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# Versatility in Ready-to-Wear: An Approach of Multi-Styling in Indian Women's Wear Collection

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**ABSTRACT:** The Indian fashion industry is witnessing a shift towards versatile and multi-functional clothing, catering to modern women who seek style, comfort, and adaptability in their wardrobes. This research explores the concept of multi-styling in Indian women's ready-to-wear collections, emphasizing garments that can be worn in multiple ways to enhance usability and sustainability. The study delves into design strategies such as modular construction, reversible elements, layering, and transformable silhouettes to create fashion that adapts to different occasions and preferences. By integrating traditional Indian textiles and crafts with contemporary design principles, this approach not only extends the lifecycle of garments but also promotes a sustainable fashion model. Through qualitative analysis and practical experimentation, this research aims to provide insights into how multi-styling can be effectively implemented in the Indian market, addressing consumer demands while aligning with global sustainable fashion trends. The findings of this study contribute to the evolving discourse on responsible fashion consumption and the future of adaptable clothing in India.

**KEYWORDS:** Multi-Style, Sustainable, Cost-efficient, Versatile, Women's wear, Ready-to-wear.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Multi-style garments are a more complex genre of design. It is a clothing concept that allows the wearers to wear different looks for different occasions, weather conditions, social situations, etc. It is a kind of garment design that gives total freedom to the wearer to reshape and reuse the garments for different occasions. The assembly and disassembly features incorporated into the garment with different fasteners provide the wearer with the ability to modify the garments with ease. This kind of design provides solutions for various supply chain-related problems in the garment industry. Therefore, it is not only life-saving for the customers but for the manufacturers as well [11]. The need for the rise of this kind of design comes from two major reasons. One is that with fast fashion in its boom people tend to wear different styles for different occasions. Digital fashion shows and other interactive mediums have made fashion content accessible to the common people at the earliest possible so that they get instantly updated and are passionate to get that into their closets. This behavior of the consumers not only affects their economic situations but also the environment. The carbon emissions from the production of large quantities of garments and other environmental degradations are so huge that manufacturers now have to think about sustainable practices in every spectrum possible. As occasional garments are expensive the need to buy new ones for every occasion is not only a waste of money but also fabric and resources. The ability to redesign and reuse the garment not only increases its shelf life but also reduces the wastage preventing it from entering landfills for the maximum possible time. The second major reason is storage and care. Garments not only require care at the time of wearing but also at the time of storage. Garments are required to be washed, ironed, conditioned and stored properly to prolong their life. Different types of fabric demand different conditions of storage. The space handling for storage of garments especially occasion wear is a task for every woman. The concept of multi-style having detachable pieces is easy to store occupying less space and at the same time helps avoid dumping garments into the closet and damaging them [11].

The purpose of this project is to interlink the concepts of sustainability, cost efficiency and novelty in women's ready-to-wear category. This specifically focuses on Indian women's ethnic wear. The project concentrates on understanding the trends and consumers and identifying the potentiality of launching a novel clothing concept through a consumer survey and development of a multi-style garment collection.



## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Evolution of Indian Silhouettes

Sarees have been the traditional Indian clothing for a very long time. Its usage can be traced back to the Indus-Valley Civilization where archeological evidence like the sculpture of priest-king clearly shows it. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century with Muslim invasion, women were forced to cover the upper part of the body leading to the attachment of a dupatta to the traditional veshti thus forming the most versatile garment – the saree [8] and also to the introduction of stitched garments like the ghagra and choli along with other fabrics and embroideries. By the late 1800s and early 1900s, there were Christian influences on the saree leading the blouses to become longer with full sleeves and the sarees taking the shape of a skirt covering just below the calf thereby revealing the ankle and feet. By the mid-18th century, influential Indian women in the British court and women participating in the Swadeshi movement wanted to dress classy yet traditional. This led to the invention of today's Nivi drape [7]. This was 1<sup>st</sup> introduced by Jayanada Nandhini Devi Rabintharanath Tagore's sister-in-law in 1866 and is still being commonly used across the country.

