New types of textiles, such as organic cotton, hemp, or bamboo, are being used to reduce environmental impact. These fibres decompose more easily than synthetic fibres like polyester, which take hundreds of years to break down.

Environmental Impact of Textile Waste:

Textile waste significantly impacts the environment across several domains:

1. Landfill and Waste Accumulation

A large portion of textile waste, especially discarded clothes, ends up in landfills. Synthetic fibres like polyester can take 200+ years to decompose or putrefy in landfills. During this passage of time, they release dangerous substances into the soil and groundwater, including chemicals, colourings, dyes, and microplastics. Moreover, landfills occupy vast quantities of space.

2. Pollution from Dyes and Chemicals

The textile assiduity is one of the largest users of druggies of colourings and chemicals in the world. When clothes are discarded without proper disposal, these harmful chemicals, such as azo dyes, formaldehyde, and heavy metals, can strain and leach into the terrain which can contaminate and pollute water sources and also harm submarine life hazardously.

Water Pollution is a major concern. However, wastewater from textile factories can contaminate rivers, lakes, and oceans, affecting local communities and ecosystems, if not treated duly.

Numerous synthetic fabrics like polyester, nylon, and acrylic shed tiny fibres during use and washing, contributing to microplastic pollution in oceans and freshwater bodies. These microfibers are too small to be filtered out by wastewater treatment plants and accumulate in marine ecosystems, posing a threat and trouble to marine life.

3. **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

- Decomposition of Synthetic Fibers: When synthetic fibres (e.g., polyester, nylon) break down in landfills, they release greenhouse gases (GHGs), including methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. The decomposition of textile waste in landfills is one of the contributing sources of GHG emissions in the waste sector.

- **Carbon Footprint of Textile Production**: The production of textiles is largely energy-ferocious, especially for synthetic fibres. The **global textile industry** contributes to around **10% of global carbon emissions**, substantially due to the use of fossil energies in manufacturing and transportation. As cloth waste continues to accumulate, the overall carbon footmark of the assiduity grows.

4. **Resource Wastage**

The textile industry is one of the most water-intensive industries in the world. It takes roughly 2,700 litres of water to produce a single cotton t-shirt. The disposal of textile waste represents the loss of all the water and energy used to produce that garment, compounding the inefficiency of the fashion industry.

Large amounts of energy go into producing textiles, including the use of fossil energies, electricity for machinery, and the water demanded for dyeing and washing.

5. **Soil and Water Contamination**

When textiles degrade in landfills, especially those containing synthetic fibers or chemically treated fabrics, they release **toxic substances** that can contaminate the soil and water. These pollutants can affect agriculture, drinking water, and local ecosystems.

6. **Deforestation**

Rayon, acetate and modal are cellulose based fibres which are derived from wood pulp. Extensive use of these fibres may lead to destruction of forests, disruption of ecosystem and loss of biodiversity.

Cultivation of fibre crops like cotton requires vast land parcels and if not grown sustainably, it also depletes water resources and uses harmful pesticides and fertilizers.

Conclusion:

The environmental impact of textile waste is extensive and requires coordinated action across governments, industries, and consumers. Sustainable practices such as adopting circular economy models, improving recycling technologies, using eco-friendly materials, and reducing consumption are essential for mitigating the environmental footprint of the textile industry.

Encouraging collaboration across the entire textile supply chain and promoting waste reduction techniques will be crucial to achieving long-term sustainability in the sector.

To address the challenges posed by textile waste, initiatives such as the establishment of textile waste collection centers around tailoring units and boutiques could streamline recycling processes and minimize waste contamination.

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ALARMING ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS DUE TO FAST FASHION AND NEED FOR A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

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Abstract:

Fast industry is multifaceted and far-reaching, with multiple economic and cultural impacts. In order to keep pace with this rising growth in both demand and supply patterns we are now seeing a rapid shift to "Fast Fashion". It is the race for quantity over quality. It refers to 'cheaply produced and priced garments that copy the latest catwalk styles. In the last 15 years clothing production world over has approximately doubled and is largely contributed by a growing middle-class population across the globe and increased sales in advanced economies. It has further led to a positive impact on the GDP and other important indicators as well. However, there is a severe flip side to it, the environmental impact on water consumption, carbon footprints, harmful emissions, etc. it thus highlights a need to find a solution to this concern and what will be the impact if the said solutions are implemented.

Keywords: Fast Fashion, Market Size, Green House Gasses, Emissions, Sustainable Development Goals.

Introduction:

The fashion industry in today's world is dynamic and rapidly growing. It has a dominant economic and cultural impact. It also influences consumer preferences at quick instances. The industry has developed to be a prominent one in the contemporary society, and continues spread. The fashion industry has the potential to not only shape our personal identities but also contribute positively to social aspects world over and environmental issues.

The fashion industry is an economic powerhouse, contributing significantly to the global economy. The talk of the town these days is "Fast Fashion" - The term refers to 'cheaply produced and priced garments that copy the latest catwalk styles and get pumped quickly through stores in order to maximise on current trends. It involves the rapid design, production, distribution, and marketing of clothing, which means that retailers are able to pull large quantities of greater product variety and allow consumers to get more fashion and product differentiation at a low price. It thrives on consumers' demands for quantity over quality.

In a world of changing demand for fashion wear, wearing garments only a few times and then disposing it of has become a trend. Entire business models of "fast fashion," is built on the premise of providing clothes cheaply and quickly to consumers through shorter fashion cycles.

The revenue generation form the Textile and Clothing Industry from the top three countries in the year 2023 is given in the following table.

Revenue generation form textile and clothing industry from the top 3 countries

United States	$351.35 billion
China	$313.82 billion
India	$101.39 billion

Source: World Bank Open Data

The fashion and construction sectors are among the world's most Greenhouse Gas emitting industry sectors. Both sectors connect economic agents from across the world and are characterised by complex, fragmented, global supply chains with globally significant impacts. While much of the focus in these industries has always centred on climate change, the transformation of fashion and construction supply chains requires a more holistic approach that also tackles pollution, and climate change concerns.

The UNEP found that – The environmental impact due to apparel production results from the fact that it is an emission and resource intensive sector. Research shows Making a pair of jeans produces as much greenhouse gases as driving a car more than 80 miles. Discarded clothing made of non-biodegradable fabrics can sit in landfills for up to 200 years. It takes 2,700 liters of water to make one cotton shirt, enough to meet the average person's drinking needs for two-and-a-half years.

Literature Review:

Fast fashion improves economic growth in both developed and developing countries, as well as creates business partnerships for future alliances. In 2022, the global fashion industry was valued at approximately $1.53 trillion.

According to the Ellen McArthur Foundation, clothing production has approximately doubled in the last 15 years, driven by a growing middle-class population across the globe and increased per capita sales in developed economies. An expected 400 percent increase in world GDP by 2050 will mean even greater demand for clothing.

However, an industry which contributes exceptionally to the global economy has certain environmental concerns as well. The Pulse Report co-developed with Boston Consulting Group, found that addressing environmental and social problems created by the fashion industry would

provide a \$192 billion overall benefit to the global economy by 2030. The annual value of clothing discarded prematurely is more than \$400 billion. According to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the industry is the second-biggest consumer of water and is responsible for about 10% of global carbon emissions

Kirsi Niinimäki, Greg Peters, Helena Dahlbo, Patsy Perry, Timo Rissanen and Alison Gwilt, in the paper titled 'Environmental Price of fast fashion', stated that - The cost pressure and level of competition in the fashion industry remain very high, making it difficult to change business practices. Yet, it is essential that the industry as a whole takes responsibility for its environmental impacts, including water, energy and chemical use, CO2 emissions and waste production.

Ellen McArthur Foundation, further stated in 2024, that time has come to radically redesign fashion's future and move towards a more "circular model" of textile production and usage that reuses materials wherever possible and keeps our clothing in use for longer, leading to better economic, societal, and environmental outcomes.

In 2023, Martini Igini stated that the fast fashion sector in the year 2020 crossed the market value of 69,000 million USD, has been detrimental to the environment, and is contributing to climate change and CO2 emissions, more than the aviation industry.

Research Objective:

To understand the current trends of the fast fashion industry in the world and to make projections about the upcoming changes in the market size the following research objectives are set. The objective designed to understand the environmental impact of the Greenhouse Gases emission due to fashion industry and suggestion of changes is:

1. Impact of fashion on greenhouse gases emission.

In order to investigate how the Sustainable Development Goals can converge with the fast fashion industry, and recommend what changes and innovation can be adopted in the industry the following objective is designed:

2. Mapping of sustainable development goals and designing clothing sectors agenda

Research Methodology:

With the aim of making the projections of the market size of the fast fashion market world over, secondary data was used from the Global Fashion Agenda Report of the year 2024. This data was used to find the year on year growth in the fashion industry. The Research Methodology used in order to work towards the mentioned objective, thus relies on drawing conclusions from secondary data. In order to understand the emissions of Greenhouse Gases due to the fast fashion

Industry and its impact on Climate change, secondary data was drawn from the Global Fashion Agenda report of 2022 about the percent share in the global total emission. The conclusions were used to make certain recommendations on how to reduce the GHG emissions as efficiently as possible, by taking insights from the world's top fashion brands.

In order to gain better insight into possibilities for future improvement of the fast fashion industry, from the point of view of sustainability, understanding the impact on certain Sustainable Development Goals, Namely Goal 9: Industry Innovation and Infrastructure, and Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. The methodology adopted here is the review analysis of the annual reports published by the United Nations Environment Programme and The Global Fashion Agenda.

Observations and Recommendations:

Objective I: Impact of Fashion on Greenhouse Gases Emission.

The Graphical representation of the year on year rise in greenhouse gas emission due to the fashion industry can be presented as shown in the figure below.
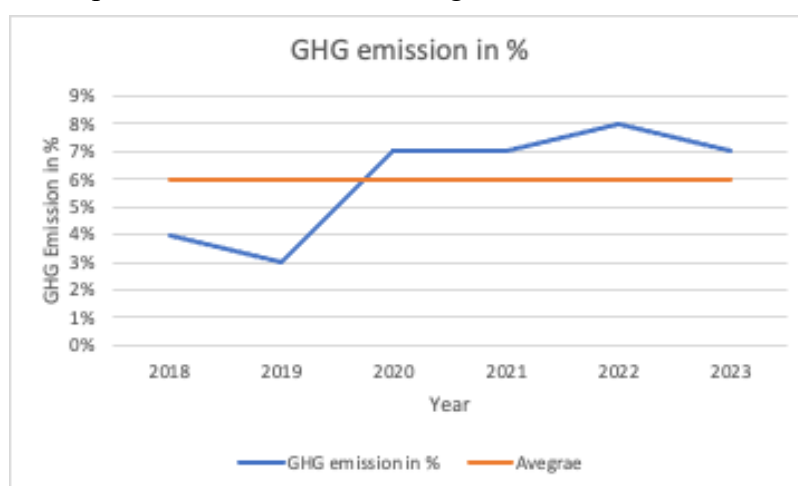
Around 70% of the fast fashion sectors's emissions came from activities such as materials production, preparation and processing. The remaining 30% were associated with downstream retail operations, the use-phase and end-of-use conditioning. The graph highlights the fact that post 2020, there has been a substantial rise in the GHG emissions from the fashion Industry.

To resolve this environmental impact needs innovation in the infrastructure and production practices. Since 2018, certain innovative practices have been adopted. Including innovative and recycled fibre production. Such as creating fibres from waste, technologies for managing traceability or value chain data management, innovations in production processes like new waterless dying technologies, technologies for innovative customer experiences e.g. on-demand production systems.

The Year-on-Year analysis found that there exists an above average increase in the GreenHouse gas emission, thus finding the correlation between the market size and GHG emission shows a negative correlation of -6%. Indicative of the fact that as the market size rises the GHG emission in percent shows a downward trend. It highlights the fact that the innovative measures have had a positive impact since 2019 onwards.

Year	GHG emission in %	Market size in trillion $
2018	4%	1.58
2019	3%	1.57
2020	7%	1.39
2021	7%	1.55
2022	8%	1.57
2023	7%	1.73

However, it is only a marginal fall in the percentage share of the GHG emission and rather, needs substantial steps taken in this direction to reduce the GHG Emissions. Also, the projection about GHG emissions is likely rise to around 2.7 billion tonnes a year by 2030, reflecting an annual volume growth rate of 2.7%. There needs to be dominant steps in this direction.

World top brands are seen working in this direction, Adidas are experimenting with personalized gear to cut down on returns, increase customer satisfaction and reduce inventory. Ralph Lauren has announced that it will use 100% sustainably-sourced key materials by 2025. This can be implemented even by the emerging fashion brands, as they are the ones who need to shift their production process away from the environmentally detrimental processes.

It also needs a response from the consumer base as, "around 21% of accelerated abatement potential is directly related to consumer actions in the use phase and end-of-use phase, enabled by conscious consumption and new industry business models" - Global Fashion agenda report 2024.

Further, given the larger goal of environmental protection, even the governments of the countries, also need to step ahead. Recently French president, Emmanuel Macron has made a pact with 150 brands to make the fashion industry more sustainable.

Objective II: Sustainable Development Goals and Designing Clothing sectors

In order to make certain recommendations, Past literature was reviewed to understand how the Fast fashion Industry can be converged two of the major SDGs, Namely Goal 9 and 12.

Source: UN 2030 Agenda Report

The fast Fashion Industry needs certain Innovations and Infrastructural changes such as supporting bold leadership in the fashion industries with respect to their supply chains with fewer dangerous chemicals and lower carbon footprints. As per the UNEP, Their needs here reflect how connected the world's environmental challenges need to address pollution, climate change, and nature loss can be transformative — with fast, tangible results at the needed scale.

There needs to be innovations to create new models which focus on sharing, reuse and longevity, rely on local identity and normalize new business models with consumers, and new technologies to support circularity.

The World Resources Institute suggests that companies need to design, test and invest in business models that reuse clothes and maximise their useful life. The UN has launched the Alliance for Sustainable Fashion to address the damages caused by fast fashion. It is seeking to 'halt the environmentally and socially destructive practices of fashion'.

The consumers should also become all the more responsible, and contribute to limiting the negative impact of the fast fashion industry on the environment. It can be as simple as approaching platforms like "Worn Wear" where you can trade in used clothing so it can be washed and resold, lengthening the garment's lifespan. Simple DIY repair guides to extend the life of textile products. The best advice on reducing the environmental impact of fast fashion comes from Patsy Perry, senior lecturer in fashion marketing at the University of Manchester, who says, "Less is always more."

Conclusions:

In the contemporary world, economic growth should go hand in hand with the measures to deal with environmental concerns. Considering the Fast Fashion industry which is an important contributor for the economy and has become a trillion dollar business should work in the direction of being more sustainable.

In the past few years, due to change in the consumption patterns, and producers in the race to meet constantly changing preferences, have seen a rise in the market size but compromised on its

alarming environmental impact. There remain only marginal steps taken to make the fast fashion industry all the more sustainable, and are even limited to top brands and thus remain slow paced. It requires imitation of the production processes by the marginal brands of the top brands, and upscaling the pace of meeting the sustainability targets.

As suggested by the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), the SDG should be targeted by the Fast Fashion Industry. There should be steps taken to make the production processes more sustainable, and even influence the consumer preference patterns.

Many Countries, and top fashion brands have realized the importance of working in the direction of making the fast fashion industry a sustainable one. There now needs to be an increase in the scope of these efforts.

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REDEFINING STYLE:

THE COMFORT REVOLUTION IN MODERN FASHION TRENDS

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Abstract:

Comfort has emerged as a significant force in contemporary fashion, with fashion trends changing significantly over time. In the past, aesthetics usually won over practicality, leaving a gap between style and wearability. Today, modern consumers are demanding clothing that is both aesthetically pleasing and comfortable, thus challenging designers and brands to innovate and adapt. This study explores comfort as a key determinant of fashion trends, along with other factors such as sustainability, technology, cultural influences, economic conditions and psychological factors. A mixed-methods approach is adopted, combining quantitative surveys using convenient sampling methods and qualitative analysis is adopted in the present study to understand the consumer preferences about comfort in determining fashion trends. Secondary data from industry reports and academic literature provided further insights. Descriptive analysis and Inferential analysis including Chi-Square and t-test are also employed to analyse the hypothesis and to derive the conclusion. The results emphasize that comfort, influenced by changing lifestyles, like working from home and focusing on wellness, is at the forefront of fashion. The designers are embracing soft fabrics, ergonomic designs, and versatile styles to cater to these needs. Sustainability has also emerged as an important factor; consumers prefer products made from environmentally friendly materials and produced through responsible means. Technological innovations in wearable technology, cultural diversity, and the global economic trend are other influential factors in the fashion industry. This study underlines the fact that the consumer-centric approach is the only way to make fashion comfortable, innovative, and aesthetically appealing to compete in the dynamic market.

Keywords: Comfort, Fashion Trends, Consumer Preferences, Designers, Sustainability.

1. Introduction:

Comfort has emerged as the most dominant reason for clothing choice. Of course, people still wanted to be fashionable, but now comfort is in great demand, whether it is comfort in terms of

fit, fabric, or the overall look of the garment. People no longer are blind followers of the designs that the fashion houses or brands would present. They express their own needs, and social media served as a perfect outlet for their voices to be heard. Demand for clothing to be comfortable without sacrificing on the style made the fashion houses and the brands go back to the drawing boards and rethink their whole design strategy. Thus comfort emerged a new style of clothing.

