

Challenges Posing Emerging Fashion Designers

Ms. Joshna Handa
Research Scholar
St. Peter's University, Chennai

Prof. (Dr.) Ravi Kumar
Research Committee Member
Institute of Management & Technology, Fbd

Abstract:

This paper presents a conceptual framework that tries to explain and understand the challenges faced by the emerging Fashion Designers across the globe. This industry is dominant and rapidly growing dynamic fashion design sector in India. This conceptual framework based on the sense of emerging designer's enterprise development experiences and challenges.

Keywords:

Fashion, Fashion Retail, Emerging Fashion Designers, Indian Retail Industry

Methodology:

Objective and Research Method

This research uses a narrative approach to examine the challenges of Emerging Fashion Designers in the most innovative Fashion Industry.

This research paper is prepared by reviewing related literature produced in the vicinity of Fashion Retail Industry. I have also incorporated views of experts, policy formulators and common man related to this issue. Research paper is based on secondary data and provides only descriptive information and no statistics are used.

Manuscript: An overview:

Fashion:

Wikipedia defines the term fashion as a popular style or practice, especially in clothing, footwear, accessories, makeup, body, or furniture. Fashion is a distinctive and often constant trend in the style in which a person dresses.

Fashion Design:

Fashion design is the art of application of **design** and aesthetics or natural beauty to **clothing** and accessories. It is influenced by cultural and social attitudes, and has varied over time and place. **The Modern fashion design** is divided into two basic categories: **haute couture** and **ready-to-wear**.

Fashion Designers:

Fashion Designers are people with a desire to create. They combine practical knowledge with artistic ability to turn abstract ideas into formal designs for the merchandise we buy, the clothes we wear, the Web sites we use, the publications we read, and the living and office space we inhabit. Designers usually specialize in a particular area of design, such as automobiles, industrial or medical equipment, home appliances, clothing and textiles, floral arrangements, publications, Web sites, logos, signage, movie or TV credits, interiors of homes or office buildings, merchandise displays, or movie, television, and theater sets.

Emerging Fashion Designers:

Emerging means newly created or noticed and growing in strength or popularity: becoming widely known or established.

Fashion designers young or old can be termed as an “emerging fashion designer”. The up and comers show the signs that they are ready for progress, or may be already heading on the path of success. They have some newness in their design and approach.

Therefore they face a lot of challenges to survive in the market and compete with their established competitors. This article tries to be a help guide for the understanding of the challenges posed by the fashion designers to capture market growth and share.

THE GLOBAL FASHION industry

Survey results by the industry experts reveals that the Fashion industry captures share of approximately **\$1.2 Trillion** of the **global industry**, along with more than **\$250 Billion** which is spent annually on fashion in the United States and Europe who have the world’s fashion Capitals.

Fashion and apparel industries employ **1.9 million people** in the United States and have a positive impact on regional economies across the country.

The **Indian retail sector** also accounts for around **24%** of the country’s GDP and also contributes around **7.9%** to the **total employment** in India. India ranks **fifth** and is an emerging as well as favorite investment destination with regard to global fashion retailers after UAE, Russia, Indonesia & Saudi Arab. Thus Fashion Industry has emerged as multibillion-dollar global enterprise which is devoted to the business of making and selling clothes. But the industry also has contribution from emerging fashion designers, which can be enumerated as:

THE CHALLENGE OF BEST PRODUCT

Just like any business the fashion industry also faces varied challenges with regard to the key marketing elements of Product, Price, Place & Promotion.