While the sarees were becoming modernized over the years and garment silhouettes were inspired by the draping styles, another trend that came in with the Mughals where the Salwar Kameez. This garment is now predominantly being worn in different parts of India. These are of huge contribution to the Indian Fashion System [7]. This garment has widely been influenced by the West as the kameez became looser in fit avoiding the use of darts thus becoming kurtis. These kurtis could be paired with a wide selection of Jeans bringing in a fusion space [7] [10]. The dupattas were slowly disappearing and the salwars were being replaced with comfort bottoms like leggings, churidars, cigarette pants, etc. thus, doing away from tight strings to elastics. The need for carrying wallets and gadgets has led to the introduction of pockets in kurtis [10]. The kurtas were further modified to kaftans inspired by the western robes and tunics. Apart from kameez, other traditional garments like ghagra were inspired by the West. The Anarkali suit seemed to have been inspired by the Western ball gowns and the crinolines had greatly inspired the addition of volume to traditional gharas and anarkalis with cancan. The ball gowns further inspire the evolution of saree dresses and pre-stitched sarees, thereby, giving a modern take to the traditional attire [7]. Furthermore, western garments like crop top are easily accepted in the Indian market as it resembles saree blouses and is often used as a substitute for blouses and cholis.

### 2.2 Ready-to-Wear Industry:

The origin of Ready-to-Wear fashion dates to the 20<sup>th</sup> century before which clothing were tailor-made. It was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century clothes were produced in masses with mantels and cloaks being the first garments to be commercialized as they required no fit. Later with time, sizing and fit came into the scenario leading to the complete commercialization of clothing. With its increasing popularity among people the demand for affordability and fashion motivated designers and manufacturers to produce them in bulk. In India similar to the rest of the world tailored clothing was more prevalent until the 1970s. Custom-made tailoring was of more progress at that time. However, the time consumption for making the garments, the requirement of several trials for fitting and high cost of production slowly led to the introduction of ready-made apparel in India. India is now the 6<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world exporting ready-to-wear garments with precise quality and 2<sup>nd</sup> largest manufactures of clothing products next to China. The global pandemic of 2019 had left a huge impact on all industries including textiles. The ready-to-wear garment sector has been affected to a greater extent by the curfews. People have become less glamorous and more functional and they expect clothing to have comfort and functionality in addition to aesthetics [1]. The global situation has led to people thinking about sustainability and environmentally friendly. Post-Covid people expect each of their investments to have both monetary and non-monetary benefits. Consumers increasingly look for versatility, quality and innovation in their garments says WGSN.

### 2.3 Need for Sustainability in Garment Design

The shorter lead times and introduction of new clothing lines more frequently have led to the aggressive buying of people. With fast fashion people continuously keep buying new styles and discard the not-so-cool ones all of which end up in landfills or incineration directly affecting the environment we live in. The number of garments produced is increasing day by day and has doubled since 2000 [4]. The production causes the release of about 23 kilograms of greenhouse gases per kilogram of fabric thereby affecting ozone [4]. Furthermore, post-pandemic peoples' thoughts have changed and they are looking for more functional and comfort-oriented products where they expect their products to have both monetary and non-monetary values. Versatility is an important feature that is gaining attention these days along with quality and innovation.

#### 2.4 Forecasted Sustainable Practices in Garment Design

The concept of multi-use has also stepped into the fashion scenario. Forecasting reports from WGSN state how the concept of sustainability can be practiced in the garment industry with modular and detachable pieces that can be restyled and reused. The incorporation of adjustable fasteners and one-size garments can be a great saving both in terms of production and usage allowing consumers to purchase 1 garment for 2 or 3 people in a family for reuse and less production at the same time. The usage of durable material and ease of disassembly can make this even better. Dissolvable stitches, unscrewable hardware and spare components with tool kits can help greatly in increasing the life of the garment [5].

#### 2.5 Multi-Style in Garments

The greatest strength of multi-style garments lies in its technical aspect where it possesses unique and versatile qualities. It has the quality of diversity where it allows the wearer to get creative and create multiple looks with limited pieces of garment components. On the other hand, it is also flexible allowing it to flow easily across various stages of the garment lifecycle from design to consumer use where it provides ultimate savings in each stage. Its lifetime is extended as it can be used across seasons and years with its ability to restyle and reshape. Apart from this it also possesses various benefits from space saving to budget friendliness. It facilitates the easy storage of the garment with the detachable pieces and also has its effect on the cost as it is the investment on 1 garment from the consumers' end. It is travel friendly as well allowing you to carry minimal luggage in travel and also allows to transform from office to party look within seconds. The cases of repetition can be avoided as the garment by itself can be restyled and reused in many ways and is also environmentally beneficial in terms of the production as it requires less use of resources, thereby promoting sustainability.