This paradigm shift signalled the beginning of what can, in all aptness, be labelled a "Comfort Revolution." This fast-paced, modern individual takes comfort and multifunctionality for granted in terms of wardrobe function. Whether one is talking about the rise of athleisure, the continued dominance of oversized silhouettes, or a growing interest in breathable, sustainable fabrics, one can see an industry that continually evolves to fill these changing consumer needs. The attraction of high heels and tight corsets has been pushed aside by the comfort of sneakers and ergonomic design. This trend is not merely about the comfort of the physical body but rather a deeper transformation in culture where individuality and authenticity are favoured over rigid conformity to out-of-date styles.

The power of social media should not be overlooked in fuelling this transformation. The spaces of consumers and influencers, therefore, have made Instagram and other platforms spaces of dictation. The trends have been expressed in the hashtag movements #ComfortOverStyle and #EffortlessFashion. The fashion dialogue is no longer restricted to the glossy magazine spreads or elite runway shows. Fashion is now a two-way dialogue because the consumers can review, comment, and share their opinions to affect the trend's course. Brands risk being left behind if they cannot meet this growing demand for comfort, as more and more customers base their loyalty on inclusiveness and responsiveness.

The pandemic era also marked a defining moment in the definition of style. With the rise of remote work and lockdowns, people found themselves embracing clothing that could easily transition between professional and casual settings. Loungewear, once confined to private spaces, became mainstream as a symbol of this new reality. This "comfort-first" approach has since remained embedded in the collective consciousness, even as society transitions back to pre-pandemic routines.

At such a juncture, the fashion industry finds itself at the crossroads. Style is, of course, still a prime factor, but the modern consumer demands a more holistic approach to design-one that unites aesthetics with comfort and sustainability. The Comfort Revolution is, therefore, far from being a passing fad but a significant shift in the way fashion is perceived, produced, and

consumed. This paper tries to examine how this revolution is shaping modern fashion trends, challenging traditional notions of style, and redefining the future of the industry.

2. Review of Literature:

Kausher, H. (2023) in her paper titled "Harmony of Style: Navigating the Intersection of Comfort and Beauty in Fashion" discusses how comfort and aesthetic appeal must balance each other to make a beautiful product. The subject matter has been developed based on the overall sustainable and functional discourse of fashion, where the customer increasingly asks for clothes that show personal style yet accommodate the need for functionality.

There is a long history of the dichotomy between comfort and beauty in fashion. Traditional Western fashion, for example, was often about looking good, as in the case of corsetry and other restrictive garments, while more contemporary movements have been about casual and functional clothing (Breward, 2003; Steele, 2019).

The paper is likely to fit within the framework of normcore and minimalist fashion trends, which call for subtlety, utility, and simplicity (Hoffmann *et al.,* 2021). It could also touch on the psychological and cultural influences that shape the perception of beauty and comfort and would incorporate knowledge from consumer behavior studies. It would be expected to talk about how technological innovations, such as advanced fabrics and ergonomic designs, contribute to reconciling this tension (Black, 2020).

Lastly, the study could reveal the future of fashion as a means of inclusiveness and adaptability in design to accommodate all body types and lifestyles, where comfort and beauty go hand in hand without sacrificing one for the other.

Thebo, S., Malik, S. A., Mengal, N., Ashraf, R. F., & Jeong, S. H. (2021). studied consumer perceptions of clothing comfort and its relationship to garment attributes such as fabric, fit, design, and performance. The study reveals that comfort is a multi-dimensional concept encompassing physical, psychological, and sensory factors. Consumers often prioritize softness, elasticity, breathability, and temperature regulation when assessing the comfort of garments. The study has also revealed that aesthetic elements such as style and color play an important role in making purchase decisions, although, in most cases, these are not the primary influencers of comfort. The researchers stressed the need for the integration of consumer feedback during the design and manufacturing processes for the attainment of comfort and aesthetic appeal.

With the results of this study, designers and manufacturers can design garments that are not only aligned with consumer preferences but also encourage brand loyalty. The need for innovation in

fabric technologies and ergonomic designs is underlined by the study to meet diverse consumer demands.

Kim, J., Schiavon, S., & Brager, G. (2018) proposed personal comfort models, focusing on moving away from generic environmental controls towards occupant-cantered solutions that are sensitive to individual thermal comfort. This paper shows that conventional thermal comfort models, like Fanger's Predicted Mean Vote, do not capture individual variability arising from physiological, psychological, and behavioural heterogeneity. PCMs combine real-time data with advanced sensors and machine learning algorithms to predict and enhance comfort at the individual level.

This study is significant to clothing design and fashion as it highlights the garment that integrates itself with users' thermal preference. The study found that garments that are breathable, moisture wicking, and adaptable with the environment greatly increase comfort in different conditions. By bringing together aesthetics, functionality, and personal thermal comfort for incorporation in dynamic environments, this study has opened doors through its science-based approach to creating garments with an orientation of individual user needs.

2.1 Research Gap

While many research studies are conducted in the field of fashion, few of them focus specifically on either the thermal comfort apparel or the worldwide fashion industry, neglecting the specific Indian context. Most of the research is focused more on the international markets with a significant deficiency in understanding Indian consumers' special preferences, cultural influences, and demands. This clearly indicates the requirements for studies to bridge the gaps between fashion aesthetics, comfort, and regional sensibilities in India. This intersection can be explored for valuable insights in the growing Indian fashion market throwing the light upon the role of comfort in the Indian Fashion Industry.

Research Problem: Traditional fashion trends often prioritized aesthetics over practicality, leading to a disconnect between style and wearability. The modern consumer, however, increasingly demands clothing that balances aesthetics with comfort. This shift presents a critical challenge for designers and brands to innovate and adapt to these changing preferences.

3. Research Objectives: The study aims to:

1. Analyse the role of comfort as a significant determinant of contemporary fashion trends.
2. Examine other key factors influencing fashion trends, such as sustainability, technology, cultural influences, and economic conditions.

3. Investigate consumer behaviour and preferences to understand the evolving relationship between style and functionality.

4. To provide suggestions to the designers based on the preferences of the consumers which would help satisfy their customers' demands

4. Hypothesis

4.1. Hypothesis 1: Comfort as a Significant Determinant of Contemporary Fashion Trends.

- **Null Hypothesis (H_0):** Comfort is not a significant determinant of contemporary fashion trends.

- **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):** Comfort is a significant determinant of contemporary fashion trends.

4.2. Difference in Willingness to Pay Extra for Comfort by Gender

- **Null Hypothesis (H_0):** There is no significant difference in willingness to pay extra for comfort between genders.

- **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):** There is a significant difference in willingness to pay extra for comfort between genders.

4.3. Impact of Age on Frequency of Considering Comfort When Purchasing

- **Null Hypothesis (H_0):** Age group has no significant impact on the frequency of considering comfort when purchasing fashion items.

- **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):** Age group has a significant impact on the frequency of considering comfort when purchasing fashion items.

5. Research Methodology: A mixed-methods approach is employed for this study.

5.1 Primary Data: The primary data was collected from 152 students

5.1.1 Structured Interview: Quantitative data is gathered through a convenient random sampling method to identify consumer preferences and purchasing behaviour and received 152 responses from Mumbai, Goa, Gujarat, Chennai.

5.1.2 Structured Interview: Qualitative insights are derived from interviews with five Fashion Designers belonging to different categories. For instance industry experts namely Sucheta Khandekar from Nirmiti (Women wear), Ambarish Kapadia of Ciinnamon (Mens wear), Nayonika Suvarna, young designer, Nivedita, Nivedita Prêt & Couture, Navyaa (Student's perception).

5.2: Secondary Data:

Various International Fashion Magazines such as InStyle, L'Official, W Magazine, Newspapers etc.

6. Results and Significant Findings

Descriptive Statistics
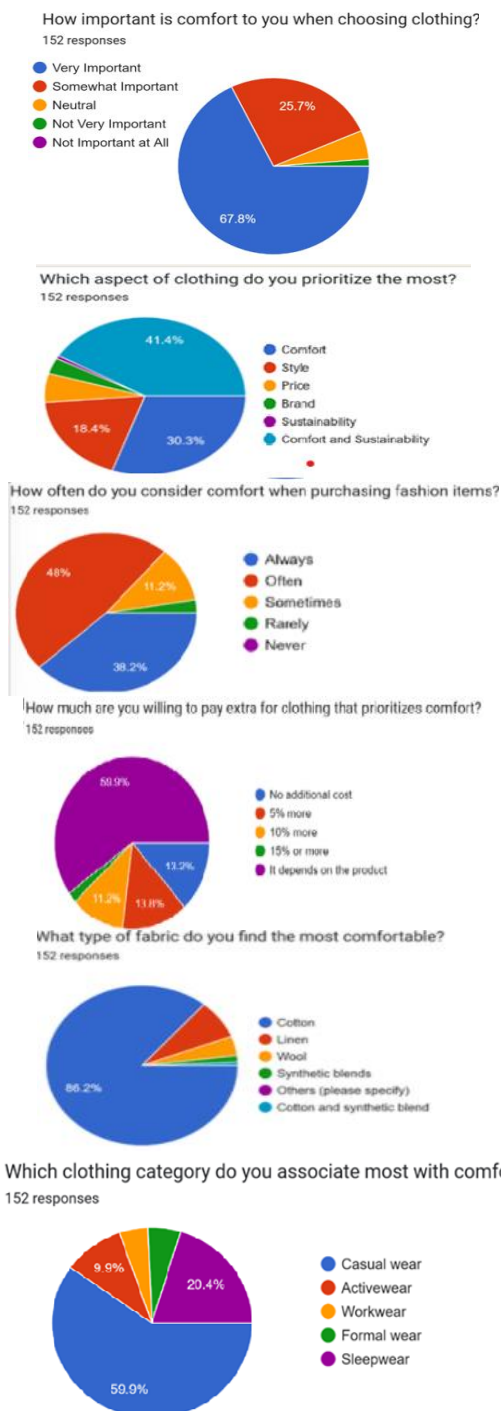
A pie chart of survey answers regarding comfort in clothes. Most (67.8%) consider comfort very important, followed by 25.7% who consider it somewhat important, and small figures with neutral or less significant opinions.

A pie chart illustrating priorities in clothes from 152 responses. Comfort and sustainability is the highest prioritized at 41.4%, followed by style at 30.3%, and price at 18.4%, with a minimal figure for brand.

A pie chart indicating frequency of thinking comfort when buying fashion products. The majority (48%) tend to think often about comfort, 38.2% always think about it, while lower percentages think sometimes or seldom.

A pie chart unveiling willingness to pay extra for comfy clothes. The biggest piece (50.1%) responds that it depends on the product, but lower percentages are willing to pay 5%, 10%, or more extra cost.

A pie chart of fabric comfort preferences. Cotton overwhelmingly leads at 86.2% with small percentages for linen, wool, synthetic blends, and other fabrics.

A pie chart of clothing comfort associations from 152 replies. Casual wear leads the pack at 59.9%, then sleepwear at 20.4%, with lesser percentages for activewear, workwear, and formal wear.
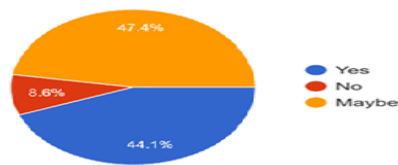
A pie chart of answers to willingness to pay more for comfort. 44.1% answered Yes, 47.4% answered Maybe, and 8.6% answered No, reflecting a generally positive sentiment towards comfort-driven purchases.
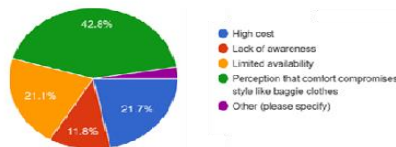
A pie chart showing fashion discomfort barriers. Expensive (21.7%) and not available (2.1%) stand out, with the highest barrier being perception that comfort harms style at 42.6%.
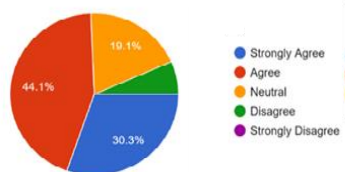
A pie chart of views on the significance of comfort in fashion. 30.3% strongly agree, 44.1% agree, 19.1% are neutral, and minimal percentages disagree or strongly disagree.

Statistical Interference:

Table 1: t-Static Findings

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	How important is comfort to you when choosing clothing?	How 4 do you consider comfort when purchasing fashion items?
Mean	4.585526316	4.190789474
Variance	0.509193099	0.698457651
Observations	152	152
Pearson Correlation	0.411097737	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	151	
t Stat	5.74608499	
P(T<=t) one-tail	2.44071E-08	
t Critical one-tail	1.655007387	
P(T<=t) two-tail	4.88142E-08	
t Critical two-tail	1.975798924	

Table 1 represents the findings of the question pertaining to "importance of comfort while choosing clothes". The obtained t value is 5.75 and t-critical value is 1.97. It can be obtained from the above table that t stat value is greater that t critical value. Therefore, we reject Null Hypothesis and conclude stating that comfort is statistically significant while selecting the clothes.

Qualitative Analysis

Interview of the five designers belonging to different sections and working with various companies in the designing industry are given below:

Name of the Designer	Response of the Designer
Nivedita from Nivedita Prêt & Couture Segment: Haute Couture	**leaning towards comfort** Comfort is very important for all. They were amongst the first to provide ultra comfort in their formal wear through innovations in designs and fabric. The new positioning of fashion has become comfort combined with style. I don't think that you have to choose fashion over style or style over fashion. There is a possibility that you get both together and that is a win-win situation for the creator and the consumer
Ambarish Kapadia from Cinnamon Segment: Menswear	**Spice for wardrobe (Mens wear)** Comfort is very important to his clients. Earlier , for formal wear , it used to be just slim fit but now he has five different fits .He makes different changes keeping in mind body types as well. People have become more aware and ask for comfort styles. The change has come in the last couple of years. The **younger generation prefer fusion**, a blend of traditional look with comfort. In non - urban areas, it is still the traditional look and style which prevails.
Sucheta Khandekar from Nirmiti Segment: Women &	Post covid, comfort has become important. Younger generation go for a tight style but the older generation want loose clothes. Today, for special occasions like weddings,

Menswear	everyone wants fashionable stylish clothes but they change into comfortable clothing the moment the function is over. Loose clothes are preferred because of more washing of the garment as opposed to earlier airing of the garment, an impact of Covid. Brands too have made changes in terms of fabric for comfort Sucheta also has made several changes in her designs to add comfort to the clothes. Including pockets for even a bride's clothes
Nayonika Suvarna from Exports Segment: Menswear	Comfort plays a significant role in most people's clothing choices. especially over 30 She has made changes to incorporate comfort using breathable fabrics, adding a bit of stretch, and designing with ease of movement in mind, without compromising on the polished look. Young people pick up a garment purely based on the style even though that means compromising on a bit of comfort. Older people prefer comfort. comfort and fashion don't have to be separate. With all the new sustainable fabrics and innovative designs out there, it's easier than ever to create stylish pieces that are also comfortable. People are willing to pay more The shift towards comfort shows that people are focusing more on well-being and versatility in their wardrobes.
Navyaa from ISDI (Designing Student)	For Daily wear comfort is preferred but for style statement: **style over comfort.** Designers have made changes Earlier, brands would compromise on fabric for stylish looks. But now consumers are demanding better fabrics as well as looks Covid played an important role in this change. **Social media and easy access** to them helps people voice their choices as feedback. People are ready to pay more if the clothes are sustainable.

Photos received from the Designers:

1. Designer Ambarish Kapadia

2. Designer Nivedita
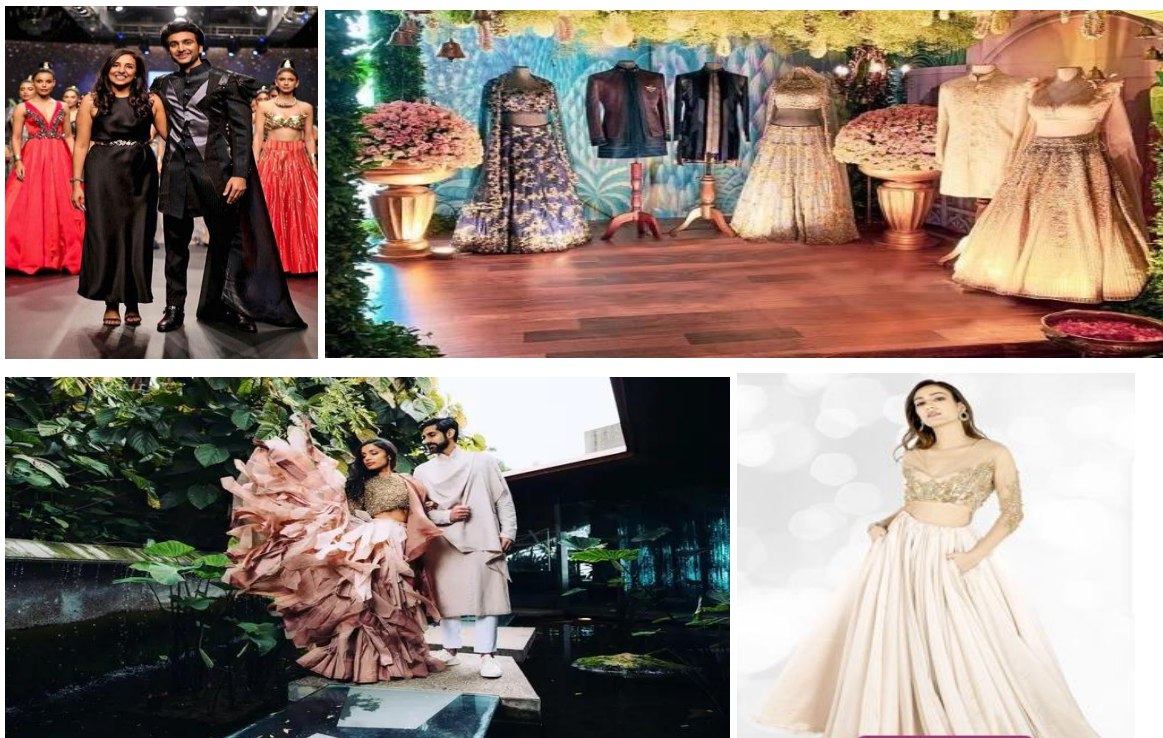
Change in Fashion towards Comfort: "From Common Youth to Runways**"**

Findings from Thematic Analysis

Designer(s)	Theme	Key Finding
Nivedita, Ambarish Kapadia, Sucheta Khandekar, Nayonika Suvarna	**Comfort as a Priority**	Comfort has become a major focus for designers and consumers. Brands are innovating with fabric and design to enhance comfort in both formal and casual wear.
Nayonika Suvarna, Sucheta Khandekar, Navyaa	**Style vs. Comfort Debate**	Younger consumers prioritize style over comfort, while older consumers prefer comfort. However, there is a growing trend of integrating both.
Ambarish Kapadia, Nivedita, Sucheta Khandekar	**Shift in Consumer Preferences**	Formal wear has evolved from just slim-fit to multiple fit options. Consumers now demand both comfort and style.
Ambarish Kapadia, Sucheta Khandekar	**Regional & Generational Differences**	Urban consumers prefer fusion fashion (a mix of traditional and modern comfort), while non-urban areas still favor traditional styles.

