

# Impact of Covid-19 on the Trends and Tastes in Fashion

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*The covid-19 epidemic has adversely affected the worldwide nations. It is the first and foremost human disaster in 2020. The impact of covid-19 on India has been largely disruptive in terms of economic activity as well as a loss of human lives. Almost all the sectors have been adversely affected. India is among the most affected countries where second wave did considerable amount of damage to a very large number of population, the mortality rate was much higher as compared to the first wave and unlike the first wave the second wave affected people of all age groups including college students as well as school students.*

The textile and apparel sector has become the foremost severely affected among manufacturing sectors because of the novel coronavirus pandemic, which has challenged the planet on every front be it economy, health care, politics, planning or social values at large. It's something exceptional in mankind's history. It's the worst nightmare of policymakers, who on one hand are attempting to slow its spread, and on the opposite, busy in efforts to form it less deadly in terms of its social and economic impact.

The pandemic has not only affected the demand for textile and apparel but also its supply. India is one among the key textiles and apparel exporters (around 60 per cent of the country's exports) to thus and therefore the EU (EU) and these markets are hit hard by the virus. Buyers from these markets have either cancelled orders or put them on hold because consumers are locked inside, shopping malls are closed and access to online marketing is restricted.

## **How the crisis has affected the state of fashion**

What we've seen through COVID-19 is destruction to the mankind but it has also accelerated a lot of the trends that were already underway. Whether we look at digital, sustainability, or even athleisure and casualization, these

were all trends that we were seeing before the crisis. If anything, they've been amplified over the course of the crisis. There definitely have been a few things that you could pin specifically on the crisis. One is clearly international travel, which has driven segments like luxury and travel retail and has clearly stalled. That was probably one of the areas where we saw a stalling or reversal of a trend. But in everything else that we look at, COVID-19 has accelerated many of the trends that we've seen.

Athleisure and casual-wear sales have seen a huge acceleration over this pandemic. But let's not forget, so has digital. While overall industry sales are down, especially earlier on in the pandemic when food and health and safety were far more important than fashion on the minds of consumers—what we have seen is a huge acceleration and step change in online channels.

Dresses have become much more casual. But that is not an invention of COVID-19. It's a trend we've seen for a long while: moving away from more formal wear, having casual Fridays not only on Fridays but also from Monday to Thursday. Of course, working from home without the restrictions that you typically have in an office has an impact on how you dress. Also, we're lacking many occasions for which people dress up. Weddings have been canceled and postponed. Concerts have been canceled. A lot of culture and people-gathering had to be canceled due to the pandemic. All of that has an impact on how we dress, what we shop for, and how we shop for it.

## **Casual wear, sustainability, and other trends**

The one thing that we've seen is the trend around casualization, but we could well imagine that there is a revival toward glamour as we start to come out of this. We're already seeing that the need for self-expression doesn't go away because we have just been through a

pandemic.

So to some extent, we think the demand for product that is more special, more glamorous, et cetera, will make a comeback. We anticipate—and you'll see in the report—that nearly 90 percent of industry executives feel that the working model of the future will be hybrid. People are typically going to be working from home two to three days and the rest in the office.

We might see some fluctuating behavior, which is really sort of dressing up and looking your best on the days that you are out and being much more casual and cocooned when you're in the home. However, what we are also likely to see is that the new variant of glamour will also come with a degree of comfort. People have realized that clothing that's comfortable, that falls well, that feels good, that is well made has become much more important, given the lives that we've been leading. So that probably is something that will continue.

Market research makes us believe that people have become more conscious. They had time to think about it. They had time to look into their wardrobes. They had time to realize that they need far less fashion if they don't have the occasions to wear it. Jogging pant can get you a long way these days. But we will see. If the Roaring Twenties are back and if we are all going to celebrate that the pandemic has vanished, we might go back to buying more. And then we hopefully buy more with sustainability in mind.

