

Product Attachment and Sustainability: Two Facets of the Same Coin

Sareekah Agarwaal and Ruby Kashyap Sood

Abstract

Intertwined with our histories and identities, clothes are memory-holders charged with emotions. Whether we use clothes as a mark of distinction, as symbols of family or self-identity, or as a means to connect with our loved ones, clothes are narratives in material form that tell stories of our lives, values, beliefs, and family history. India has always mesmerized the world with its uniquely handcrafted textiles, most of which are passed on from one generation to the next as treasured keepsakes. There could also be some that have been acquired within one's lifetime but are worthy of being preserved for future generations for the symbolic meanings they hold.

With sustainability and slow fashion being widely used buzzwords in the fashion and textile industries for the past decade or so, it is the responsibility of manufacturers, retailers, and consumers to take charge and adopt effective strategies towards building a sustainable society. Besides technological solutions, countless other measures can be taken to reduce overproduction, overconsumption, and the throwaway culture that exists in the fashion industry. Strategies contributing to longer lifespans of textile and clothing items can prove to be an effective step towards sustainability. Uncovering the stories behind some treasured textile keepsakes can be a good idea to see if there exists an emotional connect between the owners and the objects, which can drive them to hold on to these objects for as long as possible, thus contributing to a sustainable society as well as providing a way to understand experiences of both change and continuity within individual and family lives and traditions.

Through this article, the authors endeavor to find out if owners have an emotional connection or memories attached to some of the treasured textile objects that are lying unnoticed in their closets that are not only representative of the rich textile crafts of India but are meaningful assets for the symbolic value they may possess. The study covers four case studies to assess intangible product attachment attributes. The research concludes that memories and emotions attached to a product can contribute to its longevity and foster sustainability.

Keywords: Sustainability, slow fashion, storytelling, product attachment, heirlooms, emotional objects, consumer-product relationship

Introduction

Products are all around us in our daily lives. Some are self-made or purchased, while others are handed down by family and friends for one reason or another. In due course, a few of the products are favored, and ethereal associations are formed with these objects as they convey a special meaning (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988). The users enter into an emotional relationship with these special possessions (Davis, 2002) and tend to care for them for a long time, even after their utility is lost. These ‘treasured’ possessions represent objects of attachment having symbolic meaning related to family history, cultural beliefs, self-identity, affiliation with particular cultural, political, or religious philosophies, societal groups, or sub-groups (Crilly, Moultrie and Clarkson, 2004, as cited in Hwang and Self, 2015). Valued material possessions are highly laden with emotions and memories. They may act as reminders of certain people or events or evoke memories of the past, which have a relatively strong effect on consumer-product attachment (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988). These beloved clothes, reminiscent of sentiments, make the users smile or feel sad, reminding them of significant places, people, or events every time they see or hold them in their hands. Hence, they do not wish to part with these cherished objects in their lifetime or even later. Most often, the owners and makers also reuse and repurpose their prized possessions. These objects, when they find a new face, sometimes bring a smile to the faces of their users or give them satisfaction as they remember their past associations or relationships. This not only shows care for their emotions and memories but also for the community and environment.

Besides having the value of history, emotions, memories, and experiences, treasured keepsakes also possess the value of sustainability, as they satisfy all four pillars of sustainability, i.e., human, social, economic, and environmental. They have lasted in the closets for years, and the owners have no intention to dispose of or replace them with new ones, thereby preventing them from buying something similar. When a person experiences a strong relationship with a product, disposing of or replacing it seems undesirable because if the product is lost, its special meaning is lost as well (Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, 2008). Hence, people exhibit protective behavior towards these products more frequently than those to which they are less attached (Schultz, Kleine, and Kernan, 1989). Reusing and repurposing infuses a new lease of life into them, thereby facilitating a circular economy for textiles (Schumacher and Forster, 2022).