Sucheta Khandekar, Nayonika Suvarna	Impact of COVID-19	People prefer looser clothing due to increased washing and hygiene awareness. Fabric choices have shifted towards breathable materials.
Nayonika Suvarna, Navyaa	Willingness to Pay More for Comfort & Sustainability	Consumers are ready to pay a premium for sustainable fabrics and better quality, with social media influencing these choices.
Industry Adaptation	Sucheta Khandekar, Nivedita, Nayonika Suvarna	Designers are innovating by adding stretch to fabrics, incorporating pockets in bridal wear, and using sustainable materials without compromising style.

Conclusion:

The findings reveal that comfort has become a pivotal factor in determining fashion trends, driven by lifestyle changes, the rise of remote work, and growing awareness of physical well-being. The integration of soft, breathable fabrics, ergonomic designs, and versatile styles underscores this trend. Alongside comfort, sustainability has emerged as a crucial determinant, with consumers increasingly favouring eco-friendly materials and ethical practices. Other influences include advancements in wearable technology, cultural diversity, and the global economic landscape. This study underscores the need for fashion brands to adopt a consumer-centric approach, blending comfort with innovation and aesthetic appeal to remain competitive in a dynamic market.

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UNDERSTANDING QUIET LUXURY IN FASHION:
A STUDY OF OUTFITS FROM HBO'S *SUCCESSION*

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Abstract:

This paper explores the concept of "quiet luxury" in 21st-century fashion through an analysis of the outfits worn by the Roy family in HBO's television series Succession. Quiet luxury, marked by understated elegance and deliberate lack of overt branding, represents a shift in Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of Conspicuous Consumption* (1899), which initially argued that individuals display wealth through overtly luxurious goods. By examining the refined fashion choices in *Succession* by costume designer Michelle Matland, this study investigates how the series reflects Veblen's transition to inconspicuous consumption, where wealth and power are conveyed through subtle, sophisticated markers recognizable only to the high society. Applying Veblen's framework, this paper reveals how clothing in Succession operates as a visual language, signifying class distinctions and power dynamics while offering insight into contemporary elite fashion choices. Using the tenets of Fashion study and fashionology propagated by thinkers such as Yuniya Kawamura and Fred Davies, this paper explores the social, economic and mediated dimensions of sartorial practices that are popular in the 21st century. Also within the purview of this paper is the analysis of the sartorial semiotics of the characters in the series.

Keywords: Quiet Luxury, Fashionology, Fashion Studies, Conspicuous Consumption, Fashion Semiotics

Introduction:

"Quiet luxury" is a fashion trend that stresses understated elegance. It is primarily associated with Western fashion trends, especially in Europe and North America. This fashion trend is about the quality of clothing and focuses more on subtle signals of wealth rather than overt use of logos and brands. Western luxury brands like Loro Piana, Brunello Cucinelli, The Row, and Hermès, with their emphasis on craft skills, timelessness, and quality, exemplify this trend.

"Quite Luxury" gained significant popularity in 2023, largely due to the acclaimed HBO series *Succession*. This paper attempts to understand the concept of 'quiet luxury' as a prominent trend

and its hallmark as a status symbol by studying the characters and their outfits on the show *Succession*.

Succession is a dark comedy-drama series that follows the Roy family, the owners of the global media and entertainment conglomerate Waystar RoyCo. Created by Jesse Armstrong, *Succession*, aired for four seasons from 2018 to 2023. Each season comprises of ten episodes except season three.

The story follows patriarch Logan Roy, whose age and health issues spark fierce competition among his four children—Kendall, Shiv, Roman, and Connor—for control of the company. Themes of power, family dynamics, and corporate politics drive the series, marked by sharp writing, dark humour, and compelling performances.

Other key characters include Tom Wambsgans, Shiv's ambitious husband, and Greg Hirsch, the bumbling but strategic cousin, whose interactions range from alliances to betrayals. The show's distinct aesthetic is brought to life by Michelle Matland and her talented costume team, whose work enhances character development and aligns with the production's design vision. Over four seasons, and a total of 39 episodes which aired from June 3, 2018, to May 28, 2023, *Succession* captures the complexities of family and the ruthless nature of the corporate world.

Research Objectives

1. To explore and define the concept of "quiet luxury" in 21st century fashion.
2. To examine how "quiet luxury" represents a shift in markers of social status.
3. To study how clothing in the HBO TV series *Succession* epitomizes "quiet luxury" through its sartorial semiotics.
4. To analyze the fashion choices of the Roy family in the HBO TV series *Succession*.

Research Methodology

This paper uses textual and visual analysis to study the sartorial choices of the Roy family in the HBO TV series *Succession* by performing a close reading of selected episodes and focusing on costume choices by Michelle Matland, the show's head costume designer. In addition to that, this paper identifies key outfits that embody the fashion trend "quiet luxury".

Literature Review

This paper situates the concept of "quiet luxury" within broader academic and theoretical contexts. The study builds upon Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), which critiques the social and economic behaviors of the upper classes in industrial societies. It is seminal in introducing the concept of "conspicuous consumption," which refers to the overt

display of wealth through luxury goods to signal social status. Examples include lavish homes, extravagant clothing, and hosting grand social events. (Veblen, 1994)

Veblen's concept of conspicuous consumption has a profound influence on analyzing elite fashion, as clothing and personal adornments are visible markers of social status. *The Theory of the Leisure Class* directly addresses fashion, emphasizing its role in signaling power and membership within specific social classes. This paper uses Veblen's theory as a foundational framework to study the historical evolution of fashion and to emphasize the shift in fashion trends within 21st-century elite clothing. These insights provide the context for examining "quiet luxury" as depicted in *Succession*, where costume design employs subtlety to signify power and privilege. (Veblen, 1994)

The *New York Times* article by Friedman (2023) highlights how "quiet luxury" signifies exclusivity through its reliance on subtle craftsmanship and high-quality materials rather than visible logos, making it a form of visual shorthand understood by the upper echelons of society. Similarly, the BBC (2023) describes "stealth luxury" as a trend where high-value fashion is intentionally discreet, reinforcing the connection between wealth and refined taste. These insights complement Matland's sartorial semiotics in *Succession*, as discussed by *The New Yorker* (2023), which emphasizes how the series' costumes operate as a "visual language" to communicate the power dynamics and class distinctions central to its narrative. (Gelt, 2023) (Thorp, 2023)

Podcasts like *The Art of Costume* delve into the design philosophy behind these choices, further contextualizing their cultural and aesthetic significance. This aligns with the *Times of India* (2023) discussion of how the series catalyzed a larger cultural shift toward understated luxury in fashion. These online newspaper articles provide insightful knowledge in the popularity of "quiet luxury" trend. (The Art of Costume Podcast, 2024) (Dawda, 2023)

Fashion-ology: An Introduction to Fashion Studies (2005) by Yuniya Kawamura redefines the understanding of fashion as a cultural and sociological phenomenon. She states that fashion designers, editors, critics, and influencers play significant roles in legitimizing and promoting fashion trends. Hence, this theory provides a framework for understanding fashion as a social institution shaped by cultural, economic, and symbolic systems in the show *Succession*. (Kawamura,2005)

This paper also relies on Fred Davis's *Fashion, Culture, and Identity* (1992) to understand how clothing serves as a medium for individual and collective identity expression. Davis argues that fashion and clothing choices not only reflect personal tastes but also group affiliations. This

theory guides the analysis of how *Succession* uses fashion as a tool for storytelling and character development, reflecting broader sociological trends. (Davis, 1992)

This literature review establishes a comprehensive foundation for analyzing the concept of "quiet luxury" in *Succession*. Drawing on theories of conspicuous consumption and fashionology, it situates the study within broader academic and cultural discussions.

Analysis

Historically, elite fashion has always been a display of wealth and status. From Ancient Rome and Egypt, where clothing signified social standing (linen for Egyptians, purple for Romans), to the Medieval period with sumptuary laws restricting fabrics to the elite (silk, fur, gold thread), fashion has consistently served as a marker of affluence. (Mark,2017)

The Renaissance saw layered garments, intricate tailoring, and elaborate fabrics (brocade, damask) as symbols of wealth. The Baroque and Rococo eras witnessed extravagant displays of wealth through elaborate wigs, lace, and bejeweled clothing (Louis XIV, Marie Antoinette).

The Industrial Revolution democratized access to fine fabrics, shifting the focus towards custom tailoring and intricate details to distinguish the wealthy. Post-World War II, Haute Couture emerged as the pinnacle of fashion, embodying exquisite craftsmanship and exclusivity.

In essence, as stated by Thorstein Veblen, throughout history, elite fashion has been characterized by its ostentatious nature, utilizing rare materials, intricate craftsmanship, and exclusive designs to showcase wealth and social standing. The 1980s added to this conspicuous display by introducing power dressing and structured suits for both men and women. Luxury brands like Chanel, Gucci, and Prada became status symbols. Owning garments from these exclusive brands was a way to flaunt one's wealth and social connections. Logos, rare fabrics, custom pieces, and sustainability were markers of luxury clothing.

The historical journey outlined in the above passages illustrates how elites have consistently used fashion as a multifaceted tool to assert power, not just through visibility but through taste, knowledge, and exclusivity, which are the key tenets of conspicuous consumption by Thorstein Veblen.

By the 21st century, a new trend emerged: "quiet luxury" fashion. The New York Times article titled "'Quiet Luxury' Becomes a Flex for the Ultrarich," published on July 22, 2023, explores how the ultra-wealthy have shifted to understated elegance, moving away from the conspicuous displays of wealth historically seen in fashion designs and elite clothing. (Gelt,2023)

This article highlights Kendall Roy's Loro Piana baseball cap, featured in the HBO TV show *Succession*, created by Jesse Armstrong. In Season 3, Episode 3, titled "The Disruption," the cap serves as an emblem of "quiet luxury". Throughout the series, Kendall Roy is often seen wearing multiple navy baseball caps, which, to an untrained eye, might resemble cheaper caps available at a supermarket. However, the caps he wears currently cost €850 and, during the show's run in October 2021, were priced at approximately $625. (Yan, 2021)

The Italian brand Loro Piana crafted these baseball caps using their exclusive "The Gift of Kings" wool and deerskin. Speaking to the Wall Street Journal in 2021, Michelle Matland, *Succession*'s costume designer, highlighted the significance of the absence of a logo on Kendall's caps, stating: "There's no relevant team but... team Me". (Berry,2023)

Furthermore, one observes that the characters in *Succession* are dressed in brands associated with "quiet luxury". Loro Piana, Brunello Cucinelli, The Row, Hermès, Celine, Max Mara, Loretta Caponi, Ralph Lauren, and occasionally Prada and Gucci are the brands worn by the major characters of the show. In a podcast interview, Matland stated how she and her assistant co-designer, John Schwartz, would go downtown and hang outside the Wall Street buildings, observing the wealthy getting out of their limos and those at the lower echelon emerging from the subway. This process was catalyst in selecting costumes for the characters in the show. (The Art of Costume Podcast, 2024)

When speaking of brands and costumes, she discussed how the character of Tom Wambsgans, who at the beginning of the series is a Midwesterner from a lower-end college with a middle-class upbringing and is simply Shioban Roy's boyfriend at a lower-level job, can be seen struggling to fit in with the Roys style of dressing. (The Art of Costume Podcast, 2024)

In the initial season, Tom is a senior executive at Waystar Royco, running the Parks division—an insignificant aspect of the Roys' many businesses. Hence, he is often dressed in Hickey Freeman, a classic American brand that offers high-quality tailoring and targets upper-middle-class professionals and executives seeking accessible luxury. This brand is popular among business leaders and politicians but is not associated with global fashion trends. One also observes him wearing conspicuous Gordon Gekko suspenders and matching his tie to his pocket square. These sartorial practices by the costume designers symbolize his need to fit in and gain the approval of Logan Roy and the rest of the family.

Seasons 2 and 3 shows Tom as the striving opportunist and, oftentimes, the calculating survivor. He is married to Logan Roy's only daughter, a key player as the next heir. He also begins running the ATN news network, a controversial but significant division of Waystar Royco.

Though a pawn in Logan's schemes and Shiv's political ambitions, the season finale—where he betrays Shiv by aligning with Logan—marks a pivotal shift in his character from a passive participant and punching bag to an active manipulator. This is further emphasized by his Ralph Lauren Purple Label Gregory Silk-Linen Suit Jacket ($2,995) and Slim-Fit Silk and Linen-Blend Suit Trousers ($695) in the episode. The Purple Label suits embody the principles of "quiet luxury", as they are crafted from the finest fabrics, feature impeccable tailoring, and, most importantly, avoid conspicuous logos. The classic cuts and muted colours of Tom's suit project his shift to inconspicuous luxury and highlight his sophistication. (Mylod, 2021)

By Season 4, Tom Wambsgans is the ruthless player in the battle for control of Waystar Royco. He has fully grown to understand corporate politics and positions himself as the unlikely contender for the new CEO of Waystar Royco. This is reflected in his choice of suits, as he is seen wearing Brioni, an Italian brand that combines traditional Italian craftsmanship with modern sophistication and exclusivity. The target audience of this brand is ultra-high-net-worth individuals, celebrities, and connoisseurs of fine tailoring. Tom's suits in the final season of the show feature fully canvassed construction and hand-stitched details, serving as status symbols that portray the essence of "quiet luxury". (Michie, 2023a)

The concept of "quiet luxury" was introduced to the audience through Tom Wambsgans' comment on a character's bag in Season 4, Episode 1 of *Succession,* titled "The Munsters." Tom mocks the bag, carried by Bridget, Cousin Greg's date to Logan Roy's birthday party. He describes it as "monstrous" and "gargantuan," saying it could be used for camping or sliding across the floor after a bank job. The "ludicrously capacious bag," a Burberry tote featured in HBO's *Succession*, soon became a cultural symbol of the rise of "quiet luxury". (Mylod, 2023a)

Within the show, the bag represented the nuanced social dynamics and hyper-awareness of class and status that define the series. It served to highlight the insecurities and social ambitions of characters like Bridget, Greg's date, who is mocked for bringing it to a high-society event. This critique underscored the divide between "aspirational" fashion (flashy, logo-heavy) and the "quiet luxury" ethos of the elite, as embodied by the Roy family. (Mylod, 2023a)

Michelle Matland stated on a podcast that they researched around 20 bags for the scene, ultimately choosing one that looked ridiculous yet plausible for a woman in Bridget's price range. The ridiculousness is further emphasized by Bridget's Sandro Paris short dress ($490) in embroidered fabric, which stands out against the muted colours of the other guests. (The Art of Costume Podcast, 2024)

Bridget's attire contrasts sharply with that of the other female characters, highlighting the fact that she is obviously upper middle class, making at most $75,000 per month. Siobhan Roy, commonly referred to as "Shiv" throughout the series, is one of the central characters in HBO's *Succession*. As the sole daughter in the Roy family, she has become a sartorial model and a case study of the ultra-rich. Her outfits follow a neutral colour palette, featuring tailored suits with streamlined silhouettes.

