

A Study of the Contextual Environment for Changing Retail Garment Business

Hemantha Y Ph.D.(Management)

Professor, Adarsh Institute of Management and Information Technology, Bangalore

Abstract: Fashion Industry is highly sophisticated Industry in which the concept of global fashion is a product of contemporary clothing which is designed in one country, manufactured in another and sold worldwide. In present fashion retailing, technology has a great impact on customers as disruptive technology is spreading across fashion industry especially Asia region which includes India. It is critical for fashion retailers to formulate competitive strategy to respond to these changes. Having this background in mind, the study is an effort which addresses PESTEL (political, economic, Socio-cultural, technology, environment, legal) and Environmental and social factors which is posing serious threat to sustainability of fashion model.

Keyword(s): Fashion retailing, Fashion, Textile, Fast fashion, PESTEL

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I. Quick Introduction To Fashion Industry

Fashion is the term associated with rapid changes which is applicable to a thing, person or place so on and so forth. It is the act of being transforming an idea into highly innovative and creative practice of developing economic products. Hence, Fashion Industry is highly sophisticated Industry consisting of dedicated team of market research, fashion, brands, engineering, product development and manufacturing, promotions and finally distribution ((2015) The Economic Impact of the Fashion Industry)). Dating back to mid 19th century, fashion clothing was custom made and handmade for individual. Further, handmade clothes were transformed into usage of sewing machine technology for fostering the process of sewing along with factory system. Eventually, lead to proliferation of retail stores across the nation and further, this industry became globalized in which clothes are designed in one country, manufactured in another and sold worldwide. The various processes in Fashion Industry are substantial chain of business which primarily consists of four parts enlisted below:

- a) Primarily production of fibres, textiles, leather
- b) Production of fashion products by manufacturers, fashion designers and others
- c) Advertising and promotion of products
- d) Retail distributors and e-tailers

As the title suggests, this paper primarily addresses the fashion retail business practices which is mentioned in d) retail distributors and e-tailers which is constituent part of Fashion retail business rather than focusing on production of fibres. Fashion retailing in the academic literature is generally accepted as well beyond the small retail business or Apparel business with which it is popularly linked with. In this line, each fashion company responds to changes in fashion trends, distribution and selling clothes to its customers. Further, in the study made by **Fletcher K** (2008) specifies that two prominent business models prevail in fashion industry. They are Fast Fashion i.e., time based and Slow Fashion i.e., quality based.

Retailers adapting fast fashion model indicates quick response to fashion trends as well as production and lead times eventually leading to fast supply to market (**Cachon and Swinney , 2011**) and delivery of new merchandise to customers' in a particular season. This model is usually adopted by companies namely Zara, H&M (Hennes & Mauritz), GAP and evident that they have successfully implemented as mentioned in the study made by (**Choi T M et al, 2014**) where as Slow Fashion is more novel in fashion industry which is concerned with creating more sustainable supply chain focusing on local resources (**Pookulangara and Shephard (2013)**). Slow fashion promotes a more conscious buying behavior and motivates customers to be more aware of the materials used to create their looks. It tries to incorporate green thinking into the fashion world and pulls customers away from the throw-away culture that has been created with the emergence of the fast fashion concept. Slow fashion rather stands for attributes like sustainability and quality and an effort to decrease over-consumption and encourage a more conscious approach to purchasing clothes. Slow fashion model goes beyond sustainability where companies also engage in a transparent supply chain management and incorporate ethical and socially responsible initiatives while not losing sight of creativity and fashionability of their products.

(Fletcher K et al, 2012))Moreover, the prominence of slow fashion is recently escalating and entrepreneurs are coming forward to establish new business practices under Slow Fashion model. (Pookulangara and Shephard , 2013)

II. Review of Related Literature:

Retail business has a considerable potential to contribute to economic growth of the nation by mastering the practice of introduction of new fashion products and environmentally friendly and sustainable and through catalyzing the overall shift of strategies towards more sustainable products and processes which is the most pressing issue in fashion industry. The present study extends the concept of retail business process in fashion products which is currently remains under researched.

