

Emotional Couture for Slow Fashion: Legacy to Cherish For Years

By:

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Abstract

In present scenario protection of Mother Earth from various hazardous materials, excessive exploitation of resources and non-responsible human activities has become a major concern worldwide. Sustainable practices in every human activity have become important and fashion is not less affected by this movement. Exploitation of resources for ever changing trends in fashion are immense and coping up with such demand will put enormous pressure on the environment. In such a situation, slowing down the pace of rapidly changing fashion scenario is quite relevant.

The Slow Fashion movement is a unified representation of the "sustainable", "eco", "green", and "ethical" fashion movements that is gaining momentum. The pace of fashion cycle can be reduced to a certain extent by exploiting available materials to its ultimate usage, thereby limiting the further production. This will reduce environmental hazards in a considerable way. In this regard, a different approach can be adopted in design thinking. Incorporating emotional component to the product will add enormous value in the mind of the user thereby slowing the fashion by using it for longer time. Fashion professionals have to play major role to inculcate the concept of slow fashion with responsibility in their product line. This paper is a case study of a live fashion school where teaching methodology was formulated to create designs by the students with emotional value to it, an art piece that wearer can cherish for long and not throw it after one season. The main objective of the study is to incorporate the concept of slow fashion for more sensible and responsible designs that can be a better solution for sustainable fashion. It aims in imparting designing knowledge to design a fashion product with extended life.

The only thing for certain is that everything changes. The rate of change increases. In order to master changes, we have to recover slowness, reflection and togetherness. There we will find real renewal. (Professor Guttorm Fløistad)

Fashion that appeal emotionally- possessions those are close to heart, favorite and gratifies emotional needs will last for longer period with the user and can lead to slowing down the pace of fast changing fashion.

The term "Slow Fashion" was coined by Kate Fletcher in 2007, Centre for Sustainable Fashion, UK. Slow fashion is not a seasonal trend that comes and goes, but a sustainable fashion movement is gaining momentum with every passing season. Initially, The Slow Clothing Movement was intended to reject *all* mass produced clothing referring only to clothing made by hand but has broadened to include many interpretations and is practiced in various ways. The Slow Fashion movement is a unified representation of all the "sustainable", "eco", "green", and "ethical" fashion

movements.(Sagar lou, 2011) It encourages education about the garment industry's connection and impact on the environment and depleting resources, slowing of the supply chain to reduce the number of trends and seasons, to encourage quality production, and return greater value to garments removing the image of disposability of fashion. A key phrase in reference to Slow Fashion is "quality over quantity". This phrase is used to summarize the basic principles of slowing down the rate of clothing consumption by choosing garments that last longer. Slow fashion endeavors to slow the rate of change down to more sustainable pace.(Dickson M. etl.2012)

This paper deals with the experimentation in a fashion design school in order to slowing down fashion as an attempt to sustainable fashion. Fashion designing was experimented to create designs by the Fashion design students with emotional value to it, an art piece that wearer can treasure for long and not throw it after one season. The main objective of the study is to incorporate the concept of slow fashion for more sensible and responsible designs that can be a better solution for sustainable fashion. It aims in imparting designing knowledge to design a fashion product with extended life.

Hypothesis

Technical textileFashion that appeal emotionally can be cherished for longer period by the consumer rather than an obsolete fashion product thus will lead to the slow fashion.

Objectives

To incorporate the concept of slow fashion for more sensible and responsible designs that can be a better solution for sustainable fashion.

1. To design a fashion garment with emotional appeal for longer usability.
2. To analyze the element that will give a fashion product classic life.

Methodology

The experiments were conducted in National Institute of Fashion Technology, Bangalore.

Sample size was 25. Practical class assignments were done by the ongoing 6th semester students of Fashion Design 2012. The assignment brief given to the students was as follows.

“Design the Fashion couture for prolonged period with inclusion of emotional appeal to it”.

(Note: This assignment was not designed as an empirical experiment to test and evaluate teaching methods and models in a strict sense).

The assignment was planned for 8 weeks. Weekly monitoring and final analysis at the end of the design project was done for each design.