In Season 1, Shiv is portrayed as an outsider, distancing herself from the family's media conglomerate, Waystar Royco, and working as a political consultant advocating for progressive causes that contrast sharply with her family's conservative media empire. Michelle Matland stated in a podcast that Shiv is intentionally dressing to reflect her middle-income political consultant persona. As such, she wears clothing from Bloomingdale's, an iconic American department store known for its high-end merchandise and luxury offerings. Her corporate outfits, such as partly buttoned-down blouses in soft hues and comfortable fabrics, along with occasional oversized sweaters, ponchos, and an overall warm, autumnal wardrobe, represent her individuality and understated elegance. Shiv's attire reflects her approachability, which her work demands, while still incorporating brands that are inaccessible to the general public. (The Art of Costume Podcast, 2024) (Michie, 2023b)

By Season 2, Shiv is drawn into the family business and begins to shed her democratic and liberal principles. This shift is reflected in her clothing, as she transitions to wearing brands like Ralph Lauren, MaxMara, and Armani, which are popular among men for their display of "quiet luxury". Matland stated that the aim was to incorporate a mildly masculine silhouette with a subtly sexy, feminine touch. Her Hobbs London Shanice White Jumpsuit ($480), worn in the Season 2 finale "This Is Not for Tears," embodies Matland's vision. Throughout the series, Shiv often wears black turtlenecks and monochrome grey pantsuits, symbolizing her struggle to compete as a woman in a male-dominated world. (Mylod, 2019)

As the series progresses to Season 3, Shiv dives deeper into Waystar's internal politics. She struggles with her father's manipulative tactics and her siblings' rivalry, constantly seeking Logan's approval. Her outfits begin to resemble those of her circle, a shift from the more distinct style seen in Season 1. Her Plunging Back Draped Navy Gown by Monique Lhuillier ($2,500) in Episode 3 exudes subtle glamour, characterized by minimalist design, quality construction, and attention to detail. Other outfits from this season, such as the Marisa Jacket by MaxMara ($1,590) in Episode 5, the Long-Sleeve Wool Knit Day Dress by Ralph Lauren ($1,390) in Episode 6, and the Asymmetric Gathered Stretch Jersey Midi Dress by Monse Maison ($1,790)

in Episode 7, all exemplify the principles of "quiet luxury". Each piece possesses a sense of timelessness. They do not rely on trends or overt decoration; instead, they represent enduring style. This aligns with the "quiet luxury" philosophy of avoiding short-lived trends and opting for pieces that can be worn season after season. (Bray, 2021) (Parekh, 2021) (Scafaria, 2021)

In Season 4, Shiv is falling apart as she grapples with the shocking betrayal by her husband at the end of Season 3. Her decisions in the final season reflect a mix of ambition, desperation, and emotional turmoil. Her pregnancy and divorce introduce a new layer of complexity, exposing her vulnerability and forcing her to confront the intersection of her personal and professional lives. Her costumes in the final season reflect this transformation. Once symbols of her strength, her outfits now portray her failures. Another explanation for her repeated outfits is her inability to access her entire wardrobe due to her imminent divorce. For the first time, she is shown wearing the same clothing more than once. Shiv begins the season finale dressed in a Fenice Houndstooth Altuzarra blazer ($1,795) previously seen in Episode 2. In the finale, "With Open Eyes," she pairs the blazer with matching Altuzarra pants ($990), contrasting with her earlier pairing of the jacket with Rhode paper bag trousers. Shiv's evolution in *Succession* encapsulates the show's central themes of ambition, loyalty, and the corrosive nature of power. (Mylod, 2023b)

The concept of "quiet luxury" is even more prominent in the show's most powerful and wealthiest character, Logan Roy. The patriarch of the Roy family and the CEO of Waystar Royco, Logan is a ruthless, manipulative businessman who has spent his life consolidating power and control over his empire. He is highly intelligent but also deeply insecure and often willing to sacrifice his children to maintain control.

Logan Roy's fashion choices in *Succession* are not merely personal style preferences but visual representations of his character traits and business philosophies. Michelle Matland explained that Logan has nothing to prove. As a man who wields immense power, his wardrobe in Season 1 consists of comfortable and cozy shawl-collared sweaters, reflecting his health crisis after suffering a stroke early in the season. However, as he recovers in Season 2, his outfits shift to display his resolve and ruthlessness. He is seen wearing well-tailored, expensive suits in dark colours, such as navy, charcoal, or black. These suits convey authority and experience, aligning with his leadership of Waystar Royco. His suits are often accessorized with traditional items like cufflinks, ties, and pocket squares, emphasizing his old-school corporate masculinity.

In Seasons 3 and 4, Logan combines his cozy approach with a muted, conservative colour palette, favouring understated elegance over fashion-forward trends. This is evident in Episode 4 of Season 3, "Lion in the Meadow," where Logan wears a Powell Quilted Jacket from Barbour

(€159). Similarly, in Season 4, Episode 1, "The Munsters," he is seen in Cashmere Blazer Cardigan from Polo Ralph Lauren ($698) with a Graph Check Dress Shirt by Paul Stuart ($260) at his birthday party and in Ralph Lauren's Purple Label Wrexham Field Jacket ($1,157) for a central park walk. (Mylod, 2023a)

Ultimately, Logan Roy's tailored suits with minimal branding and Shiv Roy's preference for understated designer labels like The Row or Celine highlight sophisticated, timeless fabrics and clean lines. Kendall Roy, known for his extravagant lifestyle, is often portrayed in subtle but high-quality cashmere sweaters, fine leather jackets, and tailored trousers. Throughout the series, the characters predominantly wear neutrals such as navy, grey, black, and beige. These muted tones convey restraint, allowing the quality of the garments to speak for itself. Even in moments of crisis or emotional upheaval, the characters' clothing remains consistent, symbolizing their deep-rooted adherence to power dynamics and their relentless focus on maintaining appearances.

In conclusion, over the course of four seasons, the characters in HBO's acclaimed series *Succession* exemplify the concept of "quiet luxury" through their meticulously curated wardrobes. The clothing choices made by the costume department of the show not only reflect their wealth and status but also serve as powerful storytelling tools, offering insights into their personalities, ambitions, and struggles.

Conclusion:

Hence to conclude this paper has explored the evolving concept of "quiet luxury" in 21st-century fashion, particularly through its representation in the HBO television series *Succession*. By analysing the sartorial choices of the Roy family, the paper has demonstrated how fashion functions as a semiotic language that communicates power, social status, and personal identity. The shift from conspicuous consumption to "quiet luxury", as highlighted by scholars such as Veblen, has reshaped the markers of affluence, placing subtlety and quality at the forefront of elite dressing.

Through a close visual and textual analysis of key characters in *Succession*, including Kendall Roy's hats, Tom Wambsgans' evolving wardrobe, Shiv Roy's carefully curated outfits, and Logan Roy's understated yet authoritative style, this paper has uncovered how the series portrays "quiet luxury" as a tool for communicating socio-economic dominance and social positioning. Additionally, the significance of seemingly small details—such as the bag comment in season 4, episode 1—reveals how even minor sartorial elements can carry profound socio-cultural implications.

Ultimately, *Succession* serves as a cultural mirror, reflecting the shifting dynamics of status in contemporary society. The costumes in the show offer a nuanced portrayal of the elite's desire to maintain power while embracing a more refined, low-key approach to wealth.

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TRAVEL DESTINATIONS IN INDIA INFLUENCING TEXTILE TRENDS

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Abstract:

The intersection of travel destinations and fashion trends has become an increasingly significant aspect of contemporary tourism and cultural expression. Transport connectivity & social media influences travel behaviour by promoting fashion & travel destinations. Fashion trends often reflect the unique cultural, social, and economic factors of a location, influencing how tourists experience and represent a destination. At the same time, popular travel spots inspire fashion collections, contributing to the development of regional trends. India's rich textile heritage has become an important aspect of both fashion and tourism. Regions like Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Odisha are known for their traditional crafts, such as Block Printing, Bandhani and Ikat. Tourists willing to experience India's diverse culture are drawn to regions where fashion is deeply connected with local traditions. For example, Kerala's traditional attire, like the Kasavu saree, or the Kanjivaram sarees of Tamil Nadu, the Paithani saree which is a rich, handwoven textile & Nauvari saree which is a regional Maharashtrian attire hold immense cultural significance and attracts tourists interested in purchasing authentic regional fashion items. Social media has played a pivotal role in promoting fashion-related travel to India. Fashion bloggers and celebrities post images of themselves wearing Indian attire in iconic locations like the Taj Mahal, Jaipur's Ajmer Fort, etc. This "*social media*" effect has led to an exponential increase in tourism in these locations, with visitors eager to imitate the fashion-forward images they see online.

The research paper explores the connection between travel destinations and fashion trends, emphasizing how destinations foster fashion movements and how trends, in turn, shape the perception and popularity of specific locations & thereby combining fashion with culture.

Keywords: Travel Destinations, Tourists, Textile & Fashion Trends

Introduction:

India consists of diverse religions with each religion having their own cultural heritage. Every state has its unique religion which is characterised by its own traditional outfits. These traditional outfits, their unique textiles & dyeing techniques are an attraction for tourists coming from within & outside India. People travel to a particular state to view the monuments, forts and beaches, to experience snow & other scenic beauty and are attracted to the textile trends in that

particular location. These textile trends & clothing patterns are so attractive that they force the tourists to wear those garments & to make memories by going for a photoshoot.

These state-specific fashion trends have a great influence on the buying behaviour of the tourists. The travellers purchase these state-specific traditional garments for themselves as well as for their friends & relatives thereby promoting fashion-related travel to India.

Social media plays a vital role in highlighting the relationship between travel destinations & textile trends. Travellers post images & vlogs of themselves wearing Indian attire which attracts the tourist especially foreign tourists who like to wear Indian traditional attires.

The research paper highlights this significant relationship between travel destinations in India & the textile trends from that location.

Review of Literature

G.K. Ghosh & Shukla Ghosh in their book titled "Indian Textiles (Past and Present)" emphasized on the art of dyeing & printing in India such as Ikat, Batik, Block Printing, Roller Printing, Silk Screen Printing, etc. The book stated that the term "Ikat" is a Malaysian term applicable to tie & dye method of printing wherein a bunch of yarn is tied & dyed to create appropriate design on loom. Orissa, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh & Andhra Pradesh are the places where this technique is practiced. The term "Batik" is also a Malaysian word meaning to design by painting or tracing. The process of Batik involves applying melted wax and paraffin to a finely woven fabric as a resist to block the areas that are not to be dyed or are expected to remain in lighter shades. The fabric is then dipped in a cold dye to colour the background. Afterwards, the remaining areas are dyed one by one and the parts which are not to be dyed are closed. Finally, the wax is removed with the help of boiling water and soap. As the fabric is handled, the wax coating breaks into hairlike cracks thus allowing the dye to seep through and create a unique design on the fabric. The book concluded that India posses a huge variety of traditional textiles which no other country in the world has. According to this paper, India is the only country in the world that produces all four types of silks, namely, eri, tussar, muga & mulberry. Also, in India, textile is produced in four sectors, namely, khadi, handloom, powerloom & mill.

Maha AlDabbagh in their research paper titled "Traditional Clothing, Souvenirs, and Food as Factors of Tourist Attraction" made an attempt to explore the different clothing styles of various regions of the world that have a great impact in attracting the tourists to the beauty of the textile designs, magnificence of colours & its historical background. The paper focused on how traditional clothing would boost the tourism of that country. It states that the country should preserve its heritage in order to attract tourists to visit these heritage sites and make good memories & unforgettable experiences. Today, the tourists are more interested in exploring

different cultures. The study revealed that the occupation of the tourist had a significant effect on buying behaviour in respect of traditional clothes. Ethnic tourism which enables the tourist to experience other cultures through their traditions, customs, lifestyle & practices was also taken into consideration during the research.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand whether the tourists are interested in exploring the textile trends from the places that they visit
2. To understand whether the tourist visit a particular region/state just because of the textile trends in that region/state
3. To know the willingness of tourists to follow those textile trends in their routine life which they have experienced in a particular region/state

Hypothesis

1. Tourists explore the textile trends from the places they visit.
2. Textile trends do not attract tourists to visit a particular region/state.
3. When tourists purchase a special type of garment from a particular region/state, they like to wear it occasionally or sometimes in their daily routine too.

Research Methodology

Primary as well as Secondary Data was used to conduct the research. To collect primary data, a questionnaire was prepared & circulated through the Google Form. Responses were collected from 20 individuals. Research Papers, Journals & E-Books were referred for collecting Secondary Data.

Limitations

1. The research is based on a broader area of research i.e. India as a whole is considered while doing research. Due to time constraint, the research is not conducted by focusing on only one particular state in India.
2. The number of respondents are restricted to 20 only.

Findings

Out of the total 20 respondents, 14 respondents reside in Thane, 3 in Mumbai, 2 in Dombivli & 1 in Kalyan. Thus, all the respondents belong to Maharashtra.

The findings based on the Primary Data are as follows:

Q.1 Do you travel only for exploring state-specific fashion?

65 % of the respondents travel only for exploring state – specific fashion which indicates that they are highly influenced by the clothing patterns of that state which depicts the strong relationship between the tourism & fashion trends.

Do you travel only for exploring state - specific fashion ? (For e.g. Visiting Maharashtra to explore clothing trends over there like Nauvari Saree)

20 responses

● Yes
● No

65%   35%
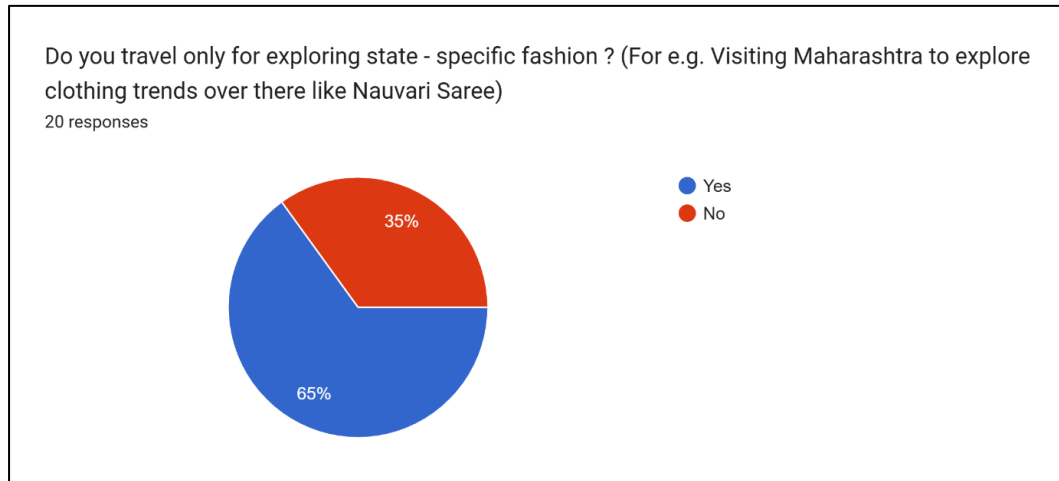
Q.2 Which states have you visited so far? (Other than Maharashtra)

Name of the State/Union Territory	No. of Respondents who have visited other States / Union Territories
Gujarat	4
Goa	3
Jammu & Kashmir	2
Kerala	7
Telangana	1
Rajasthan	3
Andhra Pradesh	2
Karnataka	3
Tamil Nadu	5
Kolkata	1
Chandigarh	1
Madhya Pradesh	3
Himachal Pradesh	3
Uttar Pradesh	2
Delhi	1
Uttarakhand	1
Punjab	1
Sikkim	1
Not visited any other State/U.T.	4

No. of Respondents who have visited other States / Union Territories
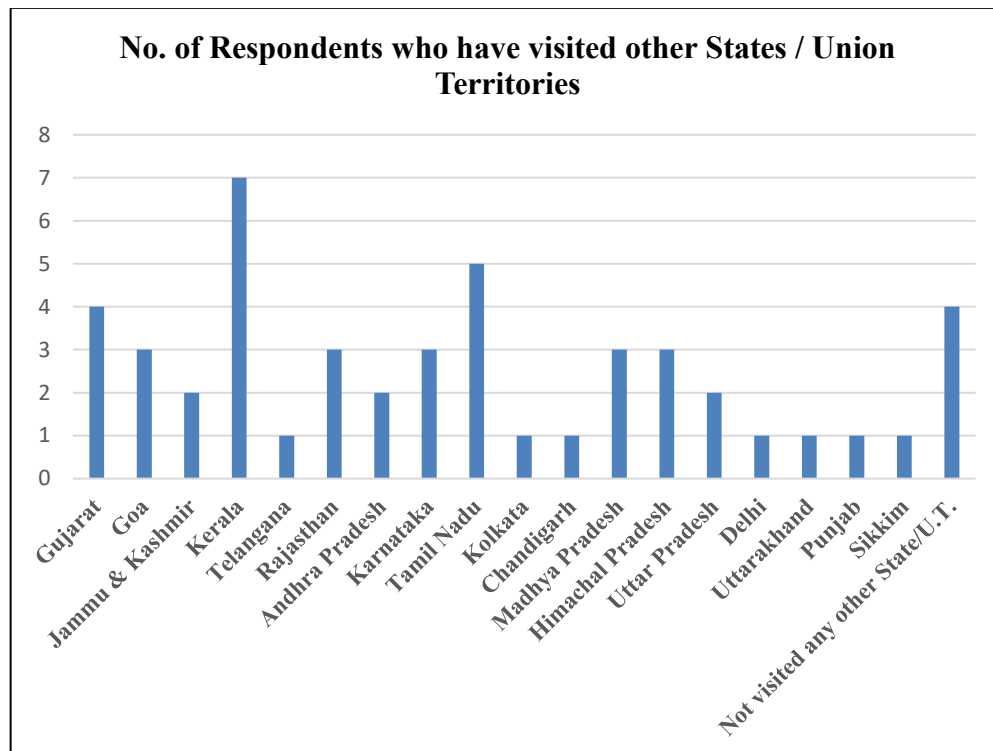
The South Indian states like Kerala & Tamil Nadu are highly visited states in India. Gujarat is the next state which experiences large number of tourists. Goa, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh & Himachal Pradesh experience the same number of tourists.

Q.3 Which places would you like to visit to experience the fashion related to that location?

Name of the Place	Reason for visiting that Place
Kerala	Mundu Saree
Udaipur	Jackets
Punjab	Patiyalas
Punjab	Punjabi Suits
Kolkata	Kantha Saree
Kolkata	Bangali Saree
Lucknow	Lakhanavi Pattern & Chikankari Kurtis

The above table depicts preferences given by the respondents regarding the places they would like to visit to explore a particular garment from that place.

