Multifarious Approaches to Attain Sustainable Fashion

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Abstract
Fashion is a huge industry and affects environmental, economic and social system in many ways. Exploitation of resources for ever changing trends in fashion is immense and providing these demands put enormous pressure on the environment. In such a situation sustainable practices in every human activity has become important and fashion is not less affected by this drive. Fashion professionals have to play major role to inculcate the concept of sustainable fashion with responsibility in their product line. It is important that while designing, designer should understand the benefits of sustainable operation starting with concept development level. In this paper design solutions for sustainable fashion are inferred in a design school scenario. The main idea to do so is to develop more sensible and responsible designs, which can be better solutions for sustainable fashion. The sustainable fashion was achieved to a certain extent by using available materials to its ultimate usage, using waste material, recycling of the products, planning second life for the fashion product, slowing down the fashion etc.

Keywords: slow fashion, sustainability, fashion design, haute couture, textile re-use, functional design

In 1918 Mahatma Gandhi started his movement for Khadi as relief programme for the poor masses living in India’s villages. Spinning and weaving was elevated to an ideology for self-reliance and self-government. Every village shall plant and harvest its own raw-materials for yarn, every woman and man shall engage in spinning and every village shall weave whatever is needed for its own use. Khadi Movement was– A true approach for sustainable living through sustainable clothing. (Prabhu R K, et.al 1960)

Fashion is a huge industry and influences environmental, economic and social systems in many ways. It is known fact that phenomenal amount of textile waste that enters landfills each year, fashion industry's sizable water-and-energy footprint is a great concern for environmentalist today. While having many economic benefits, clothing has a significant environmental and ethical impact ranging from increased carbon emissions, waste, water usage and pollution to child labour and unfair trading conditions. In February 2009, the UK Government Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) launched the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan. The research and consultation that preceded the action plan brought together over three hundred UK fashion & textile organisations, from high street retailers, to designers and textile manufacturers to battle the environmental impacts of fashion industry. (Defra 2008)

Sustainable fashion is not a trend. It is way of designing the styles as per positive future demands. (Dickson M, et al.2012), It is a part of the larger trend of “ethical fashion”.

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It is a global movement that involves economic, environmental and social issues. Apart from Gandhian philosophy there are various ways with which a sustainable fashion can be achieved. As per Gill Linton buying few well-made designer pieces that can be worn many times and does not look same. (Linton G, 2012) Vivienne Westwood on BBC’s Jonathan Ross show quoted her manifest as “buy less, choose well.” In the year 2003 “Slow Fashion” a sustainable fashion movement, was coined by Kate Fletcher. (Fletcher. K 2007). As per Fry, design future is concerned with humanity, and more specifically, how a design can contribute to the continuation of human design. Design is intrinsically linked and intertwined with humankind and the myriad problems facing the current state of the world. (Fry, T. 2008).

Today, fashion is one of the most dynamic, challenging and fast growing sectors and therefore, it influences, environmental, economic and social system in many ways. The sustainability movement is all pervasive today and touches many elements of consumer’s daily lives. Making fashion sustainable means taking into account more than just style, quality and cost. Therefore, it is important that while teaching design development, one should understand that the benefit of sustainable operations starting at concept development level, thereby broadening the design, aesthetics and the functionality of a product. The goal of design methods should be to focus on key insights or unique essential truths resulting in more holistic solutions.

Today, a conscientious consumer covets and consumes products with certain ethics, and therefore, there is a need for complete re-conceptualization of the practice of design. In such a scenario, the pedagogy for fashion requires certain amount of sensibility in terms of sustainability. Sustainable development requires radical changes in the way we design, produce, consume and socially interact. These changes will not only be technical, but also social and ethical. This paper deals with the experimentation in a Fashion design school in order to attain sustainable fashion. Fashion designing was explored to create designs by the fashion design students with sustainable approach. The main objective of the study is to incorporate the concepts for more sensible and responsible designs that do more with less, multifunctional garments (also called convertibles or transformers) are articles of clothing that can be worn in more than one way or that serve multiple purposes. They can usually be altered by utilizing attached strips of cloth, ties, buttons or other built-in modifiers. As shown in figure no. 2 a top can be altered by zipper in the form of bag for varied utility.

Methodology
The experiments were conducted in National Institute of Fashion Technology, Bangalore, India. Experimental designing is being taught for many years in the form of classroom project to the students of Fashion Design VI semester. These students are not taught about sustainable fashion as a part of their curricula and the course pedagogy was modified to include this aspect in the form of assignment. Assignments were formulated keeping attainment of sustainability in fashion in mind.