Product attachment broadly refers to the psychological connection between an individual and a particular material object that develops instantaneously or over time due to several factors (Figure 1) and affects the consumption and disposition behaviors

of the owners. Product attachment can thus be defined as the degree of the emotional bond—strong or weak—that exists between a consumer and a particular object (Schultz, Kleine, and Kernan, 1989; Mugge, Schoormans and Schifferstein, 2005; Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, 2008). Product attachments are constructed from the four broad types of pleasure enjoyed by people: physio-pleasure, psycho-pleasure, socio-pleasure, and ideo-pleasure (Tiger, 1992). Several possible determinants of attachment to objects are: the object evokes memories of persons, places, or events; provides pleasure; the object reflects one’s self-identity (Ramirez and Ward, 2015; Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, 2008); the object has value—expensive, exotic, or rare; aesthetics; the object has utility (Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, 2008); the way the object is made (hand-made, self-made); the object is inherited or gifted. Various characteristics that depict attachment are: attachment formation is not deliberate (Schultz, Kleine, and Kernan, 1989). It requires a personal history between the person and possession (Kleine and Baker, 2004); attachment is dynamic. It evolves over time (ibid.); attachment is multidimensional (cognitive, emotive, and behavioral); it has relative strength (strong to weak); it is a kind of self-extension (ibid.; Jackson, 2005).

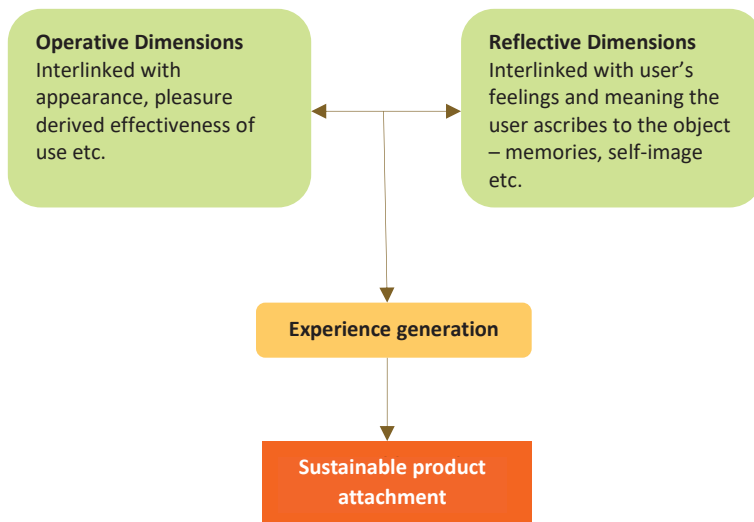


Figure 1: Sustainable product attachment derived due to interplay between different dimensions as adapted from the study of Niinimäki, 2010

Material possessions don’t last forever. At some point, they lose their utility or become undesirable enough to be discarded or replaced. Humans have a tendency to discard things for a number of different reasons. First, they become dissatisfied or disappointed with the performance of their currently owned product. Second, they look old-fashioned in comparison to more fashionable and stylish designs available on the market. Third,

improved financial conditions can encourage disposal or replacement (Bayus and Gupta, 1992; Van Nes, 2003, as cited in Mugge, Schoormans and Schifferstein, 2005), and so on. Sometimes durable products, even if they function properly at the time of disposal, are discarded by consumers (DeBell and Dardis, 1979; Van Nes, 2003, as cited in Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, 2008). From the viewpoint of sustainability, the short life span of clothing due to the early disposal of products in high quantities is detrimental as it comes at an astonishing environmental and social cost. Cooper (2005) states that sustainable consumption requires increased product life spans, which could be achieved by greater product durability and product life extension, for which the owners may need to develop greater attachment to their possessions so that disposal or replacement of products can be slowed down. Research has shown that a strong emotional relationship between the user and the object can postpone their disposal or replacement for a longer time (Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, 2008), as material possessions are important to consumers not just for their functionality but for what they signify about the users and their lives, convey meaning, tell stories, and contribute to human identity (Cooper, 2005; Jackson, 2005). A grandmother's wrap, a woman's wedding dress, a mother's sari, a self-crafted quilt, a child's first dress, and more are all special as they are symbols of family history and identity, communicating personal, social, and cultural meaning.

