

# An Epochal in the Making. What is in Store for the Fashion Industry – A Fiasco or Success?

Kakoli Das<sup>1\*</sup>, Samantha Kumar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Textile Design, National Institute of Fashion Technology, Bengaluru, India

<sup>2</sup>Student, Department of Textile Design, National Institute of Fashion Technology, Bengaluru, India

**Abstract:** Two years have passed since the world saw a major upheaval in its daily life and activities, all due to a life-threatening diligently mutant virus named COVID-19. Cut to two years later world still stands in front of yet another global crisis that has the power to change the psychological mindsets of humans to a great extent- The Ukraine- Russia War. A war with the potential of being the biggest threat to global peace after WW2 seems to have just gotten in its fourth week, with none of its state objectives reached. How long will the catastrophe last? - a question no one knows the answer to yet. The longer this conflict resides, the more it will impact world economies in terms of inflation and price increase or/and consumer mentality, and thus, on its people. Global prices, trade market, overseas business and Consumer mindsets and habits will be subject to unprecedented changes. Like the lined-up pieces of Dominos that tumble on the slightest aggression, similarly different sectors of the countries, even remotely involved in this War, will have an effect. As this chain reaction continues, not even the fashion world will remain unstirred.

**Keywords:** Fashion forecast, Fashion trends, Impact of war, Consumption, Marketing goals.

## 1. Introduction

The fashion industry is open to constant changes in its trends and ideologies and reflects the time and era it is worn in. So, if the human race encounters any new change, the Fashion industry will become the means of propagation for it. Fashion trends are a keeper of the most significant world changes or events throughout history. Recent times are no exception either. The coronavirus outbreak negatively impacted the fashion industry on a large scale. Production had ceased, retailers had closed down, demand had decreased. As the world progresses from the impact of Covid-19 into the haunting screams of a world war, fashion forecasts and trends will ricochet this change implacably in the coming years.

Fashion Forecasts are used to predict the trends and styles of apparel and accessories dictating new directions or themes dominating the fashion world that people would like to buy at a given time and place. Customer needs by Designers, Merchandisers & Buyers are anticipated through these yearly reports. Since the 1970s, trend forecasting for fashion & textiles has become an important tool for the textile industry. As fashion changes faster & faster, learning how to observe, identify and project these trends becomes essential.

Recently, trends that focus more on the ‘new normal’ or reflect the changes in the mindset of people towards fashion have surfaced in many forecasts for the season Spring Summer 2023.



Fig. 1. (Source: WGSN)

*Soul Space:* A forecast story that “is all about finding comfort and connection, whether through an appreciation of nature or via new male identities.”

*Design Wise:* A concept that “promotes thoughtful design, with a focus on longevity and fitness for purpose.”

*Full Spectrum:* A story that focuses on escapism and “joyous journeys to other realms.”

These trends somewhat portray a mental and objective shift of the consumer mindset- the direct impact of COVID-19.

## 2. Methodology

Presently, the resultant “quarantine of consumption” could hasten some of these consumer shifts, such as a rising aversion to waste-producing company models and higher expectations for purpose-driven, sustainable behaviour. However, some changes like the digital shift, in-season retail, seasonless design, and the cease of wholesale, are only an acceleration of the inevitable events that would have happened sooner or later if the pandemic had not accelerated them now. When the dust settles on this present crisis, the fashion world will face another challenge- a recessionary market in India and the world. The market scenario in India has already begun to change dramatically- courtesy of the pandemic which has negatively started to impact the industry. Recovery is anticipated marked by a continuing slowdown in expenditure and a drop in demand across all channels. The need to buy clothes regularly is no

\*Corresponding author: kakoli.das@nift.ac.in

longer there, and several well-known brands and historic department shops have permanently closed their doors.

Consumers are concerned about their health and pocketbook as the COVID-19 outbreak continues. The pandemic fuelled an already-increasing demand for second-hand clothing. Other factors like travel disruptions, mass production being stopped, people having more time at hand to invest and rethink their fashion choices as led the consumer base to become more sustainability-conscious, laid-back and yearn for timeless-seasonless clothing lines.

In the battle for a share of the middle-class pocket, the category of “Masstige”, a combination of mass-market products and prestige brands, is gaining momentum. As this category allows the common man to fulfil his discount mindset and find his aspirational taste yet look for down-to-earth value-consciousness. This change in consumer behaviour is evident in the menswear market of today as well. From youthful to middle-aged men in the Indian market have started to realise what the pandemic and the current situation has made of humanity and are a good example to showcase the above-mentioned new consumer mindset.

To get out of their financial binds, people began to explore how they could make use of the discarded clothing in their closets. The resale, or selling of "pre-loved" apparel, has become more popular around the world and can be observed on a variety of social media platforms. Stories like Art of Repair and Resourceful sartorial all propagate the same theme of reusing materials already existing in consumer wardrobes.