#### 2.6 Fashion Consumer Behaviour Post Pandemic:

Research says that even before the pandemic, fast fashion was brought in the disposal of fashion culture. Here the quality of the products is superior to its useful life but, it's the product's immaterial value that plays a major role here. This has made fashion faster. Although the material consumption of products has slowed down the immaterial values has increased as people are still connected to the rest of the world, fashion and trends through online medium. As the pandemic has led to huge economic losses, people in developing countries will take time to resume normal consumption and they prioritize the immaterial value more than the material one. Fashion products do convey immaterial values but those have a shorter life due to hyper-connections. The solution to this might not literally mean to slow down but, can rely on finding ways to increase the creative quality without affecting the demands. The pandemic has brought the values of sustainability into the picture intensifying and popularizing the views on materialism, excessive consumption and irresponsible consumer practices. People now take the time to think about their purchase choices it's worth both material and immaterial concerns. As digital content is now becoming a core mode of interaction people are broadly adapting to it and this is expected to increase spending via social channels. In this era of digitalization ideas like virtual mirrors, 3D models and digital showrooms are now being used as a tool for business. In today, the business world it is important to have in mind the purpose, value, social responsibility, customer service and product quality to be in line with the brand's attitude [22].

### III. METHODOLOGY



Figure 1. Methodology Flow Chart

### 3.1 Trend Research

Trend analysis plays a critical role in designing a collection. Forecasting websites like WGSN help to a greater extent in understanding the latest preferences and upcoming trends and styles. Although forecasting websites provide a valuable source of information it is also important to carry out a direction shopping. Therefore, directional shopping was also carried out in both online and offline stores to find out what consumers wear and prefer this season. This further helps in molding the collection with forecasted style lines and trend directions.

### 3.2 Designer Boards Development

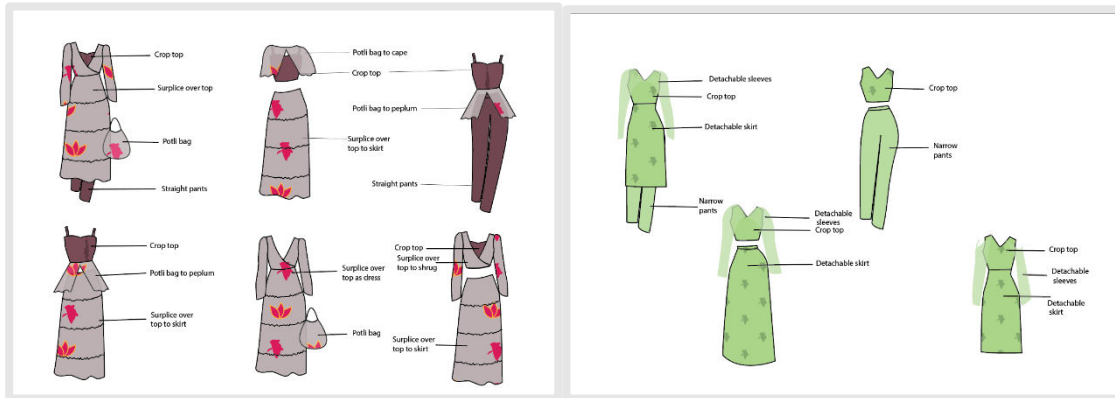
Visual boards play a major role in every design process. These boards help in deciding the elements, colors, patterns, prints, silhouettes, trims and accessories that will become a final part of the output. This collection is inspired by flowers and their natural scenery from the hill stations of Tamil Nadu. The mood of the collection is “Fairytale Romance”, which speaks about the dreamy thoughts that every princess-like girl would feel amid a flowery and romantic scenario.