The objective of this exercise was to develop strategic thinking in designing in order to achieve a concept of slow fashion as viable solutions for sustainable fashion designing. Since fashion caters to psychological utility than functional utility, the normal lifecycle of a fashion product lasts for one season.

Slow fashion design resulted in:

- Logical understanding of the design process
- Understanding sustainable design philosophy to comply with the principles of economic, social, and ecological sustainability.
- Intuitive approach towards the extended life of a product thus driving momentum for slow fashion.
- Ability to understand and apply long term trends.
- Ability to think design with a sense of responsibility.
- To be innovative in design detailing.
- Extend the endurance of the material used for product's extended life

For this study, few examples are analysed to support the formulated hypothesis.

Emotive Designing for Slow Fashion:

For a fashion to be used for prolonged period aesthetic is important factor. The design should possess a characteristic to be called a classic product and will not have scope of being obsolete. It should have expertise or virtuosity, utilitarian pleasure, style and special focus. The design should possess a characteristic to be called a classic product and will not have scope of being obsolete. (Abitslow,2011). It should have expertise or virtuosity, utilitarian pleasure, style and special focus. Fashion that appeal emotionally-possessions those are close to heart, favorite and gratifies emotional needs will last for



Figure 1A, 1B: Emotional Connect

longer period with the user and can lead to slowing down the pace of fast changing fashion. Consumers can use the fashion product for longer period for various emotional needs viz; being connected to loved ones, feeling stylish every time they wear it, finding enjoyment, feeling stylish. With this aspect designs were developed are discussed below.

1. Emotional Connect with Loved Ones:

In design 1A an attempt was made to use father's old shirt to make a completely new dress which can be

worn frequently an innovative example of emotional connect by recycling the material thus achieving slow fashion.

In figure 1B, cultural and emotional values were used to design a garment. Motifs were derived from the regional folk art of Kerala in India called 'Theyyam'. Client's mother's saree was used for making complete new designer outfit. The garment since has emotional and cultural connect therefore such fashion garment can be enjoyed by the user for prolonged time thus reducing down the pace of fashion.

2. Mythological Connect

In figure 2B inspiration is taken by a custom called papad file in Jain cult where in blessing is given in the form of papad file. This garment again carries emotional connect in the form of wishes by her family, making this garment a special to be possessed for life.



Figure 2A, 2B: Mythological connect and cultural legacy

3. Upholding of Cultural Legacy

In Design 2A use of traditional beads which are very expensive and carries regional prosperity symbol were used to make a garment exclusive. The garment has a



Figure no. 3A, 3B: upholding cultural legacy

characteristic of cultural connect at the same time is made in very contemporary manner thus can become a staple Design 3A is a very traditional silhouette of Hariyan region of India, although colours and surface created gives very noble feel to it but the garment has an cultural connect an element which does not vanishes with time. This is again an example of a designer wear which can be worn in contemporary aswellas in traditional context by the wearer thus making it staple wardrobe piece. In design 3B Costume is developed with keeping emotional quotient and cultural legacy in mind. It is a beautiful phulkar applique flared skirt which can be

worn in traditional aswellas in contemporary setup by the wearer. The known punjabi phulkari appliques are taken from grand mothers phulkari shwal. In this way fashion product's usability is lengthend by incorporating emotional content to it.

4. Reliving life

This is an example of making the fashion slow by holding it for some emotional reasons. In design 4 an haute couture was designed by developing surfaces on the fabric by layering and folding the fabric pieces artistically. These layers of fabrics are recovered by two favorite birth day dresses of the client. The whole theme revolves around re-living happiness and cherishing the celebration of good old days. The garment becomes the staple piece in the wearer's wardrobe as it holds good memories of the life, thus lengthening the life of the fashion.

Conclusion:

Fashion that appeal emotionally- things those are close to heart, favorite and gratifies emotional needs will last for longer period with the client and can lead to the slow fashion. This was an attempt to approach design formulation in such a way that the fashion life cycle of the product can be extended, by incorporating emotional value to it, resulting in conservation of material, time and energy involved. At the same time, it may serve as a piece of art and can become a classic product which can gratify consumers' psychology for longer period. Emotional couture can be an effective approach to slow down pace of fashion, creation of legacy to cherish for years.

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Figure no. 4 Reliving life, memories of good old days