



SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR RELATED TO CLOTHING: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Home Science

Darshnika Arya* Msc. Fabric and Apparel Science *Corresponding Author

Samridhi Gupta Msc. Resource Management & Design Application

ABSTRACT

Clothing has always been an important part of human society. It started out as simple safety gear and has grown into complex symbols of identity and culture. Looking back at how early people used animal skins and the development of textile weaving about 30,000 years ago, this paper looks at the motivations, symbolism, and consumption of clothing. It shows how clothing reflects identities gender roles and beliefs of individuals. The paper uses various literature pieces and secondary sources such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs to look at how clothing meets different human needs, such as physiological safety, social connection, esteem, and self-actualization. It is an attempt to understand how consumers use clothing to reflect their ideas, culture, and beliefs and use clothing to satisfy their physiological and psychological needs. This paper further aims to understand how clothing, culture, and social interactions are all connected in complex ways influencing clothing consumption & fashion choices. It also explores how modern fashion trends, sustainable fashion, and consumer behavior are affected by these connections.

KEYWORDS

Consumer Behaviour, Fashion Psychology, Clothing Industry, Sociology, Sustainability, Second-Hand Clothing, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

INTRODUCTION

Besides food & Shelter, Clothing has always been an essential part of society. Historically, Clothing made from recycled animal hides was used by Homo erectus approximately 1.8 million to 1 million years ago (Chung, 2023). Even the written accounts, such as the Rigveda from 1500 BC, mention some crucial garments, such as Vasa and Adhivasa. (Textiles and fabrics of ancient India, n.d.). The development of textile consumption into the mass fashion industry that exists today has gone through several historical, intellectual, social, cultural, and economic changes. It is crucial to investigate the developments in these areas.

History Of Clothing

Through documented records it was understood that the original purpose of clothing was mostly utilitarian, protecting early people from environmental conditions. Humans developed the ability to weave plant fibres into textiles, with evidence suggesting this shift originated about 30,000 years ago (Balter, 2009).

5000 Years of Textile, written in 2004, by Jennifer Harris, elicits that women made an important contribution to economic stability in a variety of ancient societies through their work in textile manufacturing and craftsmanship throughout prehistory; in turn, helped shape cultural identities in gendered perspectives throughout the development of different civilizations. (Harris, J. 2004).

Exploring The Need Of Clothing

Through several centuries, civilizations, and periods of Renaissance, Clothing today has developed into a lavish affair, consisting of mixed expressions, the necessity of protection, and other societal perceived functions that a piece of cloth holds.

In 1943, Maslow argued about human needs and the interrelational nature of the motivating factors behind human actions. Maslow further proposed that human needs have a hierarchy. Significantly, clothing is one of the most basic human needs it meets all five Basic Human needs in the hierarchy: Physiological, Safety, Social, Esteem, and Self-Actualisation needs. Maslow's theory further asserted that a person cannot fulfil their higher requirements, i.e., self-actualization unless their survival needs are met. Because of the environmental and interpersonal impediments that unavoidably irritate us, meeting the requirements linked with a higher hierarchy level becomes more challenging. (Maslow, 1943, 1954).

A study published in 2024 discussed European people's motivation to choose Second Hand Clothing. The findings indicate that fashion interest and materialism appear to be linked to more negative assessments of Second Hand Clothing (SHC) and thrifting, positive attitudes towards Second Hand Fashion, which are linked to high degrees of economic, hedonic (treasure hunting), and ethical concerns. Remarkably, the desire for treasure hunting (Self-actualisation) was found to be the most powerful factor influencing SHC views, outperforming both the ethical and economic motivations, which were

similarly strong. (Halicki. D, Zaborek. P, Meylan. G, 2024).

Fashion remains a tool of expression, conduct, and protection while fulfilling a wide range of human needs. Thus, design in textiles is influenced by various personal, demographic, and sociological factors such as geographical location, climate, age, gender, culture, race, etc. These influences further affect consumer choice within the fashion and textile area, motivating a particular consumer's choice of clothing. According to Kodzoman, Clothing enables people to express their individuality and inventiveness, identifies them as belonging to a certain group, covers the body appropriately, and indicates their place or rank within that group. (Kodzoman, 2019).