Q.4 Have you ever purchased garments when you went on a tour that reflected the local fashion trends of that region?

16 out of the total 20 respondents showed interest in purchasing the garments that reflected the local fashion trends of the place they visited. Only 4 respondents were such that they did not purchase any garment when they went on a tour.
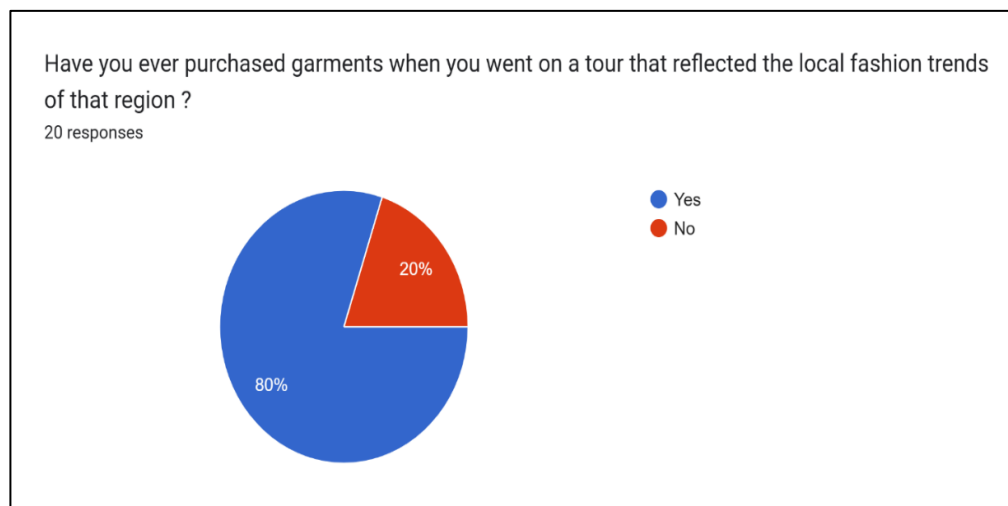
Have you ever purchased garments when you went on a tour that reflected the local fashion trends of that region ?

20 responses

- Yes
- No

20%

80%

Q. 5 Do you like to wear state-specific attire for any occasion or festival?

Do you like to wear state -specific attire for any occasion or festival ? (For e.g. Chaniya Choli during Navratri, Nauvari Saree for Gudhi Padwa)

20 responses

- Yes
- No

100%
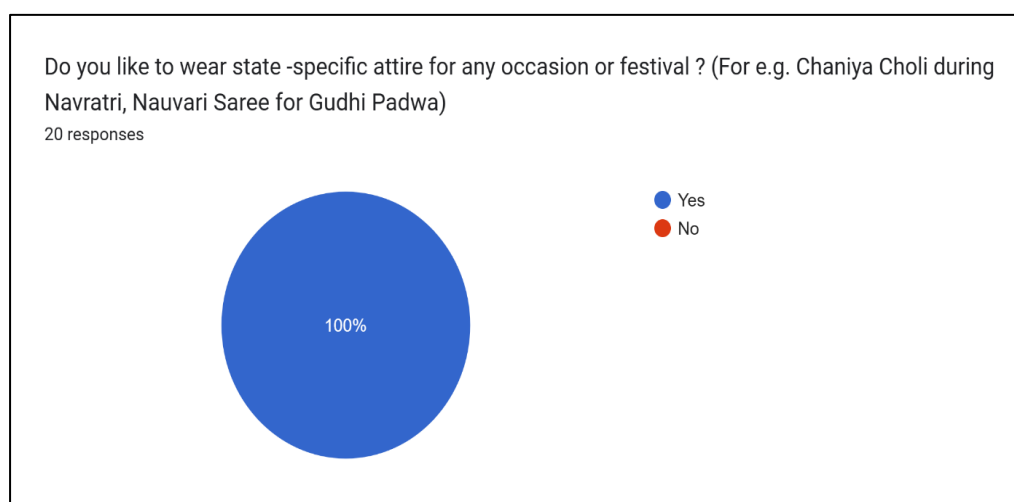
All the respondents have a very modern approach with regards to wearing traditional attires belonging to   other religions during the festivals or on some occasion.

Q. 6 For any traditional occasion which of the following attire would you like to wear?

It can be found out that Paithani Saree of Maharashtra is the most famous attire for any traditional occasion as 16 out of the total 20 respondents have showed their willingness to wear Paithani Saree for any traditional occasion. The next most - liked attire is the Maharashtra's Nauvari Saree & Bandhani Saree or Dress from Gujarat/Rajasthan. Punjab's Punjabi Dress & Kanjivaram Saree of Tamil Nadu have got same level of preference from the respondents. Patiyala Dresses from Punjab & Chaniya Choli from Gujarat are preferred for the traditional occasions to a considerable extent. Other attires get very less preference for traditional occasions.

Name of the State	Name of the Special Traditional Garment from that State	No. of Respondents who would like to wear the Special Garment for any Traditional Occasion
Maharashtra	Nauvari Saree	12
Maharashtra	Narayan Peth Saree	5
Maharashtra	Paithani Saree	16
Kashmir	Pheran	1
Punjab	Punjabi Dress	11
Punjab	Patiyala	8
Gujarat	Chaniya Choli	8
Gujarat / Rajasthan	Bandhani Dress / Saree	12
Gujarat / Rajasthan	Block Printed garments	3
Uttar Pradesh	Banarasi Saree	7
Madhya Pradesh	Chanderi Saree	5
Odisha / Andhra Pradesh	Ikat style garments	4
Kerala	Kasavu Saree	3
Tamil Nadu	Kanjivaram Saree	11
Kashmir	Kashmiri Work dress & Kani Silk Saree	1

Q.7 Which state-specific attire did you liked the most?

Name of the State	No. of Respondents who liked the attire of that State
Maharashtra	12
Gujarat	2
Kashmir	1
Telangana	1
Kerala	3
Tamil Nadu	3
Punjab	1

From the study it can be seen that most of the respondents like the Maharashtrian attire.

Q. 8 Do you feel that the Indian traditional attires gain popularity due to social media?

18 out of the total 20 respondents feel that the social media gives popularity to various Indian traditional attires whereas only 2 of them are of the opinion that social media do not have any influence on the buying behaviour of people regarding traditional Indian attires.

Recommendations:

To retain the rich cultural & textile heritage of India, the heritage sites, scenic beauty, monuments, travel destinations in India should be preserved & taken care of so that tourism industry will flourish thereby attracting the tourists to purchase the traditional attires.

Conclusion:

Fashion & textile trends from various states have a great influence on more than half of the population under the study due to which almost 65% of the respondents travel only for exploring the state-specific fashion. From the research it is found that maximum people have visited South Indian states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Some of the places where people would like to visit for exploring the fashion from that region includes Kerala for Mundu Saree, Punjab for Patiyala, Lucknow for Lakhanavi Pattern & Chickankari Kurtis, etc. 80% of the population is such that when they visit any place, they purchase the garments that depict the local fashion of that region thereby making memories of the tour. A modern approach was found among the respondents under the study in the sense that, in spite of belonging to any religion, all the respondents showed their willingness to wear any state-specific attire during a particular occasion or festival. It means that, even a Maharashtrian lady would be willing to wear Chaniya Choli during the Navratris & Gujarati lady would be willing to wear Nauvari Saree on the occasion of Gudhi Padwa. Paithani Saree from Maharashtra is the most preferred traditional attire among all the respondents under the study. From the research it can be concluded that Maharashtrian attire is highly liked by all the respondents which shows that Maharashtra is having rich cultural & textile heritage as compared to the other states. Social media also plays a very significant role in promoting the travel destinations in India & the traditional attires from those destinations.

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FASHIONING DESIGN: AN ANALYSIS OF AUTOMATIVE INDUSTRY

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Abstract:

The relationship between automotive design and fashion aesthetics, explores how innovations in vehicle design influence contemporary fashion trends. The study begins by examining the historical context of automotive design, highlighting key moments where technological advancements have shaped aesthetic preferences in both industries. It delves into the principles of "form follows function," emphasizing that automotive aesthetics are not merely about visual appeal but also about enhancing performance, safety, and user experience. The paper further analyzes how the rise of electric and autonomous vehicles has led to a reimagining of design paradigms, allowing for greater creativity and flexibility in both automotive and fashion design. This transformation reflects broader cultural shifts towards sustainability and personalization, as consumers increasingly seek products that resonate with their identities and values. By investigating case studies of iconic vehicles and fashion collections, the research illustrates how elements such as colour, shape, and material innovation in car design have inspired fashion designers to create garments that echo this automotive aesthetics. In addition, the paper addresses the role of digital technologies in both fields, examining how advancements in materials science and manufacturing processes facilitate innovative designs that cater to modern consumer demands. Ultimately, this research aims to provide insights into the dynamic interplay between automotive design and fashion aesthetics, revealing how these two seemingly disparate industries influence each other and contribute to evolving cultural narratives. The study examines the growing role of robotics, machine learning and artificial intelligence in fostering creativity and innovation across design disciplines in the vehicular industry. The paper relies on secondary qualitative data to analyse the changing trends in vehicular industry.

Keywords: Automotive Design, Fashion Aesthetics, Vehicular industry, Innovation, Robotics.

Introduction:

Automobile design and status in the society is very much connected in India. The culture and historical contexts also state the relationship between the automobile design and societal status.

Automobile has evolved as a transportation tool but in India it is a powerful symbol of identity and aspiration, reflecting socio-economic dynamics. The Hindustan Ambassador for many years was a car for politicians and bureaucrats which became a symbol of power and authority. Now new power cars like the Toyota Fortuner and Land Rover Range rover have taken its place and became a status symbol which represents wealth and modern lifestyle. The relationship between automotive design and fashion aesthetics is an interesting intersection that influences trends, shapes consumer preferences, and reflects culture. This paper explores how automotive design is influence by fashion aesthetics and how this relationship evolves over time.

In today's world, the lines between different types of design are becoming less clear, especially when it comes to automotive design and fashion. This paper looks at how car design is not just about engineering and functionality anymore; it is also influenced by trends in fashion. It explores how new ideas in vehicle design can shape and reflect current fashion trends, creating a strong connection between these two fields. Traditionally, car design followed the idea that "form follows function," meaning that a car's look was closely tied to its performance, safety, and how users experience it. However, with recent developments like electric and self-driving cars, this approach is changing. Designers now have more freedom to be creative and experiment with new shapes and materials that meet the changing tastes of consumers. As people become more focused on sustainability and personalization, they want products that match their identities and values. This shift is evident in the automotive industry, where aspects like colour, shape, and material choices play a significant role in appealing to modern consumers. Additionally, advancements in technology—such as robotics, machine learning, and artificial intelligence—are helping designers in both automotive and fashion industries. To meet today's consumer needs of innovative designs these technologies provide for new style of working with materials and manufacturing processes. Ultimately, this research aims to explain the relationship between automobile design and fashion industry. By focusing on these two industries and their influence on each other, the study highlights their contribution in the changing cultural trends. The research also focuses on the digital technologies that are evolved in automobile industry and use of it for automobile design by relying on various qualitative data.

Just like fashion designer use bold colours, sleek shapes and quality material for designing the stunning outfits, Luxury car designers often take these ideas to make vehicle more attractive. To make the vehicle stand out bold shapes or classic tones are used. The elegance of fashion silhouettes is reflected by the aerodynamic shaped of high-performance vehicles, which align with consumer's desire for both style and functionality. Use of premium leathers, exotics woods

and advanced composites for interior and exteriors manufacturing of luxury cars is just like a fashion designers seeking for unique textile and finishes. This collaboration enhances the tangible experience of both clothing and automobiles, elevating them to status symbols that reflect personal identity. Moreover, colours in automobile design are often similar to fashion runways. Fashion trends are closely observed by the automobile manufacturers to adopt the colours and designs that align with consumer's tastes. For example, the comeback of vintage pastels or the popularity of neutral tones in fashion often influences the colour schemes offered in luxury vehicles, transforming cars into extensions of personal style.

Literature Review:

Automotive design has evolved from solely functional thing to that integrates with fashion aesthetics. Historical vehicles, like the Ford Model T, focuses on affordability and reliability and not on design. But by the mid-20th century, streamlined shapes improved both aerodynamics and visual appeal. Modern cars gave importance to design, incorporating well-designed interiors, advanced safety features, and innovative technology. The Societal awareness of use of minimal resources have increased demand for electric and hybrid vehicles, while innovations in technology like AI and autonomous have shown technological adaptability and efficiency. Sustainability remains a key focus, making future designs toward eco-friendly, advanced technology, and consumer friendly experiences in a dynamic industry. (Inserra, 2018)

Cars are now designed in more customizable, efficient and in innovative ways, due to changing digital technology. Use of Artificial intelligence in car design improve performance of the vehicle and enhance user experience. Designers use virtual reality to design the car models which saves the time and resources. Lightweight and efficient vehicles are made with the use of 3D printing technology. Automobile industry is using technology just like fashion industry which ease production and allows for personalized design and increase sustainability. Digital solutions due to technological advancement will play a vital role in automobile design. (Damiani, 2009)

Innovation in material of automobile interiors is influenced by the fashion industry. Advancement in materials like breathable fabrics and carbon fibre and the rise of sustainable materials like recycled plastics and leathers which is plant based enhance comfort, durability, performance and reflect commitment to eco-friendly solution in both fashion and automobile industry. These innovation and use of material science in both the industry has improve functionality and also focuses on the consumer demand for sustainability. Use of

environmentally responsible alternative by automotive and fashion sector due to advancement in material science will shape the future design trends. (Spinney, 2017)

Literature studies show a cultural influence on car and fashion design. For example, James Bond's Aston Martin has inspired fashion collections that reflect elegance and luxury. Luxury car brands like Porsche and Ferrari have also partnered with high-end fashion labels such as Giorgio Armani, highlighting the strong link between these industries. Such collaboration is a result of consumer preference, increasing focus on sustainability, personalization, innovation and new technology. Due to preference of eco-friendly materials, customise design and smart features result in adaptability by both car and fashion industry. The use of recycled materials and plant-based alternatives in car interiors and clothing is an impact of sustainability. At the same time, advancements in technology influence wearable fashion, just as they shape modern car designs. As cultural trends change, fashion and automobiles will continue to inspire each other, driving creativity and innovation. (Kapfere, 2015).

Above literature has explored fashion and automotive design in terms of aesthetics, sustainability and advancement in technology. However, certain aspects like intersection and collaboration of both the industry, material innovation, use of AI and innovative advancement require further investigation.

Research Objectives:

The research aims to investigate the relationship between fashion aesthetics and automobile by exploring the historical evolution of automotive design. Following is the objectives of the research-

- To understand how automotive design has evolved over the period of time and understand the key milestone in car design. The research also explores how innovative materials have inspired fashion trends and style.
- To examine the role of material science in the development of fashion and automobile industry.
- To analyse the technological advancement like artificial intelligence, 3D printing, etc have impacted both the industry.
- This study explores impact of consumer preferences, social movement and digital trends affect design decision.
- This research aims to identify opportunities for collaboration between automotive and fashion brands.

Research Methodology:

The research uses qualitative methods of study consisting of analytical and descriptive approach. The dataset used for research analysis is based on Secondary sources. Information already published in reputable journals, magazines, and industry reports is used. Extensive reference of published articles in renowned journals is undertaken which ensures that the research is grounded in credible academic insights. The study is based on works written by scholars in the fields of fashion, automobile and technology which offers a comprehensive understanding of the impact of these emerging technologies on fashion and automobile industry. The qualitative approach enables a thorough interpretation of existing literature, helping to identify patterns, trends, and challenges associated with the technological transformation in fashion and automobile industry. The research tries to study the impact of collaboration between fashion and automobile industry by analysing the secondary source. The reliance on qualitative secondary data enables a deep, contextual analysis, contributing valuable insights to academic literature and practical applications in both industries.

Evolution of Automobile Design

The dynamic process of evolution of automotive design has been shaped by technological progress, consumer demands, and cultural influences. In the early century, automobiles were primarily focus on functionality with no emphasis on aesthetics. However, as trends changed, improvement in vehicle design has seen which became a symbol of innovation and status. As we move from 19th century to the 20th century, change in respect of streamlined bodies, aerodynamics, bold styling with detailing and distinctive shapes, performance-oriented designs, fuel-efficient, compact vehicles, electric vehicles, digital interfaces, and AI-driven enhancements is witnessed.

Decades-Wise Car Launches in India (Girish, 2023)

- **1950s-1960s:** Hindustan Ambassador
- **1970s-1980s:** Maruti Suzuki 800
- **1990s:** Tata Indica, Hyundai Santro
- **2000s:** Ford Endeavour, Honda City (3rd Generation)
- **2010s:** Tata Nano, Mahindra e2o, Hyundai Creta
- **2020s (Till Date):** Tata Nexon EV, Mahindra XUV 400, Kia Seltos, Tata Altroz, Hyundai i20 (4th Generation)

Role of Material Science

Material science has an impact in shaping both the automotive and fashion industries. Taking inspiration from leather accessories and apparel, the use of high-quality leather in car interiors has influenced luxury fashion. The introduction of lightweight materials such as carbon fiber has emphasis both industries focusing mainly on vehicle performance while contributing to durable, functional designs in sportswear and accessories. For a 10% reduction in vehicle weight, a 7% increase in fuel efficiency can be gained. Sustainability has driven innovation in materials. This demonstrates how transformations in one industry often followed by the advancement in another. (Joost, 2012)

Technological Advancement

The relationship between automobile and fashion sector has improved because of technology. Use of Artificial Intelligence is done to design automobile, increase efficiency and user experience. Also, AI is used to analyse trend and create digital fashion experience and personalise interaction. Waste reduction, customization and efficient production is now possible with 3D printing technology. With these increase in smart materials like temperature sensitive fabrics and adaptive surface in vehicles explains the influence of innovation across both industries.