PRODUCT

The emerging fashion designer has to deal with the following challenges in **concern to its product**:

- **Understanding the customer:** The emerging designer should have a thorough study about the trends, taste and demands of its customers and accordingly design to give the best to its clientele. He/she should be able to identify its potential **core customers** and would develop strategies to motivate and attract its customer for the purchase. Not only he/she should identify the core customers but also propound means to **develop a repeat clientele**. One can find a customer but the real challenge lies in retaining them. There may be a lot of designers but the challenge is to give them that one thing which none others can.
- **Finding the best of material for its product:** In order to make distinguished product, the designer should make an exhaustive research. He/she should be able to find the exact fabric or the exact button that may complement or make its design or product an exception.
- **Getting good and reliable people to handle the production** of the designs might also be a challenging experience. Since the business is new and as an entrant it is a daunting task to maintain quality, timely produce at reasonable prices.
- **Design Thinking/Innovation:** Design thinking is a buzzword. The terminology is new design thinking isn’t new. Design thinking initiatives have had proven success within organizations. The emerging entrepreneurs have the most important tool of innovation to retain in the marketplace.

- **Make the right product:** According to the size, colour, design preferences they need to develop a product that caters to the core wants of its customers in such a manner that it is uniquely designed and is difficult for others to copy it.
- **Scale:** Another biggest challenge is that with regard to size, design & complexity of assignment, rapid change in technology, increasing communication channels as well as new creative market. They need to adapt their tools and process to fit their creative goals. The designers should possess creative skills to solve problems.

Challenges related to Price

- The **first challenge** related to **price or money** relates to creating and maintaining **initial capital investment**. The emerging designers need capital investment to either **open a studio** or **outsource** or to **produce their first collections**.
- The characteristic features of being **high-risk, capital intensive and highly seasonal**. Due to this the **banks do not sanction loans or lines of credits** to support independent fashion start-ups. You will have to rely on your personal savings and assets or borrow money from friends and family.
- It is observed that the cost of fabrics, trims and manufacturing decreases as the amount ordered increases. Due to this, it is difficult to juggle the **correct profit margin** and still **sell** a produce **at the price rate** that a target market demands.
- Another roadblock after careful analysis of accurate and updated cost sheet is **setting up the right retail price**. If the product is catered to selling directly to the customer's one should have **flexibility in margins**.
- The incredible idea market suffers most due to **insufficient funds to enter the marketplace**. This is the only industry where money is needed at every step so as to make a **quality design, to market it, promote it**. Because No Marketing No sell.

Challenges related to Place

The next challenge is related to the place and distribution issue.

- **Brick-and-mortar stores v/s the online or virtual stores** is considered to be another major challenge, wherein the today's customer prefer both the channels of distribution of products. Some customers due to lack of time are inclined towards virtual stores wherein the others till the time they feel and try the product are not convinced to purchase the same. Therefore the emerging designer has to adopt both the types of distribution networks.
The emerging designers have an added advantage and profit if catering to the online stores, since they save on time and other investment issues.
- **Distribution Challenges:** The design and the production of the clothes is upto the designers whereas the distribution and capturing the market is the biggest challenge. The designers work hard to get their brands at the stores but when they aren't sold they are forced to get their produce back from the stores resulting in non-sales and sell them at "discounter".
- **Striking the right balance with the traditional and modern retail stores:** Next impounding challenge is to make the **designs reach at all the stores** right from the retail outlets to mega-stores, to malls and also not to be forgotten the online deals and stores.
- **The buzz of making Global Brands:** Products need to be adapted for the **local environment** in order to be effective. However, **creating global market** is also another challenge which is to be tackled wisely by the designers.

Challenges related to Promotion

It is believed that all businesses in each industry specifically in the apparel & accessory industry should have a solid and effective plan for engaging with customers or potential partners. over the Internet.