Today fashion design VI batch: Fashion with Life
2011 Fashion design VI batch: Fashion exclusive Life
2011 Fashion design VI batch: Multi-functional garments
2012 Fashion design VI batch: Slow Fashion

Weaker market and final analysis at the end of the design project was done for each design. Students were encouraged to engage with innovative and radical ways to approach sustainable fashion solutions employing different perspectives on sustainability. The design project was planned for 8 weeks. Following design process was planned for achieving the design outcome.

Design Process
- Market Research
- Client Research
- Possible Second Life Product Research
- Trend Study
- Trend Study 2 (Second Life if)
- Inspiration
- Colour Generation
- Fabric Collection
- Idea Generation
- Idea Generation (Second Life if)
- Technical Detailing of Product Conversion
- Design Collection
- Technical Specification
- Pattern Making
- Prototype Development for First Life & Conversion to Second Life if planned

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

Development of Sustainable Fashion Design
The objective of this exercise was to develop strategic thinking in designing in order to achieve 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. The idea of this exercise was to approach designing in a way that the overall life cycle of the product can be increased, resulting in conservation of material, time and energy involved. For this study, few examples are analysed. The observations made are as follows:

1. Wardrobe Staple Piece: A rule to a wardrobe – QUALITY NOT QUANTITY!!! Clothes that liked by the consumer not only for one season but for many seasons, a garment that can be coordinated with many separates in your wardrobe, it is flatter- ing, comfortable, versatile, well-made can be called a Wardrobe Staple Piece. Following examples are analysed under such season less wardrobe staple pieces.

2. Multi-Functionality of Garments: By creating garments that do more with less, multifunctional garments (also called convertibles or transformers) are articles of clothing that can be worn in more than one way or that serve multiple purposes. They can usually be altered by utilizing attached strips of cloth, ties, buttons or other built-in modifiers. As shown in figure no. 2 a top can be altered by zipper in the form of bag for varied utility.

3. Re-Construction - second life: For achieving the psychological and functional utility of a fashion product, the design process was modified to design two life cycles for one fashion product. Also, the transformation of one life to the other was planned in the design process itself by the students. After analysing
4. 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. (Abitslow, 2011). It should have expertise or virtuosity, utilitarian pleasure, style and special focus. Fashion that appeal emotionally-possessions those are close to heart, favourite and gratifies emotional needs will last for 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.

In design 4A 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 design 4B, cultural and emotional values were used to design a garment. Motifs were derived from the regional folk art of Kerala in India called ‘Theyam’. Client’s mother’s sari 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 the pace of fashion.

In design 4C 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.

5. Reduce Material & Process Using Modern Technology (seamless)
Incorporating seam less technology for the production of mass customised garment a single fabric can be varied in styles in terms of silhouette viz; A line, tulip, and with side cowl. Length of the garment can also be adjusted as per the design and size requirement of a client. By using this design intervention consumers will have access to a variety of relatively low cost, varied style, customized apparel. It is a commercially viable design intervention as it does not involve additional requirement in terms of raw material, processing time or infrastructure. Moreover unlike conventional garment construction technology where there is lot of wastage of material for pattern development, it involves no wastage, hence it certainly leads to sustainable fashion.
6. Recycle - best out of waste: Re-cut and sew vintage clothing, or use unusual materials to create truly different fashions, recycled clothing is the greenest option. In this approach to achieve sustainable fashion designs were developed by textile materials which were of no use. In figure 6A worn out and trend out waste garment and also incorporating emotional value to the garment for prolonged utility.

7. Choosing Artisans Products to Support Small Craft: Poverty is the social and economic system that makes most of the artisans in India vulnerable depriving their access to basic need for their livelihood. Cultural diversity provides wide variety of art and craft product as daily part of their living. The art of making crafts can be used by the fashion designers thus contributing to economic and social sustainability.

8. Modular Clothing: Making a garment with easily detachable finished components will give a wearer multiple options in the way it can be assembled, resulting in a feel of multiple garments without having produced that much in reality. The wearer can modify the styling, fit and silhouette as per his/her own without having produced that much in reality. The wearer can modify the styling, fit and silhouette as per his/her own need giving students a wider perspective to teaching itself gives students a wider perspective to

After analysing the recorded studies, it can be concluded that the design of a product can be done keeping environmental concerns into consideration. A thorough research about long term fashion trends is inputs in designing the extended life cycle of the product. A designer can incorporate simple and convenient methods to transform a product for the best usage resulting in reduction of environmental hazards in a considerable way.

In today's scenario with global focus on sustainability, extending a fashionable product's life beyond the recognised horizon will certainly have a positive impact. Including the aspect of sustainable fashion in teaching itself gives students a wider perspective to teaching itself gives students a wider perspective to teaching itself gives students a wider perspective to teaching itself.

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