Social Psychology and Clothing

While Clothing acts as a medium of Self-expression, It can also serve as a medium of Conformity in societal settings, for eg. It is considered more appropriate for women to wear skirts than men while it is considered more appropriate for working professionals to wear suits than ripped jeans to work. (Divyabharathi, Dinesh. G, 2023)

Clothing and Modesty

The social psychology of clothes looks at how people deal with societal norms and their sense of self through clothing choices and modesty. People often wear modest clothes to show social ideals like self-respect, virtue, and authority (Rubinstein, 1995). Contemporary theorists such as Flugel have insisted that modesty is a primary function of dress while serving as a mode of beautifying one's appearance, simultaneously satisfying self-respect. (Flugel, 1930). Modern Theorists like Laver insist that modesty is the fundamental reason for clothing, while modesty itself is the act of covering oneself and not attracting others' attention. While clothing can also act as a decoration, or ornament of the body to attract the attention of the 'opposite sex'. (Laver, 1969).

Further, according to the social cognitive theory, clothes affect how people see and understand things. For example, modest clothing can change how people are grouped and treated in social situations (Lennon & Davis, 1989, 2005). This framework emphasizes the complex connection between clothes, modesty, and identity, showing how clothes can either support or go against social expectations of modesty.

Theory of Adornment and Projection.

Theories of adornment and projection in the social psychology of clothes illustrate how dress serves as a vehicle for self-expression and social interaction. Adornment signifies personal and cultural identity, with clothing representing heritage, social standing, and individual identity. Traditional beadwork in some African communities signifies social status and ideals (Magubane & Kloppe, 2003).

Conversely, projection focuses on the impact of clothing selections on social perception and behaviour; individuals convey and affect others'

impressions through their apparel (Lennon, 2012). These ideas

Consumptions & Consumer In Clothing Industry

Clothing can be quite personalized, reflecting our personality, character, and culture, sometimes becoming a part of our identity. Although International trends, sustainability, popular culture, and economics also influence clothing.

Retailers and manufacturers try to predict these relations and even document the impact of factors like consumer affordability, cultural preferences, local customs, etc, to obtain a competitive edge in the market. (Bloch, et al., 1986).

The clothing industry holds about \$1.7 trillion in the global market (Global apparel market - statistics & facts, Statista, 2024). Sources predict that between 2024 and 2028, the worldwide apparel market is expected to generate about \$0.2 trillion in revenue, a growth of 11.17 per cent. (Statista, Global revenue of the apparel market 2018-2024, 2024)

Besides economics, there is another side to the clothing industry that often misses the headlines. The global clothing industry, especially fast fashion, generates about 92 million tonnes of waste yearly and contributes to 20 per cent of the world's water waste. (Bailey et al., 2022; Niinimäki et al., 2020).

The recent increase in the consumption of fashion since the second half of the 20th century can be attributed to the rise of consumption by the 'middle class' consumer and the increased affordability of clothing articles. However, the recent decades have noted some shifts in fashion and consumption patterns. Especially, a drastic consumer shift to sustainable clothing options in the market. (Pratima et al., 2020)

A 2020 study of more than 2,000 consumers based in Germany & UK found a growing dedication to sustainability. A little over 57% of consumers have made major lifestyle adjustments to lessen their influence on the environment, And 67% said that sustainable materials were a must when making a purchase. This change indicates a greater understanding of how consumer decisions impact the environment and society. (Granskog, A. 2020). According to an Indian study based in Vishakhapatnam, when it comes to forecasting sustainable apparel purchasing decisions, consumer knowledge, environmental concern, product quality, product pricing, and social influence are statistically significant. A positive impact on consumers' perceptions of sustainable apparel is indicated by the significant coefficient values of all the variables. (Pratima, et al, 2020)

The Gap

There seems to be substantial evidence to support the Consumer psychology and consumption intentions of the Western population in Literature. Simultaneously, predictions, and purchase actions, are present for the sustainable fashion market in the Western context, while, similar empirical evidence in the Indian context is limited. More research can be focused on this concern, for a more holistic fashion consumption context, including focused studies in the area of clothing consumption in urban and rural populations in India. This can help to predict the consumer purchase and usage of clothing and the intent to indulge in efforts toward sustainability.