Figure 2. Designer Boards

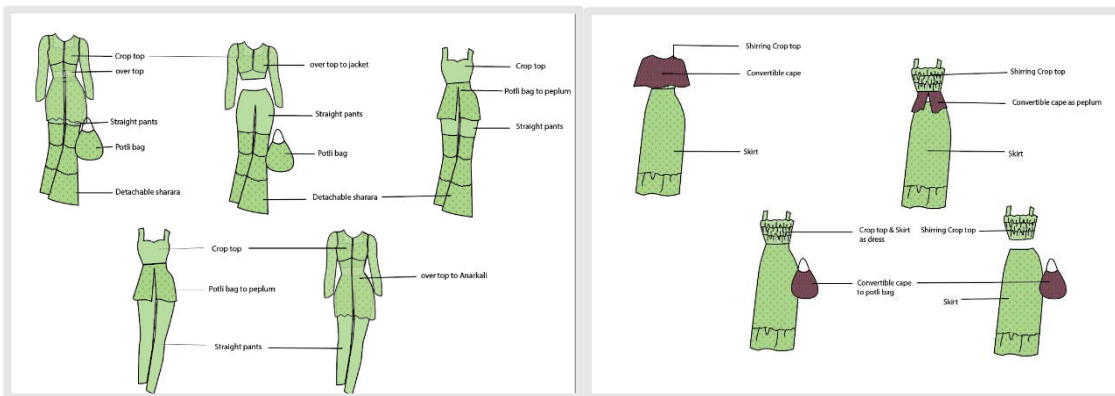
### 3.3 Design Development

This is the stage where the design thought transforms to a final output. The initial sketches are to be made based on the concept and keeping multi-wear-ability in mind. Each of the designs is built up in such a way that they could be worn in different ways. The fasteners play a major role here. The fasteners are planned for each design keeping the concept of multi-styling and wear-ability in consideration. The illustrations below show the Initial designs developed.



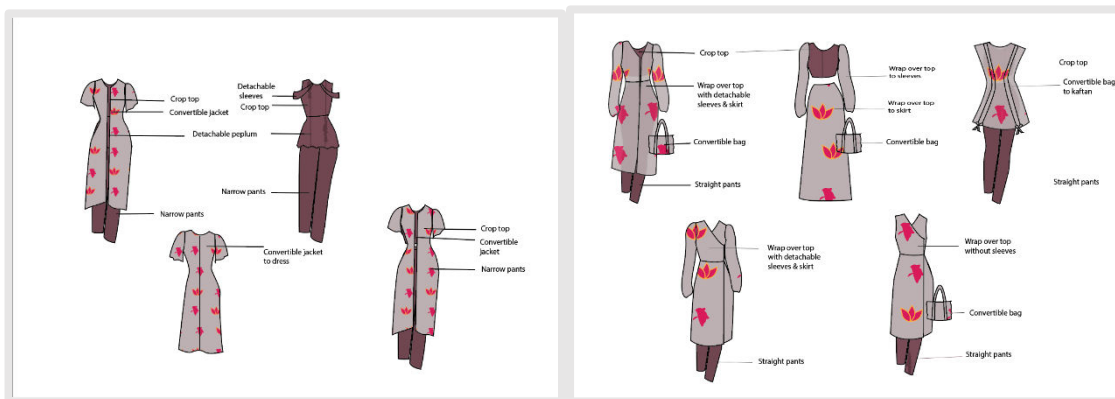
Design 1

Design 2



Design 3

Design 4



Design 5

Design 6

Figure 3. Design Development



**Design 1** consists of a crop top, straight pants, convertible surplice jacket and convertible potli bag that can be worn in 6 different ways as shown above.

**Design 2** consists of crop top, straight pants, detachable sleeves and skirts which can be worn in 4 ways as illustrated above.

**Design 3** consists of a crop top, detachable sharara pants, detachable overtop and convertible potli bags which can be restyled in 5 different ways as shown in the above figure,

**Design 4** consists of a shirred crop top, convertible cape and skirt that can be worn in 4 different styles as illustrated above.

**Design 5** consists of a crop top, narrow pants, detachable peplum and sleeves and convertible jackets which can be worn in 4 ways as shown above

**Design 6** consists of a crop top, straight pants, convertible potli bag and convertible overtop with detachable sleeves and skirt which can be styled in 5 different ways as shown in the above figure.

