

Primary Research - Summary and Insights of Interviews

Interviewed: Kaunchi Jain, Undergraduate Fashion Design Student in India

Age: 22

How She Views Fashion

She chose to study fashion design because she thinks this field lets her be creative and also combines art with psychology. While she thinks trends can be important for commercial purposes, she personally wants to create clothes that can reflect people's personalities and boost their confidence, which I believe is important as well.

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She also agrees with having a "wardrobe full of clothes but nothing to wear" and she thinks that it's about having an emotional connection to what we wear and that trends can make even a full closet feel useless. I personally agree with this sentiment as it does happen that people buy clothes which are only significant for a particular timeframe. It could be through social media trends, celebrities, merchandise, etc - but it does lead to buying things people often don't need and then those clothes are never worn again.

Sustainability

Fashion sustainability is becoming a big topic in education nowadays and students are being taught some practices through curriculum. The biggest problem is cost and sourcing. Sustainable fabrics are expensive and small designers can't order in bulk. Customers in India still prioritize price and look over sustainability, so it's tough to find that balance. She thinks that people need to reconnect emotionally with their clothes because if they love something because it feels like them, they will also wear it longer. It would also be helpful if fashion schools and brands taught more about garment care and repair.

Body Positivity and Adaptive / Versatile Clothing

There is growing talk around it, but some brands are just showing diversity in their campaigns, but on-ground pattern-making-sizing is still very standard. There is not enough inclusive sizing or designs for people who don't fit mainstream shapes. Adaptive clothing is starting to gain traction but it is not mainstream yet. There is modular clothing, like jackets that can be styled three ways, and they are very interesting, but still uncommon. I think this can be mainly because people are often looking for affordable clothing.

Problem Areas

Fashion sites don't start with the consumer's preferences like their body style, vibe, etc and recommend pieces that actually fit that, but they all instead go with random trends. Personally, my insight is also that this delves more into the intention of people making the purchasing choice and that is essential.

Interviewed: Ranjana Krishna, Mother who shops for her 5 year old daughter

Age: 37

Personal Needs and Overconsumption

She shops every few months or when there's a season change because her daughter outgrows the clothes very fast. She mostly orders online because it is easier and she can browse more options. Children are very active, so if something is scratchy or tight, it will not be worn again, so comfort is of importance. Price is the next important factor because they outgrow things very fast. Brand doesn't matter to her much as long as the quality is decent. About half her daughter's clothes are regularly worn (comfortable everyday t-shirts, jeans, shorts). Most others are occasionally worn for a family event or clothes she doesn't like much.

Sustainability

While buying, she notices if the fabric feels cheap or synthetic and avoids anything that might cause rashes or allergies. She doesn't normally check where it's made or how the workers are treated because she thinks it's not really visible to the buyers. She prioritises what is available and affordable. She passes on the clothes in good condition to her niece and gives the slightly worn ones to donation. My insight is that the need to replace clothes frequently makes parents more cost-conscious and less focused on sustainability. Also, clothes are repurposed but not from a point of practicality rather than an environmental stance.

Following Social Trends or Expectations while Buying

There is a lot of unspoken pressure to make the kid look nice, especially for important events, because no one wants their child to look underdressed. She often buys from the boys' section as those clothes are often sturdier and have pockets. She thinks kids' clothes are stereotyped. There is often more variety available for boys than girls. Here, I think that clothes can be too occasion-specific or uncomfortable, leading to underuse.

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She buys from H&M and some local online brands because they are affordable and the designs are cute. However, they don't always last long. They are convenient but not exactly value for money. Their popularity may be because kids' clothes are temporary anyway, so people don't think much before buying.

Problem Areas

Kids' clothing is not very adjustable, especially elastic waists and sleeves that they can roll up as they grow. There is also a need for more easy-to-wash fabrics and less glitter or embroidery that falls off after one wash. Reversible outfits are also helpful but not as available in the market. There is a need for adaptability and longevity in kids' clothing.