REFERENCES

1. Ancient period. Textiles and fabrics in ancient India. (n.d.). Government of India, <https://indianculture.gov.in/node/2730142#:~:text=The%20Rigveda%20refers%20mainly%20to,as%20woven%20and%20well%20fitting.>
2. Alka, Raman. (2023). 1. From Hand to Machine: How Indian Cloth Quality Shaped British Cotton Spinning Technology. *Technology and Culture*, doi: 10.1353/tech.2023.a903970
3. Alka, Raman. (2022). 3. Indian cotton textiles and British industrialization: Evidence of comparative learning in the British cotton industry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *The Economic History Review*, doi: 10.1111/ehr.13143
4. Aishwariya, S. (2019). A Review on the history, theories, and early forms of fashion and clothing. *International Journal of Engineering Sciences & Research Technology*, 7(7), 270-275. 10.5281/zenodo.1320910.
5. Bailey, K., Basu, A., Sharma, S., (2022). The Environmental Impacts of Fast Fashion on Water Quality: A Systematic Review, *Water*, 14. 1073. Doi: 10.3390/w14071073.
6. Bloch, P., Sherrell, D., & Ridgway, N. (1986). Consumer search: An extended framework. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13, 119–126.
7. Chung, M., 2023, A Study on the Origin and Development of Clothing, *The Korean Association of Practical Arts Education*, Vol. 36, Iss: 3, pp 115-133. Doi: 10.24062/kpae.2023.36.3.115
8. Divyabharathi, Dinesh, G. (2023). 3. Psychology of Fashion and its influence on Indian Consumers. *International journal of engineering technology and management sciences*, doi: 10.46647/ijetms.2023.v07i02.045
9. Global apparel market - statistics & facts, (2024), Statista, <https://www.statista.com/topics/5091/apparel-market-worldwide/>

10. Global revenue of the apparel market 2018-2028, (2024), Statista, <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/821415/value-of-the-global-apparel-market>
11. Granskog, A. Lee, L., Magnus, K., Sawers, C. (2020), Survey: Consumer sentiment on sustainability in fashion, McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/survey-consumer-sentiment-on-sustainability-in-fashion/#> Doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-38541-5_2
12. Hagewood, J., (2014). 5. Technologies for the manufacture of synthetic polymer fibers. doi: 10.1533/9780857099174.1.48
13. Halicki, D. Zaborek, P., Meylan, G., (2024). Sustainable Fashion Choices: Exploring European Consumer Motivations behind Second-Hand Clothing Purchases. *Administrative Sciences*, 14(8):174-174. doi: 10.3390/admsci14080174
14. Harris, Jennifer, 2004, 5000 years of textiles, Smithsonian Books. 9
15. Hiroshi, Takahashi. (2016). 3. High-Touch Fibers and "Shin-gosen" (Newly Innovated Fabrics). doi: 10.1007/978-4-431-55203-1_13
16. Johannis, Tsoumas. (2024). 4. Designing for the Land of Affluence: The Postwar American Dream through Synthetic Fabrics. doi: 10.62030/2024januaryarticle2
17. Krishan, C., (2016). 2. Synthetic polymeric fibers. doi: 10.1017/CBO9781139425200.006
18. Kodzoman, D. (2019). The Psychology of Clothing: Meaning of Colors, Body Image and Gender Expression in Fashion. *Textile & Leather Review*. 2(2):90-103. <https://doi.org/10.31881/TLR.2019.22>
19. M., L., Ryder. (2001). 4. The fibers in textile remains from the Iron Age salt mines at Hallstatt, Austria.
20. Maslow, A.H., (1943). "A Theory of Human Motivation". In *Psychological Review*, 50 (4), 430-437. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
21. Niinimäki, K., Peters, G., Dahlbo, H. et al. The environmental price of fast fashion. *Nat Rev Earth Environ* 1, 189–200 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43017-020-0039-9>
22. Pratima, M., Babu, G., Padmaja, P. (2020). Sustainable Apparel Consumption - A Study On Shoppers' Buying Behaviour With Reference To Visakhapatnam City, *International Journal of Management*, 11(10), pp. 189-199.
23. Rickman, J. (1931). *The Psychology of Clothes*. By J. C. Flügel B.A., D.Sc. (London: Institute of Psycho-Analysis and Hogarth Press. 1930. Pp. 257. Price 21s.). *Philosophy*, 6(22), 269–270. doi: 10.1017/S0031819100045435
24. Seyda, E. (2020). Sustainable Plant-Based Natural Fibers.
25. Vivek, Kumara., Prathishtha, Kumari., P.Basiah, K., Teja, Priyanka, Yadav., Madan, Kumar. (2022). 5. Ancient to contemporary—The saga of the Indian handloom sector. *Indian Journal of Fibre & Textile Research*, doi: 10.56042/ijfr.v4i6.59209
26. Yidi, Zhao. (2023). 2. Colonialism and the Decline of the Cotton Industry in British India (1763-1863). doi: 10.54097/ajmss.v4i3.13169