Factors Influencing Design Decisions

Design decisions are often influenced by consumer preference, social movement, and digital advancement. Adoption of green practice and innovation in design in both sectors is due to consumer demand for sustainable, ethical, and personalized products. Over the years, growing emphasis on inclusivity, fashion, and vehicle interiors with gender neutrality is reflected. Consumer experiences are reshaped because of the digital revolution. Virtual showrooms and digital clothing collections are expanding between the automobile and fashion worlds.

Collaborations

All these have influenced and brought opportunities for collaborations between brands in both sectors. Luxury car manufacturers have increased partnerships with fashion brands to create an exclusive collection that shows innovation in engineering and style. Industries can merge to produce unique products, which is seen through the collaboration of BMW and Puma. Partnerships may focus on sustainable material development, wearable technology integration, and immersive digital experiences that enhance consumer engagement. A prime example of sustainability in material is the Bajaj V-15 bike, which is made from the metal of the warship INS Vikrant, transforming a historic naval vessel into a modern, sustainable vehicle.

Recommendations:

➢ Further explore sustainable materials, innovative technology and designs encourage collaborative partnership between automotive and fashion industry. A collaborative initiative and fund raising can be done to develop lightweight, durable materials which will benefit both the industries.

➢ Emphasizing on waste reduction and recycle of material, investment in the development of sustainable materials for vehicles and fashion product is required.

➢ To increase demand for ethical and eco-friendly products, consumer education on green practices in both the field should be done.

➢ To target a broader audience, incorporation of gender-neutral aesthetics should be focused.

➢ Leverage technological advancement to personalise design, trend analysis, efficient production process, etc.

➢ To enhance consumer engagement through integrated augmented tools (digital platforms) for virtual customization in both cars and clothing.

Conclusion:

The evolution of automotive design is a fascinating journey that mirrors our technological advancements, cultural shifts, and changing consumer preferences. Just as cars have transformed from basic functional machines to stylish symbols of innovation and status, the fashion industry has also embraced creativity and sustainability through new materials and digital innovations.

Today, these two worlds are more connected than ever. They share breakthroughs in areas like artificial intelligence and 3D printing, which are reshaping how products are designed and manufactured. For instance, AI helps create personalized experiences for consumers, while 3D printing opens doors to unique, customized designs that were once unimaginable.

By encouraging collaboration between the automotive and fashion industries, we can harness these cutting-edge technologies to develop products that truly resonate with today's consumers. This partnership not only fosters creativity but also emphasizes sustainability and inclusivity—values that are increasingly important to people around the globe.

Ultimately, this synergy has the potential to drive economic growth while setting new standards for ethical and forward-thinking design practices. As we move forward, the fusion of these industries could lead to exciting innovations that enhance our lives and reflect our shared values.

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EMERGING TREND OF EMPOWERING FITNESS FROM HOME: CASE STUDY OF HABUILD (INDIA'S FIRST HABIT BUILDING PROGRAM)

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Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed a major shift toward online fitness, leading to the rapid expansion of virtual workout platforms catering to diverse demographic needs. This paper examines the emerging trend of online exercise classes post-pandemic, particularly focusing on its popularity among middle-aged and older adults who face challenges attending traditional gyms. As a case study, this research explores Habuild - India's First Habit Building Program - an online fitness platform - that successfully developed and tailored its offerings to meet the needs of adults in later life. Habuild's strategic approach combines accessible exercise routines with a supportive virtual environment, fostering a sense of community through targeted marketing and innovative engagement strategies. Through activities such as virtual challenges and interactive sessions, Habuild has established a vibrant online community that transcends physical barriers.

To capture users' perspectives, this study seeks quantitative and qualitative data from interviews with 20 regular Habuild participants. The findings highlight that Habuild's success is driven by a combination of behavioral science principles, the convenience of online accessibility and strategic marketing. By leveraging behavior modification techniques, the platform fosters consistency and long-term engagement among users. The flexibility of virtual sessions removes logistical barriers, making fitness and emotional well-being more accessible, particularly for individuals with demanding schedules or mobility limitations. Additionally, Habuild's affordability and well-structured marketing approach—offering free trials, tiered benefits and a trust-building model—that encourage sustained participation. These insights underscore the broader potential of online fitness to redefine engagement, inclusivity and long-term adherence, positioning virtual platforms as viable alternatives to traditional exercise spaces.

Keywords: Fitness, Health, Online, Habuild, Exercise, Habit

Introduction:

Exercise and fitness have long been recognized as essential components of a healthy lifestyle, playing a pivotal role in preventing chronic diseases, enhancing mental well-being, and improving overall quality of life (WHO, 2021; Warburton & Bredin, 2017). Despite these well-documented benefits, many individuals remain resistant to adopting regular exercise routines. Common barriers include lack of time, motivation, access to suitable facilities and physical or psychological constraints such as mobility issues or low self-esteem (Stutts, 2002; Salmon, Owen, Crawford, Bauman & Sallis, 2003). This resistance underscores the need for exercise regimes that are not only effective but also user-friendly, accessible, and adaptable to diverse needs and lifestyles.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about significant changes in how people approach various aspects of daily life, including physical activity. With the closure of gyms, parks and fitness studios, traditional modes of exercise became impractical for many (Ding, Del Pozo Cruz, Green & Bauman, 2020). Simultaneously, the widespread adoption of online platforms for meetings, education, and social interactions created opportunities for reimagining fitness delivery (Bailey *et al.,* 2021). The online mode of engagement, which quickly gained popularity during the pandemic, offered a convenient and flexible alternative, enabling individuals to stay active without leaving their homes.

In particular, online fitness platforms emerged as a lifeline for populations who had previously faced barriers to traditional exercise settings. Middle-aged and older adults, often deterred by logistical challenges or discomfort in conventional gym environments, found these virtual spaces welcoming and manageable (Elliott, Gordon & Millar, 2021). The ability to participate in fitness programs tailored to their needs, combined with the support of online communities, has made these platforms highly appealing.

This paper delves into the post-pandemic trend of online fitness, with a specific focus on Habuild – India's First Habit Building Program. Habuild exemplifies how innovative approaches to exercise delivery, combined with community-building strategies, can effectively cater to older demographics. The objective of this research is to explore Habuild as a significant trend in the exercise domain and to evaluate its effectiveness. Specifically, this study aims to understand what factors contributed to the success of Habuild, how it addressed inherent challenges and limitations of online exercise platforms and the strategies it employed to ensure sustained engagement and positive outcomes for its participants.

Habuild, launched in 2021, is India's first online Habit Building Program. Led by Saurabh Bothra, a government-certified yoga teacher and IIT graduate with over 12 years of experience,

Habuild offers daily live yoga sessions aimed at enhancing physical health, mental clarity, and emotional balance. The platform conducts multiple sessions each day, including morning slots at 6:30 AM, 7:30 AM, and 8:30 AM, and evening slots at 5:00 PM, 6:00 PM, and 7:00 PM (IST), ensuring accessibility for participants across various schedules. With over 6 million members from 38 nations, including a significant presence in India, Habuild has become a global community dedicated to well-being. The program leverages YouTube, Zoom, and WhatsApp for seamless session delivery, attendance tracking, and community engagement, while habit-tracking reminders and personalized support help participants stay consistent. Its clientele comprises a diverse demographic, with a strong focus on middle-aged and older adults who benefit from its tailored, low-impact exercise options and flexibility to work out at their own pace. The program also appeals to young professionals seeking convenient fitness solutions amid busy schedules.

Methodology:

Method of Data Collection

The study used 3 methods of data collection

1. Survey of 20 Participants of the Habuild Program helped collect both quantitative and qualitative data, focusing on their experiences and perceptions of the program. Questions target key areas such as program accessibility, effectiveness, engagement strategies, community-building efforts and the impact on fitness and well-being.

Sample included 10 males and 10 females, total 20 participants

Inclusion Criteria:

 i. People of age 50 plus
 ii. People who participate in Habuild's sessions 4-7 days a week
 iii. People who are member of Habuild programme for more than 6 months

2. Participant Observation by One of the Authors: Participant observation involved an in-depth, immersive experience by one of the authors, who actively engage in the Habuild program. Moreover, her professional expertise as a psychologist provided a deeper understanding of how Habuild's strategies foster participants' well-being.

This method enabled the researcher to:

● Gain an insider perspective on how the platform operates, its strengths, and potential areas for improvement.

● Bring a unique perspective by identifying and analyzing the behavioral science principles embedded in Habuild's operations and interactions.

● Capture subtleties of interaction and engagement that survey participants may not articulate.

3. Inputs from the Founder: Founder's written responses to a series of questions provided strategic insights into the program's conceptualization, business model and evolution. The founder also shared detailed information about the challenges faced, engagement strategies, marketing efforts and plans for future development.

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative responses (e.g., Likert scale ratings, multiple-choice answers) were entered into a spreadsheet and measures such as frequencies, percentages and means were calculated.

Qualitative Data Analysis

- Open-ended survey responses, observation notes and data from the founder were transcribed.
- The data was organized into thematic sections for easier management
- Responses and notes were read multiple times.
- Recurring themes and patterns were coded.
- Related codes were grouped into overarching themes
- The themes were interpreted in the context of the research questions, focusing on how they answer key objectives.
- Significant user experiences, challenges and the program's impact on fitness and well-being were highlighted.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

- Qualitative insights were used to explain trends found in quantitative data.
- Survey results were validated with observational findings and founder inputs.
- Combined both datasets to present comprehensive insights
- Findings were synthesized to answer the research questions holistically.
- Both numerical trends and rich, narrative insights were highlighted to demonstrate the program's overall effectiveness.

Discussion:

Habuild has emerged as a lifestyle trend in the domain of physical fitness. In January 2024, Habuild achieved a Guinness World Record by hosting a yoga session with 2,46,252 participants from 92 countries, underscoring its transformative impact in making yoga a daily habit for a diverse and widespread audience (habuild-world-records-uniting-the-world-with-yoga)

In words of Mr. Saurab Bothra,

We can definitely consider this a big lifestyle shift, as people now prefer flexible, accessible, and community-driven solutions for fitness. Habuild combines these elements by offering a digital

platform where users can do yoga, form healthy habits, participate in live sessions, and build a sense of belonging, all from the comfort of their homes. It's a perfect example of how lifestyle trends have evolved to prioritize well-being and adaptability

Habit Formation as New Goal in Fitness

What sets Habuild apart is its emphasis on habit formation ensuring that participants integrate fitness seamlessly into their daily routines. In that sense, it has emerged as a trendsetter in the fitness domain, embodying the modern "fashion" of habit-based wellness. Unlike traditional workout routines, which often emphasize intense physical exertion or rigid schedules, Habuild presents fitness as a sustainable lifestyle choice, appealing to a broad demographic. This is reflected in the sharing of around 06 participants and more specifically in the words of P9M

Their (Habuild's) emphasis on habit formation is unique. They focus on helping you make fitness a part of your routine rather than just offering exercises. This mindset shift has been a game changer for me (P9M)

In the words of Habuild's Founder…

…But I realized that just teaching yoga wasn't enough. The real challenge was helping people stick with it. Yoga became the medium, but the core idea of Habuild was much bigger. We wanted to help people build habits that last. …This was a gap in the market when everyone was focusing on just promoting their online fitness classes or workshops, we were more focused on helping people make it a habit. (SB)

The participants' mean rating of 4.4 out of 5 in effectiveness in improving fitness and contributing to positive changes in overall health and mean rating of 4.65 in willingness to recommend Habuild to others in their age group demonstrated that Habuild has succeeded in its objective.

Use of Behavioural Science Principles

The objective of habit formation is also found to be rooted firmly in 7 behavioral science principles identified by one of the researchers of this paper. Its ability to blend fitness with behavioral science principles made it a novel and attractive option in the crowded fitness landscape.

For example,

a) The Power of Experience-Driven Decisions: Habuild's 21-Day/14-Day Free Yoga Strategy - Researcher noted that a fundamental principle that Habuild employs is the strategy of offering trial experiences before commitment. This approach recognizes that when it comes to fitness, especially for middle-aged and older adults, making a commitment to a new program can be intimidating. The decision to join a fitness platform is often influenced by many factors,

including perceived effectiveness, ease of use and compatibility with personal fitness goals. By offering free trial sessions and allowing newcomers to experience the entire fitness regimen, Habuild significantly lowers the barriers to entry. From the very start, Habuild allows its members to explore the program's offerings. This trial period enables participants to experience firsthand what the program entails, without any financial obligation to commit immediately. It gives them a chance to test the suitability of the exercises, the user-friendly structure of the platform and the support provided through the virtual community. This principle is critical because it allows potential members to make an informed decision. The experience gives them confidence in the program's approach and reassures them that it meets their needs. Whether it's the ease of accessing the online content or the sense of belonging to a like-minded community, a firsthand experience helps demystify uncertainties if any. For many participants, particularly those unfamiliar with online fitness programs or hesitant to try something new, having the chance to "test drive" the product before committing is a crucial step in building trust and comfort. This low-risk approach not only increases conversion rates but also ensures that those who eventually choose to join the program are more likely to stay engaged and motivated long-term, having already developed a connection with the platform and its offerings.

The 21-day period also leverages the habit-formation principle, providing sufficient time for participants to assess whether yoga aligns with their personal well-being goals. By allowing people to join based on their experience rather than recommendations or external marketing messages and abstract promises, Habuild reduces commitment anxiety and enhances long-term adherence.

b) Overcoming Resistance Toward Exercise - Recognizing that individuals often find excuses such as lack of time, fatigue or feeling unwell, Habuild adopts a strategy to overcome this psychological barrier. Instructors emphasize the importance of simply starting by encouraging participants to "just join for some time." This approach leverages the idea that once the initial resistance is broken, individuals are more likely to continue through the session and feel accomplished by the end. By focusing on small, manageable actions, Habuild reduces the mental friction associated with starting a workout, fostering consistency and habit formation over time.

This is also the purpose of Habuild as shared by Mr. Saurab Bothra

Basically, we want all our members to simply show up and do whatever they can everyday. Consistency is what builds habits. We echoed this message to our community through WhatsApp messages and online content regularly.

c) Embracing Imperfection and Reinforcing Inclusivity Through Simplicity, Gentleness and Repetition - Another key behavioral science principle utilized by Habuild is the power of

normalization and inclusivity in fitness. The platform incorporates a dual-model system during sessions, where one instructor demonstrates the perfect version of the exercise or yoga pose, while another performs a less perfect, modified version. Remarkably, Saurabh Bothra, the CEO of Habuild, takes on the role of showcasing the less perfect version. Through this approach, he conveys the message that it's perfectly acceptable to start with whatever one can. He demonstrates very well the French Philosopher's Voltaire's phrase "Don't let perfect be the enemy of good" or "Do not let the best come in the way of better or better come in the way of good"

In the words of Mr. Saurab Bothra,

Habuild's design revolves around simplicity and inclusivity. We focused on creating a program that anyone can follow, regardless of their fitness level, age, location or background. Our sessions are beginner-friendly, easy to access, and highly engaging. We have two instructors for yoga, one guiding the harder version of a pose and another representing the easier anyone-can-do version.

The researchers got to see the effectiveness of this principle in the narratives of 4 participants and in the words of P19F and P11M

The workouts are adjustable, and the trainers provide alternatives for people at different fitness levels, which makes it suitable for all age (P19F)

They also explain modifications for every exercise, so I never feel like I can't keep up (P11M)

Habuild also leverages the power of repetition to reinforce key messages and ease participants' concerns about performance. Instructor constantly reminds participants throughout each session that it is perfectly fine if they cannot match the pace or complete as many repetitions as the two models on the screen would do. This reassurance is not given just once but repeated at relevant intervals during the session. By reiterating this message, the instructor normalizes varied levels of performance, reduces feelings of inadequacy and encourages participants to focus on their own progress rather than perfection. This repetitive reinforcement creates a supportive and inclusive environment that motivates individuals to keep showing up and doing their best. This is how self-efficacy ("I can do it" feeling) is also strengthened.

The expressions such as "gentleness", "not burdensome", "not too demanding" "not overwhelming", "not intimidating", "practical" "without overexertion" "without feeling too pushed" are used by 9 participants (45%) to communicate their comfort with the Habuild programme.

It's reassuring to know that I am not expected to push myself too hard, but rather, I'm encouraged to make gradual improvements, which makes it sustainable in the long run (P1F)

d) Leveraging the Power of Intention - Habuild taps into the behavioral science principle of intention-setting to promote consistency and commitment among participants. At the beginning of each week, instructors encourage individuals to commit to the number of sessions they plan to attend during the week. By making this intention explicit, participants are more likely to align their actions with their stated goals, driven by the natural human tendency to behave consistently with their commitments and avoid discomfort arising from cognitive dissonance. As put by P7F...

I also love the goal-setting aspect, where they help you set realistic weekly goals for fitness (P7F)

e) Balancing Consistency with Variety - Another key principle applied is balancing consistency with variety in the yoga routines. The program thoughtfully addresses two common challenges faced by participants in maintaining a long-term fitness habit: the need for regularity and the risk of boredom. On the one hand, it is essential to consistently practice certain yogasanas (yoga poses) to build strength, flexibility and mental focus. Habuild incorporates a core set of foundational asanas that participants return to regularly, ensuring that they develop a stable, consistent practice. On the other hand, to prevent the monotony that can come with repetition, Habuild introduces variety into the routines. Each session or week may feature different asanas, variations of existing poses, or even new types of yoga techniques to keep the workouts fresh and engaging. This mix of familiar and novel movements stimulates participants both physically and mentally, reducing the risk of boredom or predictability.

