



@Shutterstock.com

FLASHBACK 2018!

As the curtains fall on 2018 and 2019 sets in, **Bindu Gopal Rao** looks back at the apparel trends that ruled the year.

The year 2018 saw the apparel industry take several new strides. The fashion ramps witnessed many new fashion and style trends and the apparel manufacturers looked at the past and at traditions to create the new. Here are some key trends that shaped the industry this year.

COMFORT IS KEY

Athleisure as a category has made a mark across runways, luxury as well as high-street brands. No longer reserved for when you are watching Netflix or visiting the gym, it has now become a part of daily wear. This shift has largely to do with consumers looking for comfort than actually living active lives. "There's also a strong sense of the 90s' nostalgia reflected in apparel trends, with the popularity of jumpsuits, high-waist ripped jeans and fanny packs. Influencers and celebrities have had a huge impact on the popularity of this trend. The catwalks have been awash with pastel hues, especially lilac which has been tipped off as the colour of the season. With Rihanna setting the stage and real-life royals giving their seal of approval, lilac has slowly given the ever-popular millennial pink a break this year," says Aanchal Jiwrajka, Advisory Researcher, Stylus Innovation + Advisory. The year 2018 was all about casual and comfortable clothing and was mostly for the people who love to sport comfy fashion without compromising on style. Checkered



@Ashima S Couture

@Ashima S Couture



@Ashima S Couture

THIS YEAR HAS BEEN A BENCHMARK IN BRINGING ABOUT A VAST CHANGE IN HOW MEN STYLED THEMSELVES.



pants, joggers, sporty pants with side tapes, tees and cropped trousers are some of the apparel trends that made waves in 2018, along with wrap dresses, tie-up styles, tailored suits, and paper bag waist in both pants and skirts for women.

GOING GREEN

The new fondness towards sustainability has given rise to innovations in biodegradable materials and animal-friendly fabrics to cater to the conscientious consumer. With brands phasing out the use of fur, innovative skins are being developed such as plant-based leather alternatives made from mushrooms or pineapple fibres. "There is also a major shift towards a utilitarian aesthetic, evident in bomber jackets, drawstring pants, easily visible zippers and practical button-down shirts. The industry is swaying towards more wearable outfits and practical materials that have enhanced technical properties. The result has been more versatile and travel-friendly apparel," avers Jiwrajka. Suman Saha, Chief Operating Officer - Group Apparel & Made to Measure (MTM), Raymond Ltd adds, "More fashion brands are planning for recyclability from the fibre stage (like organic cotton, bamboo and Tencel cotton) of the supply chain and many

are harnessing sustainability through tech innovation in order to unlock efficiency, transparency, mission orientation and genuine ethical upgrades."

MEN MATTER

This year has been a benchmark in bringing about a vast change in how men styled themselves. Tropical fabrics with self-embroidered weaves did wonders in both Indian and western attire. Pastel colours were and still are floating ahead for all occasions. "Contemporary cuts, layers and gathers became the trend among men of all ages. Talking about blends, cashmere blends with silk and linen came on the top of the wish list. Silk, the forever favourite, still held the fort. Jacquard and printed silks, jacquard weave silks and jersey silks were the most demanded fabrics, and apparel made out of the same were naturally popular," says Sunil Mehra, Founder and Designer, House of Sunil Mehra. Likewise, the vertical stripe is now officially the new go-to pattern in men's wear. The best examples on show for Spring Summer '18 were straight and narrow and were deployed across T-shirts and short-sleeved shirts. 2018 was also the year of

APPAREL TRENDS IN 2018 WERE LARGELY CONCENTRATED ON JACQUARD WOVEN GARMENTS, FROM SHIRTS TO SUITS.

combinations. The monotony of regular apparel was broken by the inclination of men towards combinations of plain kurta sets with printed Nehru jackets or vice versa. Cashmere waistcoats with two-piece suits in a cashmere blend too became a trend for men this year.

