

ABSTRACT

India seems to be making an impact, and sari being uniquely Indian seems to be creating an influence. The sari is an inseparable part of India's sartorial story and has been iconic in representing the changing facets of the geo-political, cultural and social changes that India has witnessed; where women have played a pivotal role. The transitions and tacit communications through the sari have in many ways reflected these changes and multicultural identities. A sari could be noted as a symbolic indicator of the progressive nature of India.

The sari remains the biggest clothing category: Indian women and the sari form the core of history and legacy. Having realized the impact of the powerful drape few Indian designers are making efforts to reintroduce and reinvent the sari to make it relevant for the new Indian women. This again led to understanding the fluid nature of fashion identities in the post-modern globalized world, simultaneously retaining the heritage and cultural values through its traditional textiles, motifs and crafts. With the western fashions and dynamic silhouettes that are more prevalent and popular among the Indian youth, the sari seemed to be pushed back and was considered as old school or only for occasional wear. Reviewing the theories for fashion change and reasons that explained the changes occurring in the world, they were compelling to understand meaning of the sari for Indian women, Indian fashion system and economy/ industry. Documentation in terms of database or models would become essential reference point for future research and helpful in creating the Indian fashion vocabulary.

The broad objectives of the study were to trace the semiology of fashion apparel and the semiotic meaning of the Indian sari with the changing role of women in society. The study of the semiotic interpretation of the Indian sari: by trade organizations/ industry & designers. Analyze and interpret the semiotics of the sari for trend mapping and study its role in the Indian fashion system. In this exploratory research the secondary data was collected using literary references, visual references and case studies to understand the semiology of fashion apparel and mainly the sari. For primary data focused group discussion with five expert panelists from diverse backgrounds was conducted on the basis of exhaustive interview schedule, to get qualitative and open ended input on the essence of the sari. The findings from all these methods were instrumental in drawing detailed questionnaires for conducting

survey with 3 distinct groups of respondents: Educated Middle and Upper middle class women - 300 Questionnaires, Lower middle class women - 60, by way of conducting interview schedules, through research assistance and Men respondents - 35 questionnaires. The findings have been analyzed using percentages and frequencies. And responses to each question were mapped against the most relevant objective of the study and discussed respectively. Thereafter case studies, primary and secondary photographs were collected and grouped in 23 unique plates to be further analyzed and interpreted for accomplishing each objective of the study. All the data was further analyzed and decoded for creating Models which supplement illustrating the robust final outcomes of the study and formulating theoretical framework for the Indian fashion system.

More Indian women were likely to wear sari only for the festive & formal occasion, these festive saris will continue to be dressier and elaborate compared to daily wear or work wear sari. Women shall continue to buy and gift saris during the festivals and wedding season. Experts recommended that we brought saris in daily wear, often people found it difficult to wear a sari, but suggested that familiarity would make it easier. While there is specific data on the difficulties faced while wearing a sari, there is substantial data to enumerate the advantages of wearing the sari, thus there is opportunity for the Indian Fashion system to overcome the challenges faced for wearing the sari in the 21st century. Few women were not accustomed to drape a sari regularly, by themselves; hence special sari draping experts were in huge demand. There is lot more education available online on the sari ; it will continue to be an integral part of Indian woman's wardrobe, more Indian women will continue to wear a sari to weddings or an event as they get more comfortable and adapt to wearing the saris, which are lighter and airy. There was neutral response to the "Neo-Sari", thus the semiotic interpretations of the sari for future trend predictions are likely to be complex yet at the same time exploratory with the changing concepts of self-image for women and the lifestyle factors.

It was difficult to rely solely on the quantitative data in this study as cross referencing of data shows contradictory results when it comes to sari preference for each individual sari wearer. Online or TV shopping mode was not very popular till the time of the studying the lower income groups. The growing popularity and convenience of

online shopping has led to co-existence of both “Brick and Click” mode of buying saris amongst the middle and upper classes. There was unanimous agreement that innovation in the sari design has made it more popular and “The Neo Sari” variants like “the Divided trouser sari”, "Sarini" (bikini sari), "Sarong sari", and "Gown sari" were not an assault on Indian sartorial aesthetics and they can co-exist with the traditional saris.