The fact that a secondary market really got a boost through digital innovation—because it's now a digital exercise, and it's somehow lost its stigma with the younger consumers, and even became trendy—is a nice way to see how technical innovation, a new consumer group, and sustainability come together and create a whole new market and a better footprint for the industry.

### **Reimagining the role of stores**

We've all seen the acceleration in digital channels. There's no question that the role of stores and the scale of a portfolio that is appropriate for a brand or retailer to have is going to be called into question. Many will be reviewing their store portfolios and indeed their rental cost space.

Having said that, we believe there's going to be a

reimagined role of the store as well that will emerge from all this. Particularly, we've been quite excited to see some of the innovation that finally makes the merging of online and offline channels a reality.

For example, we've seen players draw on customers who are on a website, able to connect with colleagues in store for customer service. We've seen in many cases store colleagues starting to pick and pack and get customer orders ready to ship. We've actually seen for the first time probably much greater integration and ability of both store colleagues and physical locations to also power the digital experience. That's going to be an exciting area of innovation for the future.

### **Changing role of fashion shows**

We've already seen that the role of the fashion shows has become less important than it used to be. In the old day, it was basically two times a year in each of those fashion cities to inspire, to produce some news, to produce pictures and stories for the media, and for the brands to communicate about the innovations and the new collections.

In the world of social media, two times a year multiplied by four or five cities is just not enough. We've seen that more storytelling was required. More occasions were required. And fashion shows, in a way, have only become one of many moments to create these stories.

The industry needs to get together. It needs to exchange the same way as we need to exchange with our clients. A lot of ideas, a lot of opportunities are created through those kinds of unplanned gatherings and discussions that we all have under those circumstances.

Using videoconference and telephone is efficient but also much more transactional. Fashion is a mirror of culture, a mirror of what's going on in the world. It's also an expression of yourself and what you believe and what you want to make others see. So there's always a translation of that into fashion and into style.

We also clearly see that social media and consumers are much more sensitive to those topics and want to see that reflected in the way brands act and present themselves. Sustainability, social justice, equality, all of those topics is highly relevant.

## Summary: Recommendations for Recovery of Brands

It would be best summarized as; we're certainly looking forward at a recovery trajectory. However, let's not forget that the recovery isn't going to be complete even this year, right? So we will continue to live with the virus and its consequences.

The key takeaway, if we think about the characteristics and traits of those who have been, relatively speaking, more resilient through this period, is first, it will call for speed and responsiveness, really staying tuned to where the consumer is heading, what matters, and how quickly players can respond and pivot around that. Second, it's really going to be about focus. Brands and players and individuals won't win by spreading their efforts and attention everywhere. It will call for a particular focus on the channels and the markets and geographies that are going to drive this recovery. You have to be where the recovery is to ensure that you can stay ahead and win as part of this recovery.

And finally, it's important to note that this recovery is going to come with market-share redistribution. So the recovering tide is not going to lift every player. It's going to lift the players that are better positioned and will end up gaining and distributing market share in their favor. So really thinking about what it is that it would take for you to be a winner in market-share terms as we come out of the recovery, that's going to be an essential lens for companies to adopt.

Despite the fact that it's all tough to live through this crisis, it's also an amazing opportunity for this industry. And it was somehow overdue, yes? Because we all learned somewhat the hard way that this industry can innovate.

Think about how product has been developed in the last couple of months: very often from a kitchen table, much more digitized; using tools, not being with your factory; selling online, not in stores; building up new capabilities; being much more agile and flexible than we used to be.

We should make sure that a lot of those workarounds and new techniques become a new standard and a new reality. That will help to innovate the industry. We will always need fashion. If the industry gets its act together, it will also continue to be successful in the future.

The pandemic has offered enough time for the fashion industry to slow down and think beyond just extending an identity and individual expression to its end consumers. It is an opportunity to re-evaluate industry practices, streamline, and coordinate efforts to prioritize sustainable and strengthened business supply chains. Investing in a sustainable future seems like the only foolproof option for ensuring the triple bottom line – People, Profits, and Planet as well as the Purpose of the global fashion industry.

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