TREND CHECK

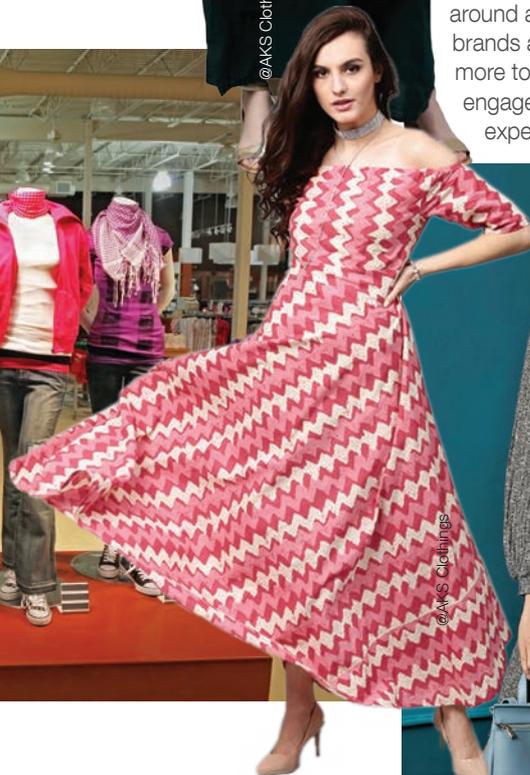
Apparel trends in 2018 were largely concentrated on jacquard woven garments, from shirts to suits. Figurative and abstract weaves as well as high-collared shirts trended too. The most unusual trend, however, was the panel shirts, very rare to find as they are very tricky in terms of construction but once they appeal to you, it is something that you will stick to. Sanjeev Mukhija, Founder, Breakbounce Streetwear opines, “2018 saw the rise of simpler silhouettes, colour

blocking and super comfortable styles, which with a little twist could be adapted for all occasions. This trend is likely to influence the fashion trends in 2019 as well.” Metallic trends ruled the year. From the runway to the street, the metallic looks were a raging trend this season. Nidhi Yada, Founder and Creative Head, AKS Clothings adds, “Layering it up with capes and long jackets to spotting bold and vibrant hues in every season to adorning floral with ruffles in all dress materials, 2018 was all about experimenting what goes well with all feminine beauties. The gap between ethnic and western apparel almost came to an end and the beautiful collision of the two styles led to the birth of some drop-dead gorgeous trends that ladies have loved.”

Coat cardigans for men have been an emerging trend that blends the conventional silhouette of a blazer with the comfort of a cardigan. “For women, coat dresses have made a comeback in the market that double up as an overcoat or a dress when need be. Generally, blends of classic silhouettes with a focus on comfort have been a big trend. Another trend that has been big this year was experimentation with varying types of stripes on a single garment—horizontal with verticals, varying widths and the like,” says Niharika Dubey, Stylist, PostFold.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

As consumer values coalesce around authenticity and individuality, brands are valuing data even more to tailor recommendations, engage influencers and personalise experiences. “The year has been



ANOTHER INTERESTING TREND WAS THE MERGING OF CLASSIC SILHOUETTES THAT CREATED GREAT HYBRIDS.



@PostFold



@PostFold

@PostFold



@PostFold

a precursor to what we call as 'the age of the individual'. Personalisation and specially curated content for each individual across mediums has been of paramount importance to the customer," says Saha. Consumers are increasingly looking to online platforms as the first point of search, attracted by their convenience, relevance, and breadth of offerings. Whether mass, specialist or premium, platforms continue to grow in scale and reach, compelling fashion brands to find ways of engaging more consumers with these powerful sales channels.

FUSION FEELS

Another interesting trend was the merging of classic silhouettes that created great hybrids. Subtle details like panelling, pleats, piping, and contrast buttons are also something the consumers have started paying attention to now. The year 2018 witnessed an incredible work of fusion, giving a new dimension to traditional Indian wear. "Whether it is the transformation of the typical salwar-kameez replaced by substitutes like long kurtas, palazzos, pants and leggings or saris paired with asymmetrical tops, shirts, pants, crop or kimono tops, the way each garment has been experimented on and mixed and matched, taking cues from the West, has been a treat to the eyes," says Deepa Reddy, Founder, The Open Trunk. Street styling has always been in trend. This year, this trend came along with a twist. "A glamorous outfit can be seen paired with a casual outfit. This trend has made a statement this year and has also been loved by all. Earlier, it was only about sporting a plain shirt and a pair of pants. This has completely changed now. The designers

these days are very experimental in nature, and it is because of this reason that we see a lot of mix and match these days," says Sharad Venkata, CEO & MD, Toonz Retail Pvt. Ltd. Ashima Sharma, Owner of Ashima S Couture adds, "Monochrome outfits also were a fashion favourite of many, including some of the mainstream celebrities. The monochrome was also seen donned on the red carpet numerous times. Tassels and fringes were also a major trend that people have loved this season." In all, 2018 has been a comfort-centric year with retro styles like volume sleeves and coat dresses having made a comeback. Comfort and modern functionality has been the most important feature for most of the garments. The people are becoming more aware of the choices made available to them, so they are picking pieces that fit well within their aesthetic boundaries without compromising on their comfort or quality. ■