2.1 Fashion Retail :

Retailing is paramount to the economy of many nations and has a strong impact on consumers life (McGoldrick, P.J. (2002).Indian fashion retailing has witnessed several changes in evolving fashion segment across Tier-I and Tier-II cities as India is considered as a lucrative market for foreign companies and many of them are standardising retail market mix to match the needs of customers' demand. The beauty of this country is that it has a very large young population of average age of 30 years but the retail market is totally unstructured and constitutes 8-percent of retail in India. (McCormick, H., et al, 2014). Foreign retailers with presence in India includes Zara, Levi's and Next and number of domestic retail players such as Pantaloons' Aditya Birla Group and Central-Future Group venture (Mann Manveer, Byun, 2011).Organized retail in India, is likely to grow at 20-percent of the total market by the year 2020 (Malik, Khalid, 2013) and this sector is highly regulated by Government of India.

Organized retail is likely to grow at 20-percent of the total market by 2020. There are many retail business models as well as formats on the rise in India though there is an inflation prevailing in current economic conditions. It is observed that many malls are built not just for apparels or consumer products but also for entertainment, social spaces and many more.

There is significant growth in the richer classes and a shrinking of the proportion of poor in the Indian population (Mann Manveer and Byun (2011)) In line with other emerging markets, Indian consumers view fashion consumption as a way of conveying their status and thus fashion retailing is predicted to continue with strong growth in India (Das, 2014) and McCormick et al, 2014). However one of the key challenges for fashion retail in India is how to present product ranges satisfying desire for western styles which is considered culturally acceptable (Khare et al, 2012) . Theshift in demand towards western styles has been a recent phenomenon and in 2007 only around 20% of total apparel sales were from ready-made clothing (Halepete et al, 2008) although there is growing at a rate of nearly 50-percent per year (Mallik and Khalid, 2013). Infrastructure in Indian retail market remains poor and country has huge diversity in terms of wealth, culture, religion and language (Mann, Byun, 2011). However, growth is seen in the numbers of affluent consumers of Tier-I cities which is driven by increasing numbers of professional jobs, working women's' in workplace fuelling demand for modern work wardrobes. The study made by Chugan (2005) indicates that Indian Textile Industry should have global competitive view apart from cost competitiveness to lead the market.

2.2 Sustainable Fashion

Turker and Altuntas (2014) indicates that taking the base of theoretical framework of Seuring and Muller (2008), the study has addressed the current situation of sustainable supply chain management in fast fashion industry. Further, the findings were companies focus significantly on supplier compliance and monitoring auditing activities to prevent production issues in developing countries to improve the overall supply chain activities as well as sustainability in their business model. On the same line, the study made by Caniato et al (2012) pointed out that fashion companies have incorporated green practices to improve environmental sustainability which is key performance indicator and many small fashion companies are practicing green brands and emerging to position themselves as green brands.

Li Y et al (2014) have observed that there is an impact of corporate social responsibility on sustainability of companies emphasizing on fast fashion supply chain and attributes related to sustainable governance is discussed. It is observed that in prevailing fashion business practices, the policy frameworks are taking new shape as stakeholders are able to understand the significance of sustainability in fashion industry as they will be accountable for development and implementation of policies and norms. (Kozlowski et al,2012)

The study made by McNeill, L., and Moore, R. (2015) indicates that fashion industry is headed to sustainable fashion and practicing ethical production process which is conflict to fast fashion segment. Further, the study explores the attitudes of fashion consumers towards sustainable fashion. It explores three fashion consumers' namely self consumers concerned about hedonic behavior, social consumers who have social image and sacrifice consumers who strive to reduce their effect to world. Each of these groups have conflicting ideas

pertaining to fast fashion. Another literature seen in **Jia, P et al (2015)** depicts that sustainability has been a major focus of fashion companies and realized the harmful effects to environment. Further, indicates that selecting the right supplier for supplying sustainable materials to production house. This study has framed twelve factors from environmental and social perspectives for evaluation of suppliers. Various literatures are emphasizing the broader aspects of sustainable fashion. In the same way, **Shen B (2014)** pointed out in the study that sustainability plays significant for fashion companies due to increase in consumers' awareness about environment. In this context, H & M a Swedish fast fashion company has constructed sustainable supply chain in developing eco friendly fabrics, providing training and monitoring sustainable manufacturing, reducing carbon emissions and promoting eco fashion.

III. Rationale of the Study

This study is being done to explore Fashion Industry giving emphasis on fashion retailing. Moreover, fashion industry is fast changing all over the India as new models are coming up in India along with foreign retailers. To understand these aspects, researcher is keen in exploring various changes in Fashion Industry which is impacted by PESTEL study. At the same time, sustainable fashion is gaining advantage in fashion companies.