Three Participants (15%) shared this aspect of their experience with Habuild. By maintaining this balance of structure and flexibility, Habuild fosters an environment where participants feel both grounded in their practice and motivated by the evolving nature of their workouts. This principle ensures that fitness becomes an enjoyable part of their routine rather than a chore, which is especially important for older adults who may have experienced previous challenges with maintaining consistency in other fitness settings.

In the words of P10F "*The variety of workouts is amazing. This variety keeps me excited and engaged*"

f) Encouraging Interaction and Feedback - Habuild instructor enhances engagement by incorporating interactivity into the sessions. He encourages participants to respond through the chat box, often asking them to type the initial alphabet of a relevant word or phrase. This simple yet effective technique ensures that participants remain attentive and actively engage with the session. It also provides real-time feedback to the instructor, allowing them to gauge participants' involvement and adjust their approach if needed. By fostering interaction, Habuild

not only keeps participants motivated but also creates a sense of connection and community within the virtual fitness environment. Five Participants (25%) talked specially about it.

g) Reinforcement through Reminders - Regular messages of appreciating the attendance and communication of missed sessions also contributes towards commitment and progress, as reflected in the sharing of P1F.

The habit tracker is a motivational tool that helps me see my progress over time. When I check off my daily activities and look at the streaks of consistency, I feel proud of my efforts and this boosts my confidence in maintaining the program.

In the fast-paced, often stressful lives of people, it's easy for health-related activities to be overlooked or forgotten amidst other daily responsibilities. Sending reminders serves as an effective strategy to combat forgetfulness, helping participants stay on track with their goals. These reminders are more than just notifications about upcoming workouts; they create a sense of continuity and encourage a regular fitness habit. Additionally, the reminders communicate a level of personal care from the Habuild team, which enhances participant motivation and engagement. The consistent outreach makes participants feel supported, reinforcing the idea that they are not alone in their fitness journey.

The reminders and tips they send throughout the day keep me mindful of my actions, not just during the workout sessions but in my overall lifestyle (P11M)

Accessibility and Flexibility

Habuild offers six sessions per day, providing participants with flexible timing options to fit their diverse schedules. This accessibility plays a crucial role in enhancing user satisfaction and ensuring the program's sustainability. A high average rating of 4.35 out of 5 given by 20 participants underscores the significance of flexibility in meeting participants' needs and maintaining engagement. 15% of the participants talked specifically about this in their qualitative responses.

I think it is offering me a flexible schedule which no one will offer (P1F)

Suitability of the Programme for Middle Aged/Old People and Beginners

The responses from 17 participants (85%) of the study emphasize that Habuild's routines are highly suitable for middle-aged and older adults. 80% of respondents highlighted the effectiveness of low-impact exercises, designed to be gentle on joints while improving overall fitness. These routines cater to individuals with varying fitness levels, including those starting with minimal physical activity. 75% praised the focus on flexibility, balance, and posture, which are crucial for maintaining mobility, preventing injuries, and supporting daily activities in older age. Around 60% noted the emphasis on core strength, functional fitness, and gradual progress,

making the program practical and sustainable without being overly strenuous. Additionally, 50% valued the inclusion of breathing exercises and mindfulness, which enhance both mental and physical well-being. The adaptability of the routines, with modifications tailored to address joint issues and mobility limitations, was appreciated by 40%, making Habuild an inclusive platform for older adults aiming to stay active and healthy. Overall, these responses underscore the program's thoughtful design, ensuring it meets the needs of middle-aged and older individuals effectively.

The routines provided by Habuild are specifically designed to be adaptable for individuals of all ages, especially for older adults like me (P1F)

Habuild: Holistic Approach to Wellbeing

Alongside their core focus on yoga, breathing exercises, Habuild delves into essential aspects of daily life like diet and sleep. By offering specialized sessions on these topics, Habuild educates participants on maintaining a balanced lifestyle, improving energy levels and promoting mental clarity. Their library of videos covers a wide range of subjects, including nutritious meal planning, mindful eating habits, techniques for achieving restful sleep, and managing sleep cycles effectively. Through this multi-faceted approach, Habuild ensures that participants gain comprehensive tools to enhance overall health and sustain long-term wellness. 7 Participants (35%) talked about the same.

The emphasis on mindful breathing exercises has also played a significant role in improving my sleep quality. I no longer wake up as often during the night and feel more refreshed in the mornings (P1F)

Recognizing the importance of emotional health, Habuild integrates targeted sessions into their offerings to nurture positivity, connection, and inner peace. For instance, gratitude sessions on Fridays provide participants with a reflective space to express thankfulness. Similarly, laughter sessions on Thursdays are designed to promote joy and reduce stress. By addressing both the mind and body, Habuild reinforces its mission to holistically improve the quality of life. Six participants (30%) made a mention of this in their responses. Participants also rated the impact of Habuild on their mental well-being as 4.4 out of 5. In the words of P19.

The live sessions are great, but what stands out is the way they blend fitness with mindfulness. I've never seen a program focus on emotional well-being alongside physical health like this (P19F)

Nineteen participants (95%) reported that they have experienced holistic lifestyle transformations across multiple areas since joining Habuild. Around 75% reported improvements in physical health, including higher energy levels, reduced fatigue, better posture and alleviated aches and

pains, with over 60% noting enhanced sleep quality due to mindfulness and breathing exercises. Approximately 50% have adopted healthier eating habits, becoming more mindful of their food choices, with some incorporating home-cooked meals, journaling and regular meditation for mental clarity. About 65% developed a more structured and disciplined routine, such as waking up earlier, maintaining fitness consistency and integrating stretching or breaks during work. Nearly 55% highlighted positive changes in mental and emotional well-being, including increased confidence, reduced stress, and improved mood, often recognized by family members. Additionally, 35% noted a ripple effect on their overall productivity, work-life balance, and stamina for daily activities. Collectively, these changes underscore Habuild's impact on physical, emotional, and behavioral well-being, as narrated by one of the participants.

Since joining Habuild, I've adopted a more disciplined approach to fitness. I feel calmer and more focused throughout the day, thanks to the mindfulness sessions. My work-life balance has improved, and I've become more mindful of my overall health.(P6M)

Impact of Virtual Community

Virtual Community offered by Habuilt plays an important role in enriched experience with Habuild. Fourteen participants (70%) appreciated the support and camaraderie, mentioning a strong sense of belonging, encouragement from fellow participants, and the ability to share tips, recipes and progress. While some preferred to observe rather than actively engage, they valued reading about others' journeys, which fostered a sense of connection and shared purpose. Around 60% emphasized the motivational elements, such as daily motivational posts, group challenges, which provided a supportive, non-competitive push to stay consistent and improve. Others cited tools like WhatsApp groups and mentorship programs as helpful for accountability and tracking progress. Approximately 50% valued the educational features, such as expert-led Q&A sessions, live webinars and focus groups, which offered guidance, practical tips, and age-specific discussions tailored to individual needs. As shared by P3F...

*The sense of belonging is wonderful….Sharing tips, recipes, and small victories with others makes the journey more enjoyable. …The encouragement I receive from the group has made a big difference in my confidenc*e.

Nineteen participants (95%) shared their motivation to continue with Habuild. On the physical front, 75% of participants highlighted improved fitness, stamina, strength, flexibility, and overall energy levels. In the mental/emotional realm, 65% reported feeling calmer, happier, less stressed, and more mentally clear, with a noticeable boost in productivity and positivity. Socially, 45% valued the support and encouragement from the community, friendships with batchmates, and positive feedback from peers and family. Additionally, 50% appreciated the structural factors,

such as the program's flexibility, ease of use, evolving nature, and daily habit-building reminders, which made it sustainable and engaging. Together, it underscores the holistic impact of Habuild on participants' physical health, mental well-being, and social connections while ensuring long-term consistency through structural convenience.

The comprehensive benefits—physical fitness, mental clarity, and reduced stress—are my biggest motivators. The ease of access and flexibility make it convenient to stick with the program. (P6M)

When asked what they would have done if Habuild would not have happened to them, participants (95%) highlighted the pivotal role Habuild plays in shaping their fitness and well-being routines. Many expressed that without Habuild, they would have turned to alternatives like fitness videos, local yoga classes, gyms or self-guided routines. However, most acknowledged the limitations of these options, such as lack of consistency or focus on mental well-being. Some participants mentioned they might not have engaged in any fitness activities at all, while others recognized that traditional approaches often lack the structured, habit-building focus that Habuild provides. The online format, integration of mental and physical well-being, and flexibility offered by Habuild emerge as key differentiators, addressing gaps that other methods or programs fail to bridge.

Habuild as a Social Movement

Habuild's viral marketing strategies, impactful social media campaigns, and collaborations with influencers have elevated it beyond the realm of a typical fitness program. It is increasingly perceived as a **social movement** that encourages habit-building and community-driven wellness. Its success is reflected in its rapidly expanding user base, particularly among middle-aged and older adults who previously encountered barriers to traditional fitness regimes. As more individuals seek health solutions that are flexible, inclusive, and engaging, Habuild is redefining the concept of fitness — positioning itself not just as a service, but as a **trendsetter in the fashion of modern well-being**.

In conclusion, Habuild's success can be attributed to a combination of key factors:

1. Unique Goal of Habit Formation
2. Application of Behavioral Science Principles
3. Convenience of the Online Mode with Support from Virtual Community
4. Suitability for Middle Aged/Old People and Beginners
5. Focus on Holistic Well-being
6. Strategic Marketing and Affordability

Together, these factors create a model that prioritizes user needs, fosters consistent engagement, and drives sustainable growth.

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THE INTERSECTION OF EMERGING TRENDS, CULTURAL NORMS AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN INDIA: A CRITICAL MEDIA ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) remains a pervasive issue globally, with numerous factors contributing to its occurrence. The shame and embarrassment surrounding CSA often prevent children from seeking help, while societal and cultural norms further complicate this silence. In certain contexts, the portrayal of children in the media and fashion trends can inadvertently perpetuate the sexual objectification of minors, normalizing harmful behaviours. This paper aims to explore the intersection of emerging trends, cultural norms and CSA in the Indian context. It draws on secondary analysis of existing literature and conducts a critical review of contemporary media representations of children in India. The methodology involves a qualitative review of Indian reality TV shows where children are featured as central figures. The findings of the study indicate a strong link between media depictions of children and the societal normalization of CSA. The implications of this study suggest that addressing CSA requires a multifaceted approach, including media literacy, societal awareness, and the dismantling of harmful cultural norms.

Keywords: Child Sexual Abuse, objectification, cultural norms, media representation, emerging trends, media literacy.

Introduction:

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) remains a critical global issue, marked by stigma, shame, and fear that silence victims and create significant barriers to justice (Finkelhor, 1984). Societal and cultural norms further reinforce this silence, fostering denial and victim-blaming, making CSA one of the most underreported crimes. Research by Collin-Vézina, Daigneault & Hebert (2013) underscores how societal and familial structures shape children's reluctance to disclose abuse, amplifying the problem.

Among the societal factors influencing CSA, media plays a significant role in shaping public attitudes. Buckingham (2000) highlights the growing commodification of childhood in media, a

trend visible globally and within Indian entertainment. Banaji and Chakravarti (2019) reveal how Indian reality television frequently places children in hyper-adult roles, blurring boundaries between entertainment and exploitation. Similarly, Banerjee and Nair (2020) show how Indian cinema and television perpetuate cultural stereotypes that objectify children, normalizing harmful behaviors and desensitizing audiences.

In the Indian context, the proliferation of reality TV shows featuring child participants is particularly concerning. This study critically reviews secondary literature and conducts qualitative content analysis to identify patterns and insights into how media portrays children and contributes to societal attitudes surrounding CSA.

Methodology

Data Collection

The data was collected through a systematic analysis of 20 performances of randomly selected 4 episodes from popular children's reality shows named *Dance India Dance Li'l Masters* and *Super Dancer* in which children are at the center of the narrative.

Analysis of Data

Selected episodes were systematically analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns of visual, behavioral, narrative, verbal and autonomy-related cues that indicate the objectification of children. A coding framework was developed from relevant literature and preliminary observations as follows:

Visual Objectification:

- **1A**: Camera angles that sexualize or objectify the child

Behavioral Objectification:

- **2A**: Child shown performing or behaving in a highly exaggerated way for entertainment
- **2B**: Child pressured or encouraged to act outside of normal behavior for the sake of entertainment
- **2C:** Child performing on age-inappropriate songs without comprehending the meaning of the content of the songs

Narrative Objectification:

- **3A**: Child portrayed as a commodity or product
- **3B**: Child's story is framed as a tool to enhance ratings or attract attention

Verbal Objectification:

- **4A**: Host or other characters make comments that sexualize or infantilize the child.
- **4B**: Language that emphasizes the child's appearance over other qualities

Agency & Autonomy:

- **5A**: Children are portrayed as having little control over their participation or image (e.g., adult producers controlling their storyline or interactions).

	Visual Objectification	Behavioral Objectification:			Narrative Objectification		Verbal Objectification		Agency & Autonomy
	1A	2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	4A	4B	5A
	Camera angles that sexualize or objectify the child	Highly exaggerated performance	Adult-like behaviour/speech	Performing on age-inappropriate	Portrayed as a commodity	Background story framed for ratings and attention	Sexualizing comments passed by adults	Emphasizing appearance over anything else	Have little or no control over the image or dialogues
2021 -Super Dancer (S04E05)	✔					✔	✔		
2nd performance		✔	✔					✔	✔
3rd performance				✔	✔	✔			✔
4th performance			✔	✔		✔	✔		
mid-performance - children other than the ones who performed in				✔✔✔ ✔					
5th performance			✔	✔	✔				
6th performance				✔					
2022 - DID L'il Masters (S05E23) 1st performance			✔		✔	✔			
2nd performance			✔	✔	✔				✔✔
mid-performance - children other than the ones who performed in			✔						
3rd performance			✔		✔				✔
4th performance				✔	✔				
2022 - DID L'il Masters (S05E25) 1st performance			✔✔	✔	✔				✔✔
2nd performance					✔	✔			
3rd performance			✔		✔				✔✔
4th performance				✔	✔				
5th performance					✔				✔
2021 -Super Dancer (S04E12)			✔						✔✔
2nd performance	✔					✔			✔
3rd performance			✔						✔
4th performance	✔			✔					✔✔

Discussion

After analysis, the theme that emerged prominently from the data was behavioral objectification. **Behavioral Objectification** occurs when individuals are valued or portrayed primarily for their actions, performances, or behaviors, rather than as complete human beings with inherent dignity and autonomy. In this context, the focus is disproportionately on how children behave in a way that serves entertainment, gratification or expectations imposed by others, often at the cost of their individuality.

In the present study, behavioral objectification is manifested in children talking and behaving in an adult-like and exaggerated manner (70%). Children's comments like *"aap kuch kaam ke nahi ho" "maine unn par vishwas rakha and unnonhe muz par vishwas rakha''* indicate behavioral objectification. Constantly made to make funny faces is another example of exclusive focus on

entertainment. Choosing songs with themes and lyrics beyond children's comprehension is very commonly observed behavioral objectification (50%). For example, "Haai Rama ye kya hua", "chalti hai kya nau se bara", "ang laga de" & "param sundari". Themes like "*Sita's Agni Pariksha*" where there is a lot of focus on "purity" is another example of children fulfilling entertainment expectations without understanding the actual meaning behind it.

Secondly, the use of Lavani form of dance is also indicative of the age-inappropriateness of the performance. It often involves themes of desire and romance, portrayed with bold and sensuous expressions, creating a highly evocative performance style where children's sexualization is normalized, even if not explicitly portrayed. Coy (2008) similarly emphasizes such portrayals of children in media perpetuating objectification and harmful gender roles. This blurs the boundaries between childhood and adulthood, fostering a societal desensitization to child exploitation and increasing the risk of CSA.

What also emerges prominently from the data is narrative objectification, where children's lives and experiences are molded into stories that serve external agendas, reducing them to plot devices. In the episodes analyzed, children's underprivileged backgrounds and family struggles were frequently highlighted (30%) to evoke sympathy and appeal to viewers' emotions. For example, performers' poor living conditions were showcased, entire villages were shown conducting *havan* rituals for their success and parents' socio-economic status was depicted as improving due to the child's television appearance—such as a daily wage-earning father receiving praise for his workplace. This emotional exploitation extended to symbolic acts, like a grandmother gifting a self-woven sweater or a factory owner sending sarees for the judges, while the child's mother prepared home-cooked meals for the team. Although these gestures appear heartfelt, they shift the focus from the child's talent to their personal hardships, fostering pity and emotional engagement rather than a genuine appreciation of their abilities. Such portrayals commodify children's stories, turning them into consumable content and promoting a transactional perception of their worth. This commodification is further exemplified by children (50%) being made to request votes to win contests, leveraging their innocence to elicit love and support from the audience. As Heimermann (2024) notes, this "commodification of children" reduces them to entities valued for the benefits they can generate, whether monetary or otherwise. The shift from emotional to physical commodification is subtle but significant, reinforcing the perception of children as objects to be used for adult gratification.