- **Pay-for-play celebrity endorsements:** In order to make the design popular and to spark a trend and sell more pieces the designers need to be creative and require more capital investments. The designers need to rope in the top faces for their design promotions and to increase their sales. This is also a challenge to be able create a mark in celebrity endorsement means and methods. Celebrity endorsement goes far beyond the red carpet appearance, ad campaigns and internet posts. The customers follow the styles and trends endorsed by these celebrities.
- **Conquering Social Media:** These days social media is one of the best and most cost effective way of getting a brand or design popular. Thus the emerging designers should be able to take advantage and make efforts to connect with varied social media sites and operations and dedicate certain amount of time to plan the social media strategy and execute it. The social followings are being administered more than one's resume. The designers must have the time and ways to handle the Tumblr, Instagram and Twitter etc. posts. At **Fashionista** magazine conference it was quoted that, "**All things being equal, if you are up.**" It is considered to be the best medium of getting connected and engaged with its audience or customers. Social media and online communities and services provide new outlets for discussion of fashion trends, changing consumer behavior patterns and attitudes.
- **Smart-phone/Mobile as a medium of strong CRM:** The emerging designers are also facing the challenge of being active and maintain strong **Customer Relationship Management (CRM)**. In this regard the continuous and ever increasing usage of mobile phones is again diverting the designers to maximize their production through mobile phones.

Other challenges

- **Green & Eco-friendly collections:** Biggest challenge today is the manufacturing of **green or eco-friendly products**. Even the fashion industry is facing the same threat to use the eco-friendly or green clothes. Thereby the inventions are made which can be enumerated as use of **recycled wool, organic linen, and cotton** in order to reduce the harmful impact of the production on the mother Earth.
- Designers & Biospheres' are exploring the use of **organic cotton and bionic yarn** (though high minimums for both have been a problem) as well as **wet-green leather, an ecological leather tanning** process to meet the luxury standards and create best designs.
- **Challenge of being original:** The fashion industry is deeply rooted to be original and most creative. Still there are cases of copycats or idea stealers. The small designers even capture the designs, prints and steal the ideas making their produce capable of reaching common man. Thereby the designers are more focused to make quality products than signature products.
- **Attracting New Business:** Attracting new business was the biggest challenge facing start-ups during 2015-2016. Even as the economy was recovering from the crisis still the consumers were exercising their spending power. The recovering economy also brings more competition to the table which makes grabbing your fair share within the fashion and retail sectors even more challenging. However, the retailers are exercising risk management policy to make its consumers happy and satisfied.
- **Dealing with growth in all directions:** There are many designers who believe that the biggest challenge which they are facing is Growth. As the companies, agencies, competition and customers grow there is expectation to do more, faster and better. He must analyse how, why and when to add features, size and designs to the products. Thereby making the product accessible, scalable and global.

Conclusion

Thus to sum up, the emerging fashion designer is just like any other professional who is required to have proper skills, talent and expertise to deal with the changing and challenging situations. The Fashion designers must be visionaries and be good at executing their visions from the concept to the final product of the clothing line, using good technical skills in the process for clothing production, fabrics and textiles. Only those are to be in limelight who embraces new trends in technology and retail.

REFERENCES

- **A.T. Kearney** (2013), Global Retailers: Cautiously Aggressive or Aggressively Cautious?
- **Cawthorne, N., Key** "Moments in Fashion: from haute couture to streetwear, key collections, major figures and crucial moments that changed the course of fashion history from 1890 to the 1990s. 1998, London"
- **Diamond, J. and E. Diamond**, The world of fashion. 3rd ed. 2002, New York: Fairchild Publications. xvii, 548 p. Jay Diamond, Ellen Diamond.
- **Dickerson, K.G.**, Inside the fashion business. 7th ed. 2002, Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pentice Hall. xviii, 558 p. Kitty G. Dickerson.
- Global Retail Development Index.
- **PWC (2012)**, The Indian Kaleidoscope - Emerging trends in retail.
- **Weeks, A.L.**, Effective marketing management: Using merchandising and financial strategies for retail success. 1991, New York: Fairchild Fashion & Merchandising Group. xii, 288 p. Andrea L. Weeks
- <https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-A-to-Z-to-be-known-before-starting-an-online-fashion-marketplace>
- <http://www.smartinsights.com/digital-marketing-strategy/digital-strategy-development/15-unstoppable-trends-which-will-shape-marketing-in-2016/>
- <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/the-changing-face-of-marketing>.
- <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/basics/the-basics-part-8-marketing>