IV. Objectives of the Study

The present study is being descriptive as well as exploratory in nature (evolving and rapid changes taking place in fashion retailing in India) was undertaken with the primary objective of understanding the changing development in Fashion Industry or Fashion retailing. Based on this, the specific objective is *to identify the various changes in PESTEL factors of fashion industry and the effect of sustainability model on fashion products.*

V. Methodology

After reviewing the related literatures on Fashion retailing it is observed that empirical evidence on the research work is limited. Looking into this aspect the methodology incorporated in this research is based on secondary Meta Analysis of existing academic literature and market reports related to Fashion industry to understand socio-cultural and buying patterns by customers.

VI. Discussions

Fashion industry in a global level is highly complex as far as macro factors are concerned. In India this industry operates in a narrow segment catering to limited people who are aspiring and ability to buy fashion products. In this line, retailers across the nation are coming up with new business models along with newer store policies. Moreover, Government of India has given approval for Foreign Direct Investment to multi-brand retailers of foreign retailers to invest in India. Going through these aspects, there are vast changes taking place and impacted fashion retail industry.

6.1 Impact of PESTEL on Fashion Retailing- A Brief

Major factors have impacted Fashion retail business practices across nation. In this line, PESTEL study is essential to understand the aspects of retailing business in India as presented below:

A) Political Aspect:

Every country has political and legal frameworks which has significant effect on fashion business. For Instance, in the year 2005, multi-fibre agreement was removed and paved way for many fashion export houses to venture into exporting of fashion merchandise i.e., open competition. (**Lea-Greenwood, 2012**) In present scenario of Indian retailing, significant changes took place in revival of policies and legal frameworks pertaining to commerce and business which is framed by Government of India. Before introduction of Foreign Direct Investment in India, there were yearlong discussions of whether to allow foreign retailers to venture in Indian retail market with 100-percent or 51-percent stake in business. Finally, Central Government approved single and multi-brand retailers to set up business in India. There is no stability in Political system which has implications for fashion retailers in a particular market dealing with fashion products as policies should be revived consistently to meet the consumers' demand as retailers face issues related to logistics cost in supply chain management. (**Sternquist, B. 1998**) At present, domestic retailers have not made substantial investment in backend infrastructure. They outsource apparel manufacturing as well as logistics to third parties. However, a select few have their own manufacturing plant in which they have their in house warehousing facility across different regions of the country and own IT infrastructure needed to manage inventory management. Investments in backend infrastructure development (<https://fdocuments.in/document/fashion-retail-scenario-in-india-trends-and-market-fashion-retail-scenario.html>) could be a challenge for many international, multi-brand apparel retailers seeking entry into India through the FDI route. The policy also requires retailers to source 30-

percent(<http://www.technopak.com/files/fashion-retail-scenario-in-india.pdf>) of their products from such small and medium scale domestic sources. It is expected that, due to the existence of the vertical integration of apparel industry, local sourcing will not be a constraint for international retailers. It is crucial to note that international players have entered India through FDI route and it is an opportunity for India to learn international best practices to improve overall business performance in Fashion Industry in terms of development of better product design and deployment of technology.

B) Economic Factor (Economic Status)

After reviewing market report it is understood that for retailers; economic factors are vital in determining the purchasing power of customers in which average purchasing power per person is often a better benchmark of market potential not GDP of market. For example, China has the world's biggest GDP but the huge gap in prosperity in this country means that their purchasing power per person is relatively low. The study made by Mckinsey report indicates that there is shift in economic growth from mature regions in western regions or countries to emerging markets in South and Eastern regions. Further, during the year 2018, more than half of Apparel and Footwear sales have originated outside of Europe and North America as presented in Figure 1. (Fashion Scope, 2018) The Figure 1 indicates that there are rapidly growing cities including India as emerging markets and becoming growth centres for fashion industry. As per the reports of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) implies that there is increase in disposable income of households for consumers to purchase clothes which may lead to increase in sales. On the other hand, there is very less employment rate in most OECD countries over the last few years. Eventually, there are less people to buy fashion clothes. In this line, fashion retailers increase the price of fashion products to the people who have high disposable income by enhancing the quality of products.