Fig. 2. Depiction of the style followed in Resourceful Sartorial (Source-WGSN)

*In 2020, more than 65% of consumers planned to spend less on clothes. The combination of staying at home and financial worry led the majority of consumers to reprioritize. “As the situation continues further into 2021, Mckinsey predicts that the industry won’t be returning to pre-pandemic sites before at least late 2023. In 2021, experts predict a 30% growth in online sales in the US.”*

Furthermore, years of consumer evolution happened as e-commerce in Covid time boomed. Brands began to focus on generating revenue from the only channel available in many

markets: e-commerce. *Overturning traditional consumer customs and giving birth to a new wave of direct-to-consumer winners, COVID-19 thrust the development of five years into one.*



Fig. 3. (Source: Common thread)

Multi-channel marketing has also become a necessity as means to establish a consistent and purchase-centred experience on the digital spaces consumers inhabit. The e-commerce fashion market size is expected to reach \$1207.23 billion in 2025 at a CAGR of 16 per cent, according to the Business Research Company’s report titled 'Fashion E-Commerce Global Market Report 2021: COVID 19 Growth and Change to 2030'. This growth is being fuelled by two factors: the share of active paying customers and increasing e-commerce's share of retail fashion.

Comfort is also another aspect that has caught heed in recent times. Staying home and with less movement, people have started to choose comfort over any other style. Stories like a Business casual (WGSN), that cater to casualization and athleisure. The current styles also resemble 90s fashion trends using that time’s silhouettes and patterns, however, with one big difference; these classic styles are being reinvented in oversized and loud colours activewear and streetwear styles.



Fig. 4. Depiction of the style followed in business casual story (Source: WGSN)

Hygiene is another topic that came up as a growing issue after the coronavirus outbreak. Fashion's future is now health-first. Today's consumers are looking for ways to protect their health and the health of those around them. With facemasks being the year's must-have accessory, sustainable, ethical, and socially conscious wardrobes may be expected to become even more prominent in the future. As people's survival instincts kicked in, it took very soon for all to realise the importance of medicine and good hygiene. As the world was in utter chaos, people did not stray from any form of medical practises that promised protection in one form or the other.

Working on the same theme, recently in 2020 as part of their health fashion mission, Peter England, a renowned worldwide menswear brand from the Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Limited, unveiled the Neem Tulsi Collection, a unique line of clothes powered with a patented technology called "Enliven"- *"a unique mixture of 100% Herbal Neem, Tulsi and other healing herbs, to add comprehensive hygiene functions like anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and tested to provide defence against Ultraviolet rays for minimum UPF20."* The brand never fails to provide nature's best in a sustainable way. Speaking about the launch, Mr Manish Singhai, COO, Peter England said, *"Peter England has always brought numerous innovative products and we are thrilled to launch our Neem Tulsi Collection, which is the need of the hour. With this range, we aim to incorporate Indian ancient Vedic heritage and set a new benchmark in sustainable and wellness fashion. As a brand that caters to the evolving consumer sensibilities, this collection comes as a breakthrough in today's fashion category."*

Moreover, one can start to observe the trend of outdoorsy fashion in the upcoming collections of many mass-market brands which is yet another trend set to be seen in 2023. Brands like Max India (menswear) & their recent collection called Grunge Rock consisting of stonewashed jeans, shirts, t-shirts and more showcase prints and fabric techniques that fit the themes like *Outdoor max* (WGSN).

Although, what may seem of the fashion industry now is very soon about to be changed. New aspects will be added to the 'new normal' that the globe was heading towards as a result of the ongoing pandemic. The ongoing war has significant ramifications for global trade, cash flows, financial markets, and technological access. Increased armament spending will result in a shortage of high-tech for civilian use, slowing GDP while boosting prices and reducing investment in social sectors. Despite more employment, all of this will exacerbate poverty. Inequalities will widen more as workers are excluded and capital profits soar. Expenditures on research and development will rise. Deglobalisation and domestic production will hurt old-style enterprises producing intermediate technology goods in the developing world, as their exports fall.

India will see an immediate impact on inflation (already reigning at high levels) with a rise in fuel and food prices. Other prices will rise if supply bottlenecks worsen as a result of sanctions and the war. Exports are anticipated to be harmed when the global economy slows and deglobalisation occurs. Due to the slowdown and other issues, expenditures will rise but real revenues will fall. The already enormous budget

imbalance will widen much more, and in such circumstances, social and capital account spending will be slashed. For crucial defence equipment, India will have trouble obtaining already contracted defence equipment, as a result, India's preparedness to fight China and Pakistan would deteriorate. China could take advantage of this situation and increase its pressure on India. In the long run, given the new Cold War scenario, India would have to rebuild its international relations, particularly with China. With such strained ties exports and imports with some of the world's superpowers like America, Russia and China may be propelled and correspondingly impact Indian markets.



Fig. 5. Resort-wear Casuals will not be in demand in 2023  
(Source: WGSN)

### 3. Results

If the war continues it will also indirectly impact the fashion world and history is proof of it. Like when in the first world war fashion was affected due to shortage of money and unemployment after World War and in 1940, during the Second World War, many countries went through a recession. People had less money to spend hence spent on garments that cost less. As a result, period leather and T-shirt became very popular. More expenditure, pricey end-products, less demand and the psychological toll that the war will have on people is unprecedented. As travel restrictions are increased as the impact of war increases, collections based on themes like *Resortverse, Refined resort, Shore thing, all-inclusive clubhouse, city explorer*- that celebrated resort wear and the notion of carefree travel, will be destined to fail in the market as leisure activities during these tough times will be decreased and not opted for as tension between superpower nations increase leading to the repulsion of customers from luxury and leisure activities.

