



Kids on Top

The future looks bright for India's children's apparel market as it grows and expands steadily. **Bindu Gopal Rao** observes.

A key factor driving the Indian kids'-wear market is the country's huge population (1.37 billion, precisely). Children's apparel usually includes clothing for kids between 1–14 years of age. As per industry estimates, the market for children's apparel in India is worth over ₹35,000 crore, of which around ₹3,000 crore's worth of share is owned by branded children's-wear. The market is indeed growing fast, at a rate of 10 per cent per annum.

DOING THE NEW

Kids'-wear is one of the fastest growing categories globally. It has seen phenomenal growth in the last couple of years. There have been some seismic changes in this category, both product- and consumer-wise. Going by the current growth trend exhibited by this category, it could be averaging at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of eight per cent to nine per cent. Poonam Naik Desai, Founder and Chief

Executive Officer (CEO), Peekaboo, says, “New-age parents are exhibiting considerable brand awareness and inclination towards high-quality apparel products for their kids. The rise of the upper middle-class in India has also given rise to the new globetrotting parents with the world’s information on their fingertips. They are highly aware, well-informed, and willing to go the extra mile especially when it comes to their little ones’ comfort.” The market is, however, nascent and mostly unorganised and as per some primary research, it was estimated at ₹66,904 crore in 2017, making for 20 per cent of the total apparel market of the country. Reports also say that Indian kids’-wear is expected to grow at a CAGR of 8.1 per cent to reach ₹145,445 crore by 2027.

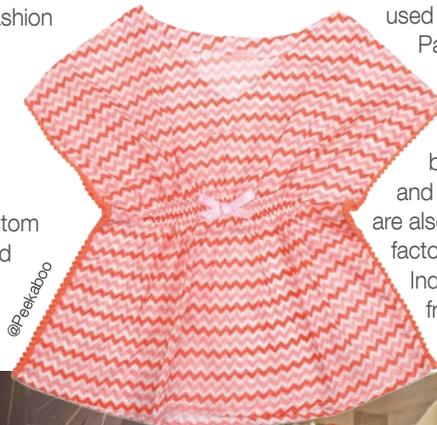
CONTEMPORARY CUES

There was a time when parents used to shop from local markets for reasonable prices. But now, due to increasing salaries, parents prefer to buy branded clothes for their kids. They are also taking to online shopping for kids’-wear. Shamika Pradhan, Head of Fashion Department, Inter National Institute of Fashion Designing (INIFD), Deccan, Pune, says, “Middle-classes and upper middle-classes prefer to buy branded clothes for their kids. Trends for 2019–2020 are custom baby clothes, and personalised bodysuits, rompers, three-piece sets, ruffled dresses and *shararas* for girls, and

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many more. Most of the organised players in the kids’-wear market initially focused exclusively on Western-wear categories like denims, shirts, T-shirts, and the likes, but not anymore.” Brands and organised players have now started foraying into children’s ethnic-wear categories, offering ethnically styled products for kids. The ‘mini me’ trend, too, continues to be popular. Steven Jhangiani, Founder, Kurtees, says, “We see children’s-wear, from a styling perspective, to be reflective of the quality available to adults. At Kurtees, our newly launched boys’ line is an exact replica of the men’s line. The styling and materials used are exactly the same.

Parents, today, are looking at quality, comfort, and style for any purchase that they make. The costs need to be reasonable as well. Utility and re-usability of the garment are also important deciding factors. We have a collection of Indian garments that are made from a range of versatile materials, enabling these



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garments to be worn over and over again, which is reassuring to prudent parents."

CHANGE-MAKERS

The increasing preference for branded apparel has attracted consumers through fabulous visual merchandising, promotional strategies, and focused advertising. "This shift is taking place on account of changes such as a rise in the disposable income of parents and the increasing influence of Western culture. We are also influenced by mass media and peer pressure; however, today's kids are more informed and conscious about their clothing choices as they are aware of trends," says Pradhan. Elodie Le Derf, Head Designer and Founder, Born, says, "Organic and sustainable fashion is the way forward. It is no longer a trend but the future.

All over the world, fashion is now moving towards a more sustainable approach, reducing waste, being more ethical, and respecting the environment. There is a rise in brands developing organic cotton lines. Back in the day, India was a country that was sensitive to sustainability (think recycling practices, avoiding plastic, consuming less, using only natural dyes, owning a huge handcraft segment with block prints and hand-embroideries, just to name a few) and is now slowly going back to its roots. With 80 per cent of our collection made with organic cotton and soon, a range of small products made out of discarded fabrics (in order to recycle them), Born is committed to supporting sustainable fashion in India and promote the incredible Indian handicrafts. Again, an evolution in colours is also being seen. It is going away from the usual bright primary pinks, reds, yellows, and blues, towards a more gender-neutral palette, wherein pinks don't necessarily have to be for girls and blue, for boys."

Mothers have also been increasingly hooked on to the twinning trend, wherein they clothe themselves and their kids in identical attire. Keeping this in mind, Born will also be launching an identical mom-and-kid collection.

SIZE CHARTS ARE ONE OF THE BIGGEST CONCERNS IN THE CHILDREN'S-WEAR MARKET.

CHALLENGE FACTOR

Size charts are one of the biggest concerns in the children's-wear market—while designing clothes for kids, standard measurements are usually followed, which inevitably discounts the in-betweens. “As obesity rates are increasing, there has been a growing demand for plus sizes in the kids’ section. There are also times when, for example, a pair of jeans doesn’t wrap around the waist properly when it comes to lithe, thin children. Hence, to acquire the right fit in kids’-wear is a big challenge for the purchaser. While purchasing for babies, paying attention

to the kind of fibres used in the garment is also paramount. It should be comfortable, durable, and natural, otherwise the clothing can cause harm to newborns,” adds Pradhan. Cutting through the noise and making a lasting impression on the consumer is tricky business and will continue to remain one of the major challenges in kids’-wear marketing, as the lack of mainstream media channels such as magazines or kids-focused departmental stores makes it hard for a brand to be discovered by new customers. “Spending on kids’ fashion has just begun in India; hence, marketing opportunities are quite less. Born does its own in-store workshops and events for kids and moms and has now developed its own community of mothers. Unlike the rest of Asia and the world, India faces a dearth of good fashion streets, where people can walk and spend time window-shopping and discover brands for children. Shoppers, here, tend to know exactly what they want, buy that, and leave. However, at Born, with our welcoming window

displays and facade design, we have been lucky enough to have walk-ins from many passing customers,” says Derf. To lend it some more perspective, the market for children’s fashion in India is still blooming. It is most important for kids’-wear brands to remember that their target audience needs a sensitive and thoughtful approach to design. Hence, a humane touch, some creative ideas, quality products, and emotional appeal built around the brand will truly take it go a long way. ■