Figure 1 Sales more than half in Fashion and Footwear in Emerging markets in South and Eastern region than Western regions or countries (Compiled by Researcher)

Source: Mckinsey Fashion Scope(2018)

C) Socio-Cultural factor:

Fashion retailers have to clearly understand the impact of social and cultural changes on customers as these aspect helps in adopting their product range to attract a variety of different consumers and their changing needs (Newman, A.J. & Foxall, G.R., 2003). It is vital to search for niches and meet certain customer groups (Kent and Omar, 2003). However, it is difficult for retailers to improve consumer understanding a day-to-day affairs of retailers. But, to remain competitive, rapid changes can only lead to sustain your business as it is open competition. Moreover, customers mind flickers i.e., any moment customers can change their mind to switch from one store to another (Sheridian et al, 2006) Further, following are the few factors which attracts new age customers as presented below:

C.1 Shift in Consumption patterns in Physical Stores

In Prevailing fashion retailing, it is observed that there is shift from Need-based Purchasing to Aspiration-based Purchasing i.e., Fashion clothing is more than a basic need; it reflects out aspiration, personality and status symbols. The Indian fashion consumers can tell the difference between unbranded and branded apparel on different occasions. The aspirational youth is also influenced by peer groups working in organization though basic fashion and foot ware persist; the demand for aspirational fashion clothing and accessories has increased substantially in recent years.

C.2 Fashion Awareness and Celebrity Role Models

In recent years, customers have become far more aware of fashion trends as they normally associate their favourite celebrity in purchasing fashion products. This is leading retailers to change their business practices and act rapidly and effectively in order to capitalise their opportunity to sell high volume of products to customers (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006). According to Bruce and Daly (2011) it looks like there is increase in celebrity obsession among customers and it is evident that an array of articles in Newspaper talks about customers are spending a lot on brands endorsed by celebrities. In this line, retailers have to increase their supply chain and lead time as there are customers seeking the product fast as it is evident that Fast Fashion- Zara had adapted approach to differentiate themselves from other retailers. (Doyle et al, 2006)

C.3 Shift in shopping behaviour

One of the impacts on fashion retailing has been the shift towards self service from traditional stores. In this line, customers are looking for convenience either in physical stores or online stores in wide range of products. Moreover, stores provide array of services, trying new products, leisure and comparison of products with prices. Today's present fashion consumers are smart enough to compare prices across brands in various formats. Online fashion or e-tailing is a new phenomenon as it is fast emerging though physical stores persist. Many fashion retailers have realised that there is changing perception of shopping behaviour and major retailers have invested in enhanced supply chain technology driven by manufacturer. Some retailers have their own supply chain which is competitive edge (McCormick et al, 2014)

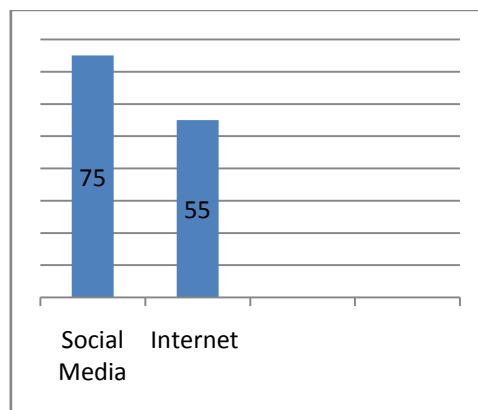


Figure 2 Consumer purchase patterns (Compiled by Researcher)

Figure 2 indicates that there is profound impact of social media and online tracking of products, comparisons, purchasing decisions, peer reviews which is the major shift in buying behaviors.

C.4 Growing Value Consciousness

Though fashion consumer is willing to spend on fashion clothing and accessories, the consciousness of value received for the money spent has increased manifold as weak Economy is prevailing and higher inflation rates have also contributed to this heightened value consciousness. The consumer is inclined towards value and affordability, but at the same time, there is an inherent need for a fashionable look.

D) Technology factor:

Technology is playing a key role than ever in influencing consumer taste due to advanced improvements across various industries of India so as in Retail. Research shows that many fashion retailers are concerned about the rapidity of developments in technology and are unsure how to react strategically to meet customer demands (Abjjeet Pratap, 2017). On the contrary, consumers have rapidly accepted new technologies and accustomed in using websites and mobile commerce as part of their shopping habits thereby putting pressure on retailers to provide this additional channel and service to consumers (Chocarro et al, 2013). Further, Consumers have shown an inclination towards brands that are selling good quality fashion products at affordable prices. This has led to demand for major retail applications on websites that are enabled for smartphone and Apple® iPads (Drapers multichannel report, 2012). Most Indian retailers own their Information technology infrastructure for Inventory management, Supply Chain Management, Vendor Management, Training and development, tracking of industry trends etc.,