As bloodshed and distress in society increase, themes that find their core in vibrant and upbeat stories will also have to be sublimated. As we have seen, how the increasing rise in stress, anxiety and other distress emotions during the pandemic led to the emergence and negation of many aspects and stories that life in 2019 welcomed. Similarly, the war will lead to significant changes in the upcoming fashion forecasts. May it be themes or colour stories, many of these stories will be toned down to suit and soothe the distressed man of 2023.

In addition to this, exports and imports between India and the two major groups involved in the Russia-Ukraine War will also be impacted. It may be so that exports from Ukraine and Russia and other countries that get involved may be propelled. In

events like this, themes based on local crafts and promoting ethnic indigenous production may become famous and work well for brands.

#### 4. Conclusion

With the changing dimensions of the world, we can only hope and see for ourselves what the future holds for the fashion world. As to how it sails through these changes effortlessly is a question yet to be answered. New strategies like the Circular in which our clothing and personal things are made using a more thoughtful paradigm, in which the creation of an item and its end of life are both equally significant may significantly help out in creating collections worthy of the distressed consumers. Covid-19 emphasised the necessity for a shift in the profitability perspective after demonstrating that having more items and collections does not always equal better financial performance. By implementing a demand-focused approach to their assortment strategy and improving flexible in-season reactivity for both new items and replenishment, and producing value-conscious designs that speak to the consumers on a deeper level, companies may be able to realise their marketing goals and sales even during a testing period while acing their market's needs.

#### References

- [1] Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the fashion industry- [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impact\\_of\\_the\\_COVID19\\_pandemic\\_on\\_the\\_fashion\\_industry](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impact_of_the_COVID19_pandemic_on_the_fashion_industry)
- [2] Yara Zeidan - July 13, 2020- Fashion After Lockdown: The Future of the Fashion Industry- CRITEO.COM <https://www.criteo.com/blog/fashion-after-lockdown>
- [3] Arun Kumar- 26/FEB/2022- What India Needs to Do to Deal with the Consequences of the Russia-Ukraine War- THE WIRE <https://thewire.in/economy/india-russia-ukraine-war-consequences-impact>
- [4] Steven McIntosh - 30 April 2020- Coronavirus: Why the fashion industry faces an 'existential crisis'- Entertainment reporter <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-52394504>
- [5] 24 Apr '21- Global fashion e-com market to reach \$668.1 bn in 2021: Report- Fibre to Fashion <https://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/e-commerce-industry/global-fashion-e-com-market-to-reach-668-1-bn-in-2021-report-273633-newsdetails.htm>
- [6] Dunja Radonic - February 28, 2022- The Most Important Fashion Industry Statistics in 2022- Fashion Discounts <https://fashiondiscounts.uk/fashion-industry-statistics/>
- [7] Milos Djordjevic- 18.12.2021- 39 Thought-Provoking Fashion Industry Statistics [The 2022 Outlook]-SaveMyCent <https://savemycent.com/fashion-industry-statistics/>
- [8] Aaron Orendorff- Mar. 12 2022- 10 Trends Styling 2022's Ecommerce Fashion Industry: Growth + Data in Online Apparel & Accessories Market-Common Thread <https://commonthreadco.com/blogs/coachs-corner/fashion-ecommerce-industry-trends>
- [9] 28 Dec '21- Cotton yarn prices continue to show upward trend in south India- Fibre to Fashion
- [10] <https://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/textiles-market-trends-news/cotton-yarn-prices-continue-to-show-upward-trend-in-south-india-278110-newsdetails.htm>
- [11] AP- Feb 26, 2022, 09:00 IST - Russia-Ukraine war impacts Milan Fashion Week- Etimes
- [12] <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/fashion/buzz/russia-ukraine-war-impacts-milan-fashion-week/articleshow/89821364.cms>
- [13] Imran Amed, Achim Berg-08 April 2020-The State of Fashion 2020: Coronavirus Update — It's Time to Rewire the Fashion Industry-Business of Fashion.Com <https://www.businessoffashion.com/reports/global-markets/the-state-of-fashion-2020-coronavirus-update-bof-mckinsey-report-release-download/>
- [14] OdAdmin- On Sep 7, 2020- Peter England Launches Unique and First-Of-Its-Kind Neem Tulsi Collection- orissadiary.com <https://orissadiary.com/peter-england-launches-unique-and-first-of-its-kind-neem-tulsi-collection/>
- [15] WGSN Fashion Reports S/S 23- Design-Wise, Soul Space & Full Spectrum, <https://www.wgsn.com/fashion/reports>
- [16] The State of Fashion 2021- BOF- McKinsey and Company, Accessed on 24th March, 2022.