### 3.4 Feedback

A qualitative survey from an industry perspective was done, and it will give clarity on whether the garment styles will be appealing to the target audience or not. The quality of the collection, its value and salability were judged through a qualitative survey from an industrial point of view. The questionnaire consists of 5-point Likert scale questions regarding the features and salability of the garment designs. Each of the questions is accompanied by a 5-point Likert scale allowing the respondent to choose from the least likely option to the most likely option.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Results from Trend Research

WGSN suggested trends like pleats, tucks, trims, fabric manipulation and other fabric trends. The big ideas for 2024 from WGSN (a forecasting website) when mentioning sustainability talks about modular, restyling and adaptable garments along with material durability and others. When speaking about recycling and downcycling it also covers the areas of unscrewable hardware and detachable pieces. The S/S 24 reports also suggest predicted colors, prints and style directions. The color directions as per WGSN is given below in the pictures. Further, the trend research from directional shopping also gave some valuable information on the style lines and details like V-necks, scoop necks, sweetheart necklines, full sleeves, fluttered sleeves, accordion pleats, tiered skirts, bishop sleeves, straight pants, peplum tops etc.



Figure 4. Colour Directions of WGSN

#### 4.2 Initial Design Development

This Collection is inspired by the floral scenery in hill stations. The mood of the collection is “Fairytale Romance”, which speaks about the dreamy thoughts that every princess-like girl would feel amid a flowery and romantic scenario.

#### 4.3 Design Development

Based on the understanding from trend analysis and consumer survey the collection was made by the designer boards. The concept of multi-style is brought into the collection. From the survey results it was found that people expect at least 3 looks from each ensemble. Each of ensemble made features 4 looks, but it is left to the wearer on how they style, giving possibilities of endless style creations. The fabrics were chosen in accordance with the theme and the collection was constructed with appropriate fasteners to allow easy removal and attachment.



Look 1

Look 2

Look 3

Look 4

Look 5

Figure 5. Ensemble 1

Ensemble 1 Consists of a pant, crop top, detachable sleeve and skirt which can be styled as a crop top and pant, A-line dress, skirt and top, or a kurta set.



Look 1

Look 2

Look 3

Look 4

Figure 6. Ensemble 2

Ensemble 2 consists of a pant, crop top, peplum skirt, detachable sleeves and convertible jacket which can be styled as crop top and pant set with jacket, straight dress, peplum top and pant or a peplum suit.



#### 4.4 Feedback

The survey was presented to the creative head, designers and shop managers to get their view on the collection, its sale-ability and design complications. Each of the questions was supported by a 5-point Likert scale that allowed the respondent to choose from least favorable to most favorable options. The initial impression of the garment was rated between 4 to 5 by the participants. This clearly shows the look and design of the garment is impressive and are likely to attract customers. The purpose efficiency of the product was rated between 3 to 5 showing that the products do satisfy the intent of multi-style. When asked about the cost efficiency of the garments the respondents gave a rating between 3 to 4. This shows that the products are cost-efficient in terms of production but the parts and components are still to be worked out so that maximum efficiency can be achieved. The likeliness of customers to prefer this kind of a product was rated between 3 to 5 with 5 being the most selected one. With the present economic situations post-pandemic and from the review it can be concluded that people are moving towards sustainability and products like this are appreciated. When asked about customers' likeliness to handle difficulties the rating lies between 3 to 4. Although the customers would not face much difficulty in handling the garment pieces, they might face a few which may be due to the fasteners used.

The questionnaire also had open-ended questions to which the respondents shared their thoughts openly. When asked about the impressive aspect of the collection respondents have written that the concept by itself is more impressive and new of a kind. The concept of multi-use has caught positive attention provided the detachable sleeves have also caught the eye of the manager who suggested that it would be a great add-on to a collection. The questionnaire also had questions focusing on constructive criticism. When asked for suggestions for improvement the respondents have asked to make it more simple so that customer difficulty in handling the garments can be reduced. Further when having a multi-style collection, the finishing is also expected to be notch so that it is both presentable and functional at the same time.

#### V. CONCLUSION

With fast fashion and growing trends, people have developed the need to wear different outfits for different occasions. However, the environmental concerns and the cost of buying multiple garments to be worn only once or twice is also a matter of discussion. The multi-style garments can be a great choice for addressing and solving these issues. The consumers can wear different outfits for different occasions yet stay trendy and fashionable provided it is also easy to store these garments. It also helps in reducing the possibility of overproduction from the industry side. Thus being fashionable and sustainable is possible with multi-style garments.

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