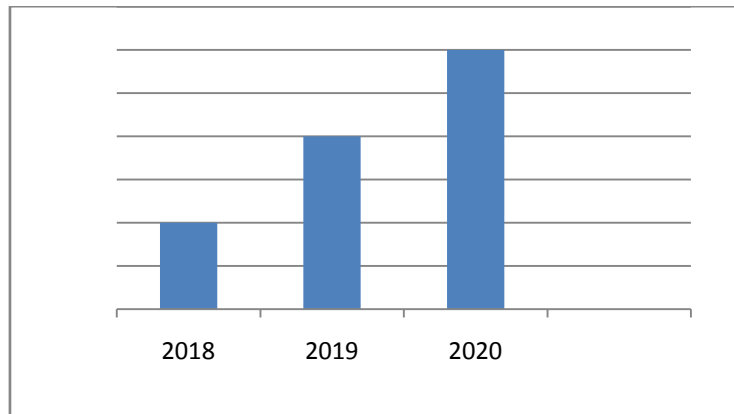


Figure 3 Growth of Online Sales of Fashion (2018-2020)

The global fashion industry is rapidly growing and moving into digital transformation as presented in Figure 3 which indicates that there is 10-percent of Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR). The modern comfort offered by digital devices has changed the consumption pattern from traditional model to complex model of online and offline which makes fashion retailers create a consistent brand experience to customers. Further, fashion industry should be able to adapt disruptive technologies such as Mobile, Analytics, Robotics, Augmented Reality etc., for the future business practices to change over their models

E) Environmental factors:

In prevailing fashion industry, Eco-friendliness will also be a critical performance metric for retail organizations though green marketing are still at a nascent stage in India. It is expected that a section of consumer groups and nongovernmental organizations will ramp up their vigilance on the environmental friendliness of companies. In fashion industry, sustainable fashion brands are focusing on environmental friendly products which are organic in nature as fashion companies namely Nike, H&M formulated sustainability factor for maximizing the productivity and minimization of carbon footprint.

Retailers will face questions related to the kind of labor employed by their manufacturers for example, whether dyes and chemicals used are in compliance with environmental norms, whether proper manufacturing and waste management practices are adapted. Fashion retailers in India have to keep abreast of the times and must start marketing their environment policies to gain a competitive edge. On a positive note for fashion retailers, India's textiles and apparel suppliers have a proven expertise in meeting the environmental standards of Western markets and have shown their ability to meet the expectations of leading international brands.

F) Legal factor:

Legal challenges are equally important to fashion retail industry as many fashion designers, labels, celebrity designers should have compliance with legal framework which is important focus areas for the big brands as well as labels developed independently by designers. As fashion industry is in transformation phase and environmental laws are equally important related to domestic and international trade which is complex process which is very beneficial to fashion brands success

VII. Conclusion:

The study has addressed the rudimentary aspects of macro factors has huge impact to fashion industry as well as fashion consumers. It is observed that there are two models prevailing in fashion industry i.e., *Fast Fashion and Slow Fashion*. Retailers have realized that in slow fashion, sustainable fashion is incorporated as a part of business practices in which fashion retail companies are able to implement. At the same time there is rapid development of technology in fashion retail business across emerging markets including Asia. This study indicates that there is effective sustainable supply chain strategies implemented in many large fashion houses giving way for eco fashion. As far as technology is concerned, India is accepting new challenges as there is drastic shift from traditional retail practices to digital platform in which major retailers are implementing their business models in particular the heterogeneity of the market, evolving consumption patterns, a complex legal processes, infrastructural bottlenecks and Supply chain strategy. After reviewing the business reports as well as academic literatures on Fashion Industry, it is noteworthy to mention that fashion houses are seriously working on environmental and social aspects of fashion eventually affecting fashion consumers. At the same time, fashion industry is disrupted with many technological innovations such as Artificial intelligence, augmented reality. The study clearly indicates that global fashion industry in economic sense, there is setback for North America and other nearby western regions in fashion business giving way for South and Eastern regions of the

globe to be the emerging fashion market as presented in Figure 1. In totality, the fashion companies having slow fashion segment is focusing on environmental issues, social issues and most importantly, sustainability affecting fashion industry with focusing on eco-fashion. Fashion retailers can capitalize on the said model with improvements in supply chain strategies for betterment of the business for entire fashion business cycle.

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