When it comes to sustainability in the fashion and textile industries, the production and consumption of clothing have increased multifold in the last few decades—something we know of by merely looking at our wardrobes—leading to a proportional increase in the amount of textile waste. This has posed serious environmental and societal problems, especially in developing economies, as it uses up more scarce resources and generates a lot of waste. Facts like the fast fashion industry is the second-biggest consumer of water and is responsible for 8–10 percent of global carbon emissions (UN Environment Programme, 2019), and emissions from textile manufacturing alone are projected to increase by 60 percent by 2030 (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2018) are disturbing enough to draw everyone's attention to this growing menace. It stresses the need for more sustainable business models and practices at every stage of the product life cycle, from conception of design to production, consumption, and disposal. Sustainability is not just about using fewer resources and greener ways of production; it is much more about taking into account the social, economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions of the business environment (Werbach, 2009). Hence, understanding the role of consumer-product attachment in contributing to sustainability, particularly in the fashion industry, becomes pertinent as the longevity of a product's life span is primarily determined by the consumer, not by the manufacturer (Stahel, 1986).

A lot of Indian and international designers are encouraged to take up sustainable product design on account of social, environmental (Papanek, 1984; Whiteley, 1993),

and psychological considerations. Eternally Yours, which originated in the Netherlands almost two decades ago, spearheaded discussion on 'product endurance' (Hinte, 1997). It's bilingual conference 'Time in Design' reflected on the possibilities of cultural life extension of products by tracing how carefully and intimately they are used. Brands like H&M, Grassroot, Nicobar, 11.11, Doodlage, B-Label, KharaKapaas, and more are producing sustainable clothing by introducing circular business models to extend the lifetime of products and materials through repair, reuse, and remake before recycling, using plant-based fibers, and adopting new and revolutionary techniques for sustainable production. But the role that emotions play in promoting large-scale sustainable behavior among users has not been fully exploited. If sustainable consumption requires products to last longer, it is imperative to understand the meaningful associations that users form with products over time and how they may be better leveraged to elongate the length of ownership.

The art of creating handcrafted textiles and the act of passing down clothing and textile items from one generation to the next is rooted in Indian culture. Thus, almost every Indian household may have a piece or two soaked up with memories of the owners or makers. Besides these, there may be some pieces that have been bought during one's lifetime or are self-made. To fully understand the meaning of these possessions, further research is needed (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988). Also, to understand the role of consumers in promoting sustainability, research is needed to explore the intangible product attributes like memories, emotions, experiences, and reliability, among others, along with the tangible product attributes that have already received much attention in the past few decades. This research article presents four case studies of the owners of some cherished clothing or textile objects from Indian families in order to ascertain if emotions and memories play an important role in extending the life span of products, thus contributing to sustainability. These case studies attempt to study the consumer-product relationship that develops over time and may impact disposal of the product—the weakest link in the product life cycle. As Jackson (2005) states, consumption is not just about functionality but usage in pursuit of meaning; no pure functional account of objects will deliver a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior. Hence, this research focuses on person-product attachments to clothing items and the context of attachment by narrating stories of objects as provided by the owners to obtain a solid evidence base to evaluate the potential for sustainability via emotional longevity.

Methodology

The main objective of the study was to determine the relationship between product attachment and sustainability. The main focus of the research was to examine if emotional attachment to textiles and clothing leads to the longevity of a product.

To conduct the study, a qualitative case study approach was employed for a deeper understanding of the subject. Four case studies are covered in this article. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the subjects. The selected participants had a higher vocational or academic education (Table 1) and possessed a handcrafted textile or clothing item that was either handed down from one generation to the next or was self-acquired.