The absence of Autonomy and Agency is also distinctly noted in the shows (80% - 16 times in 20 performances). It refers to situations where an individual—typically a child—is denied the

freedom to make choices about their actions, or representation. Instead, decisions are made for them by others, often prioritizing external goals like entertainment, profit, or societal expectations, without considering their desires, needs, or consent. Being picked up by the host or judges, made to sit on the lap, being hugged and kissed, and being asked to perform on the song or theme not chosen by them are the examples of absence of autonomy and agency in these episodes. Furthermore, the portrayal consistently depicts children as happy, grateful, and comfortable in these situations, creating a narrative of compliance. This normalization of disregarding a child's autonomy risks desensitizing society to broader issues of boundary violations. Such portrayals may unintentionally reinforce the acceptance of exploitative behaviors blurring the lines of what constitutes appropriate interactions with children. When children are continuously deprived of having a say and are discouraged from asserting their boundaries, they can feel helpless and powerless. This can make them more vulnerable to CSA as they are unable to recognize inappropriate situations because of their normalization.

The phenomenon of Parentification and glorification also emerged as significant findings. Parentification refers to situations where children are expected to assume adult-like responsibilities, often in emotional or caregiving capacities. Parentification is seen in these reality shows when children's talent is highlighted as not only their individual accomplishment but as a key factor in improving their family's standing or addressing its struggles, putting undue adult-like pressure on the child. Glorification occurs when children are placed in situations where they are put on a pedestal. In the studied shows, instances of this were seen when judges and hosts displayed exaggerated reverence for the child performers, such as bowing before them or kissing their feet, and over-the-top comments about the child's future which reinforces a false narrative of the child as a unique or untouchable being, turning them into a commodity rather than a person with autonomy.

Also noted in the show is verbal objectification, that is, comments, descriptions, or speech that emphasize superficial traits. In this study, verbal objectification (20%) is seen in the form of comments sexualizing children like repeatedly focusing on and asking the child to show her abs, complimenting the child's smile in a flirting manner. This verbal objectification is also accompanied by visual objectification when the camera zoomed in on the contestant's abs. Emphasizing appearance and costume over the dance performance is also another form of objectification seen in the show. The American Psychological Association's Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls has reported that media depictions emphasizing sexualized images of

young girls can lead to societal acceptance of such portrayals, potentially increasing the risk of CSA (Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls, 2007)

The findings of the present study fulfill Finkelhor's (1984) four preconditions for CSA to occur.

Four Preconditions for CSA Given by Finkelhor	Role of Media in Offender Behavior
Motivation to Abuse	Media's objectification and commodification of children focuses on their struggles or appearances to create emotional narratives and diminish their individuality, fueling exploitative mindsets.
Overcoming Internal Inhibitors	Normalization of practices by influential figures in media reinforces justification for such behavior as unsolicited hugs or sitting on laps, making it appear socially acceptable.
Overcoming External Inhibitors	Society's validation because of audiences' or judges' praise and applause and indifference, driven by cultural norms that prioritize fame and entertainment over ethics, reduces scrutiny of inappropriate behavior.
Overcoming Resistance of Child	Media portrayal of children as happy, compliant, and lacking autonomy fosters perceptions of them as passive participants, minimizing concerns about consent or agency.

There are several popular children's shows, many of which have spinoffs or multiple seasons. These shows, often airing on mainstream television networks, have become a part of daily life in numerous households across India. Their mass appeal and wide-reaching viewership create an environment where elements that contribute to the normalization of child sexual abuse (CSA) are constantly in public consumption. The portrayal of children in ways that are objectified, commodified, and emotionally manipulated in these reality shows subtly reinforces societal beliefs, behaviors, and expectations surrounding children. Over time, this pervasive exposure helps shape a culture that not only overlooks but sometimes trivializes harmful practices, inadvertently contributing to the normalization of CSA.

Recommendations for Action

1. **Implement Age-Appropriate Content Guidelines:** Ensure all performances and themes are age-appropriate

2. **Respect Children's Autonomy and Agency:** Allow children to make informed decisions about their participation, avoiding forced or scripted actions that compromise their individuality.

3. **Eliminate Emotional and Narrative Exploitation:** Focus on showcasing children's talents rather than exploiting their socio-economic background for emotional appeal or sympathy.

4. **Prevent Physical and Verbal Objectification:** Avoid sexualizing children through comments or visual focus on their appearance and maintain appropriate physical boundaries at all times.

5. **Adopt Child Protection Standards:** Implement and adhere to comprehensive guidelines for child safety and protection, ensuring media creators respect boundaries and rights.

6. **Promote Media Literacy:** Provide education for creators, viewers, and participants on the impacts of objectification and exploitation.

7. **Foster a Shift in Public Perception:** Encourage the celebration of children for their talents and humanity.

Many of the recommendations outlined in this study are already included in the document published by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) in 2023, titled *"Guidelines for Child and Adolescent Participation in the Entertainment Industry and any Commercial Entertainment Activity"*. However, the implementation and adherence to these guidelines appear to be insufficient. Those involved in the production of these shows can issue disclaimers claiming compliance with the guidelines, even when they have no genuine intention of adhering to them. In some cases, they may believe they are following the guidelines, but their actions fail to align with the true spirit and purpose of the regulations. This disconnect highlights the limitations of relying solely on self-declaration mechanisms. Hence, there is a pressing need for more robust enforcement and consistent monitoring of reality shows involving child participants.

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SINGLE-SESSION THERAPY IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract:

The generally accepted definition of Single-Session Therapy is "an intentional endeavour where the client and the therapist agree to meet to help the client deal with their nominated concern in one session knowing that more help is available if needed" (Dryden, 2024). Single-Session Therapy (SST) is a framework, rather than a theoretical model, a way to conduct therapy and counselling aimed at maximizing the efficacy of every session of each type of psychotherapy. Moshe Talmon, Michael F. Hoyt and Robert Rosenbaum are considered to be the pioneers of Single-Session Therapy. Considering the fact that Single-Session Therapy is relatively new to India, this paper aims to explore the relevance and efficacy of Single-Session Therapy in the Indian context mainly in two areas: 1) In a culture where social, cultural and financial constraints make it difficult for people to access therapy, does Single-Session Therapy provide the clients with easy access to therapeutic interventions? 2) Does Single-Session Therapy appeal more to young adults (18-30 years) because of its brevity? This paper will use literature review to understand the concept and functioning of Single-Session Therapy in general and interviews with psychotherapists and practitioners practicing Single-Session Therapy in India to understand the relevance of Single-Session Therapy in the Indian context.

Keywords: Single-Session Therapy, Indian Context, Young Adults

Introduction:

The earliest example of effective Single-Session Therapy (SST) was conducted by Sigmund Freud. Later on various other therapists like Alfred Adler, Albert Ellis, Milton Erickson, David Malan, have shown that single sessions can be effective in bringing about a change in the client. These sessions however were examples of unplanned Single-Session Therapy. Bernard Bloom was the first to study SST systematically and set forth certain guiding principles for an effective SST practice.

Moshe Talmon, Robert Rosenbaum and Michael Hoyt carried out a systematic study of planned SST. This interest and study of Single Session Therapy can be traced to two observations: Firstly, the modal frequency of the number of sessions attended by clients is 'one'

And secondly, most of the clients were satisfied with the outcome of that single session.

"In the study that Hoyt *et al.* (1992) conducted, first clients were told that it was their therapist's intention to see if they could be helped in a single session, but that they could have more sessions if needed. The results showed that (a) over half of the 58 patients in the study (58.6%) chose to have only one session; (b) more than 88% reported significant improvement in the problem for which they sought help; (c) more than 65% also reported improvements in other areas; and (d) and there was no difference in outcome and satisfaction between those who elected to have one session and those who chose to have more sessions." (Dryden, 2024)

Moshe Talmon's definition of SST is- "Single- session therapy is defined here as one face- to-face meeting between a therapist and a patient with no previous or subsequent sessions within one year" (Talmon,1990).

From this initial definition where SST was restricted to only a single session SST practice now incorporates the 'open door policy', where more sessions are possible if required.

SST has also been named 'One-at-a-time therapy (OAATT)'by Michel Hoyt. "This term refers to the idea that therapy 'takes place one contact at a time, and one contact may be all the time that is needed'" (Dryden, 2024).

Windy Dryden uses the term 'one plus therapy' and defines it as "a purposeful endeavour where both therapist and client contract to work together with the intention of helping the client in one session knowing that more help is available, if needed." (Dryden, 2024)

The above definition shows that more sessions are available if the client wants, and the freedom to choose lies with the client.

SST is not a therapy model, rather an approach or mindset. In order to conduct SST efficiently and effectively, the therapist needs to develop the SST mindset.

Cannistrà (2022) has identified 14 principles as comprising the typical mindset of a single-session therapist

1. A single session may be enough. The therapist approaches the session with the idea that it may be the only meeting between them and the client, not because the session is a "failure", but because, conversely, it has been sufficiently useful. This also means that the therapist will conduct the session bearing in mind that it must be complete in itself. (Cannistrà, 2022)

2. Further sessions may be needed- SST practices open door policy, in case the client wants or the therapist thinks it appropriate, further sessions can be scheduled at the end of the first session.

3. The therapist can play an active role- The therapist plays the role of a listener, of a guide or an active directive role where they give the client feedback, suggest certain behaviours; or the role

of a facilitator, who helps the client help themselves. The therapist should be able to take up or change their role within the session to adapt to the client's needs.

4. Different methods can be used- The therapist needs to be flexible in their approach during the session. The SST therapists have their own preferred models of therapy but are not restricted by them. They need to have a repertoire of methods and techniques, to be able to help the client effectively in that one session.

5. The client is the expert in their own life- The therapist believes they have to understand the problem from the client's point of view; conduct the session in a manner that ensures it is the client who ultimately decides the goal of the session; in general, making the client the co-constructor of the solution, which will be based on, or at least inspired by, their own resources. (Cannistrà, 2022)

6. People have resources they can use to feel better- Clients have their own internal strengths and external resources, which can be identified and used to help them achieve their goals.

7. Nothing is taken for granted. – However, it is important to understand that the client may not have *the* strengths and resources to achieve their set goal or although an expert in their life may not have the necessary insight or self-awareness.

8. SST is suitable for different contexts and needs- SST can be used for all types of problems and in various settings

9.. It's fine to aim for small or simple interventions- SST therapists do not always aim at cure or achieving the final goal. The change expected in the session is mostly taking the first step towards the goal.

10. Results are mainly achieved outside the session-The therapist believes that most change happens outside the therapy room. This principle involves the simple idea that a major part of the process of change is more likely to occur in the hours and days following the therapy session than in the hour (or less) spent face to face with the therapist. (Cannistrà, 2022)

11. It's fine to have less prior knowledge-Therapists do not engage in explorative techniques but rather focus on the current problem presented. They do not use too many diagnostic or evaluative techniques to get to know the person before they come into the session.

12. It's best to stick with the process and the here and now- The focus of the therapist and the client is on the current difficulty and on the 'here and now'. Addressing the problem in the first session gives the client a sense of hope and helps the client at their point of need.

13. A structure is needed for the single session- Therapists believe it is necessary to have a single session structure to follow, which is obviously flexible and adaptable, but ensures that the therapist does not attempt to conduct the session in an improvised manner. (Cannistrà, 2022)

14. A client– therapist relationship can be established rapidly- One of the major objections to SST is regarding the therapeutic relationship, which is an important determining factor for the effectiveness of psychotherapy. This relationship develops over a period of time and therefore may not be present in that one single session, making SST less effective. SST therapists however maintain that with its goal-oriented and problem-focused approach, a good working alliance is developed between the therapist and the client. Studies have shown that clients who benefit from SST report a good working relationship with the therapist.

SST therapists usually follow the structure of having

- a presession contact, that is either verbal or written, is used to get the context of the problem, to prepare the client for the session and to know the client's goals.

- The session: Here the therapist and the client form a working alliance to focus on the client's current problem, negotiate a goal and co-construct a solution or agree upon techniques and ways that will help the client help themselves.

- Feedback. The manner and time of the feedback is decided during the session itself. Feedback can be verbal or written. Therapists ask the clients whether and how they have been able to incorporate the take-aways from their session.

The effectiveness of SST lies in its flexibility and its efficient use of time which is the need of the hour. SST as an approach is new to India. Psychotherapy itself is still not a widely accepted and an easily approached solution for the Indian population. Whether SST has the potential to make psychotherapy more appealing to the Indian population needs to be explored.

Methodology

Method

Qualitative research

Method of data collection

Semi-structured Interviews

Tool of data collection

Interview guide

Sample

4 psychologists

Participants

Four psychotherapists trained in and currently practicing SST with work experience ranging from13 years to 20 years. The psychotherapists practice in various settings with both Indian and international clients.

Results:

The questions in the semi-structured interview were divided in three categories. First category dealt with the process of SST, second related to the characteristics of the Indian population and third to the impact of SST on the therapist

All the four psychotherapists use REBT as their main model of therapy in Single Session Therapy. The process of SST remains the same for the Indian population with minor changes like feedback is mostly verbal rather than written. 3 psychotherapists mentioned that the duration of the single session is longer than that of the session in the long -term therapy (60-90 minutes), only one psychotherapist has the same session duration as in long term therapy (45 minutes). A presession conversation is used by 3 psychotherapists. Single sessions are a collaborative choice where the choice is given to the clients by these three. One psychotherapist uses OAATT format where all sessions are offered as single sessions, No presession conversation is held.

Factors that affect the choice of SST are awareness about therapy, therapy costs and time. Age, social strata do not seem to have any impact on the choice of SST. Factors that help the Indian clients during therapy are resilience, family/social networks, ideologies typical to the Indian culture like religious beliefs. Factors like strong family bonds, social norms seem to help as well as hamper the progress of a client in therapy. SST has played a role in making therapy accessible to the Indian population

SST has changed the approach of the therapists: made them more structured, more flexible, more client centered during the sessions. The role of the therapist has become more client centered but also has moved towards being a facilitator.

Discussion:

The diversity and complexity as well as the paradoxes in the Indian cultural and social landscape make it imperative that therapy and therapy models are flexible and adaptive in nature to be able to cater to such diverse needs. SST with its inherent flexibility and pluralistic approach lends itself well to address these complex needs of the Indian population.

The most practical reason why SST can be appealing to Indian clients is its cost-effectiveness, especially for the clients from lower socio-economic strata: and time-effectiveness for the urban

population for whom time is an expensive commodity. To that purpose SST serves as an excellent opportunity for the clients to get help even with their limited resources

 The treatment gap for mental disorders as estimated in 2016 by NMHS (National Mental Health Survey) to be 83% is a result of an interplay of many factors, like costs, insufficient facilities and stigma about mental health problems (NMHS, 2016). The fact that people are still unaware of what therapy actually entails also contributes to their general apathy about therapy. The pre-session contact with the client plays an important role here in preparing and orienting them towards the session. Questions such as what problem would they want to discuss, what is their goal for the session and clarifications about what they can expect from the session, help in preparing the client for the therapy and building a contextual framework for the therapist to operate in. SST gives the client the power and freedom to choose a single session or come for more, thereby, making it more appealing to the otherwise reluctant clients.

In the session the goals are decided by the client. The client chooses the focus of the session as to whether they want emotional relief, guidance, solutions or just venting out their emotions. The therapist along with the client develops a working focus and discusses with the client certain strategies that would help them maintain this focus and take steps towards the attainment of their goal.

Feedback is also usually verbal, where the therapist checks whether the client has been able to use the take-aways from the session in their daily lives.

This structured approach not only helps the client to get the most out of that one session but provides a glimpse into the therapeutic process, which enables the client to make an informed choice about future therapeutic interventions. SST thus serves as a "foot in the door technique" (Participant 1) for clients who hitherto have been hesitant about therapy.

The practice of SST is goal-directed. Therefore, it is important that in order to be effective, client goals should be salient to the client, achievable within the practical contexts of the client's life; perceived by the client as involving their own contribution; described by the client as involving the 'start of something' and not the 'end of something' (Dryden, 2024) making the client the co-constructor of the solution, which will be based on their own strengths and resources.

Indians who come to therapy may have worldviews that are very traditional, quite modern or a mix of both (Bhatt 2015). Having lived hard lives and with an acceptance of life as it comes, Indian clients have an inner resilience which is their greatest strength. External resources like strong family ties and a strong social network make it possible for them to deal with most problems. However, these factors and the values they represent, for instance, compliance to rigid

hierarchical structures, passive tolerance and a certain disinclination towards critical questioning, rigidity of belief systems and values can hamper the progress of Indian clients. Therefore, although there is awareness about and insight in the problem and an intellectual agreement to the solution, people refrain from implementing these solutions in their daily lives. For instance, "getting out of a toxic marriage is a solution to which the client can agree intellectually, but finds it difficult to implement due to their inherent value systems". (Participant 4). SST however allows the client to define and choose their goals and functional work can be then decided upon as the goal of the session. SST therapists believe that the steps taken towards change are the first steps and the major part of the process of change happens outside the therapy room (Cannistra, 2022). This allows the client to incorporate these small changes in their daily context and makes them more 'therapy-friendly'. The focus on the help given for the current problem and at the point of need increases the chances of the client returning for more sessions when in need.

Among the factors that play a role in the choice of SST are cost-considerations, time constraints, long travelling hours, and online therapy sessions. The single session format seems to appeal more to the older age group. They come to therapy without really knowing what to expect and are therefore more amenable to the single session format. The young adults though used to a fast-paced life and wanting quick solutions are ready for longer therapy hours. Awareness about mental health issues seems to be the key factor in this choice. However, here too it is seen that young adults go in more for multiple single sessions.

Conclusion:

Since SST is just being introduced in India, the data gathered is insufficient to make any conclusive statements about its efficacy and preference. But because of its flexibility, brevity and client-centric approach, SST seems to have the potential to make therapy approachable and appealing to the Indian clients

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