A semi-structured interview schedule was prepared to determine the relationship between the selected product and owner and assess the attachment attributes. In-home personal interviews were conducted with the selected participants, both men and women, between 65 and 80 years old, to investigate the special and meaningful attachment to clothing items they typically owned. The participants were asked to have the items with them while they talked about them. As part of the interview, the participants were asked a series of questions not only about the product but also about their memories of the object and their relationship with it, if any. Respondents were also asked to report on how they felt when they touched or thought about the product. The interviews were recorded for the accuracy of the data. A written consent, duly signed by the participants, was obtained before the interview, which confirmed that the information shared by them could be freely published in various sources. Photographs of the participants and their products were taken for visual reference and the authenticity of the data.

Table 1: List of participants

S.No.	Name of the participant	Professional status and job title (if any)	Title of the object
1	Dr. Kusum Chopra	Former Professor and Chairperson, Fashion Design Department, National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi	Peach Pakistani <i>Shalwar</i>
2	Mr. Kheemraj Nandlal Rathi	Craftsman, Barmer Appliqué and Embroidery	Red Block Printed Women's <i>Odhani</i> ; Red Block Printed Girl's <i>Odhani</i>
3	Late Mr. Satya Narain Agarwal	Former Managing Director, Electrosteel Castings Pvt. Ltd.	Blue <i>Makhmal</i> (chenille) Dress
4	Dr. Ruchira Ghose	Former Chairman and Director, National Crafts Museum, New Delhi	Checkered Kanjeevaram Sari

Results and Discussion

Textile possessions, whether gifted, self-made, or acquired, are reservoirs of memories and narratives. They evoke memories and feelings—a fact that surfaced when interaction happened with all four selected participants. The most frequent reason for valuing these objects, as given by each participant, were the memories they were associated with—people, events, and relationships—that overshadowed the functionality and aesthetics of the objects. They are not just carriers but keepers of memories and experiences, as described by Dr. Kusum Chopra (Figure 2), a participant, while narrating her story of attachment with a peach-colored Pakistani *shalwar* she owns from her grandmother's collection.

“Born in March 1947 in Lahore, Dr. Kusum Chopra was just six months old when she witnessed the Union Jack being lowered and the Indian tricolor being raised at the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947. It was raining heavily, but her father, an engineer, Mr. Jagdish Mitter, made sure that she witnessed the occasion as, after decades of endeavor, independence had arrived. With independence also came the partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan, resulting in mass migrations across the newly formed nations. It was then that Dr. Kusum, along with her parents, grandparents, and other relatives, abandoned their homes in Pakistan and moved to India with their belongings.

Dr. Kusum's grandparents used to stay with her, but they had a house in Rohtak (Haryana) too, where all their belongings lay stacked in trunks. No one bothered about them until it was time for Dr. Kusum's wedding in 1969, as her grandmother, Mrs. Dhan Dei (Devi), wanted to pass on a few things to her granddaughter as a part of her trousseau, which probably she would have gotten in her trousseau or may have acquired during her lifetime.

*One of the objects that was passed on to Dr. Kusum was a peach-colored Pakistani *shalwar* that was baggy and atypically wide at the waist and tapered to a narrow, cuffed bottom. It was a ceremonial *shalwar* that was worn occasionally by her grandmother. After her, it was Dr. Kusum who wore the *shalwar* for a wedding with little alteration of the *pauncha* so that it fitted well (Figures 3 to 5).*

The sentimental value of this piece is worth a great deal for Dr. Kusum Chopra. Besides this, she has some more cherished pieces in her wardrobe. With every piece she owns, she takes a trip down memory lane and celebrates the nostalgia. At 75, her enthusiasm to share her stories is inspiring. Since the objects she owns are not of much practical

importance now but certainly are historic pieces of academic value, Dr. Kusum has decided to donate her prized possessions to the Clothing and Textile Department Museum of Maharaja Sayajirao University in Vadodara, Gujarat—her alma mater!”



Figure 2: Dr. Kusum Chopra



Figure 3: Dr. Kusum Chopra wearing the peach Pakistani *shalwar* at a wedding function



Figure 4: Dr. Kusum Chopra showcasing the *shalwar* at a seminar in New Delhi



Figure 5: The *shalwar* with Zardozi embroidery on the pauncha

Dr. Kusum Chopra’s *shalwar*, despite the significant signs of ageing it shows, breathes life even today as it still forms a part of her wearable clothing items. Also, she always tries to utilize any opportunity that comes her way to showcase her legendary objects to let the world know that such things existed in the past and what we have today are readapted versions of these age-old items. She doesn’t believe that the old must make way for the new; in fact, the new must complement the old for it to live longer.

Mr. Satya Narain Agarwal, another participant in the study, explained that objects that reflect attachments based upon personal memories are special, as he talked about

his most cherished 'Blue *Makhmal* Dress' that was once gifted to him by his great grandfather and now belongs to his grandchild, Ms. Anya Agarwal, who lives in Chicago (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Ms. Anya Agarwal with her grandfather late Mr. Satya Narain Agarwal

"Born in the year 1939, Mr. Satya Narain Agarwal belonged to a reputed jeweler family in Lucknow, whose members were treated with great deference in society. He was the first fourth-generation child born to Mr. Kundan Lal ji, his great-grandfather, and this was a matter of pronounced celebration! To mark this momentous occasion, not only were the great-grandparents offered the golden ladder, but a special dress was made for 'Satya' by the Muslim karigars (craftsmen) of Lucknow who worked for the Nawabs! The two-piece dress is beautifully enhanced with Zardozi embroidery in real gold and silver metal threads. No wonder the embroidery still retains its charm even after 82 years of storage and use!

In the year 1963, 'Satya' met his special someone, and they got married. They were soon blessed with two wonderful boys who got married in 1989 and 1991, respectively. Then came 'Anya' to Rajeev (the elder son) and 'Karan' to Arvind (the younger son) in the year 1996—an occasion to celebrate again and a time for family rituals to repeat.

According to social customs, the golden ladder is offered to the great-grandparents when a boy is born in the fourth generation of a family. But Anya being the first fourth-generation child to Mr. Triloki Nath Agarwal, it was decided to change the customary tradition as the family strongly believed that both sons and daughters should be equally respected—the reason why Anya was never called the grand granddaughter but always the grand grandchild of her great grandparents! The family relived the old memories. A golden ladder was offered to the great-grandparents, and 'Anya' was gifted the 'blue makhmal dress' by her great-grandmother (Figures 7 to 9).

It's 2023; Anya is now 26 years old, and she recently lost her beloved grandfather, Mr. Satya Narain Agarwal, with whom she shares a special bond as they both have something in common: the 'blue makhmal dress'! It's a reminder to her of her grandfather's unconditional love and affection, which has been stored by the family with much love and care. Probably, they might also want to pass this legacy on to their next generation to bring the old and the new together."



Figure 7: Late Mr. Satya Narain Agarwal with his grandchild Anya on the day of the ceremony



Figure 8: Anya with her father on her first birthday wearing the blue *makhmal* dress



Figure 9: The blue *makhmal* dress

Mr. Satya Narain Agarwal's account of his blue *makhmal* dress clearly indicates that clothes are carriers of family identity and traditions. They become memory holders and have the capacity to repeat the experience when used again in similar situations. The special feelings they evoke are meaningful because they not only serve as special bonding experiences but also establish a foundation for family values. Passing down his blue *makhmal* dress to his grandchild is an implicit way of passing down family values to the next generation, as these values have the power to shape them in accordance with what the family has envisioned.

Objects are extensions of one's self. Also, they are cherished if they are hand-made or self-made. This is clearly evident from the case study of Mr. Kheemraj Rathi, a renowned craftsman of Barmer appliqué and embroidery and owner of 'Red Block Printed Women's Odhani' and 'Red Block Printed Girl's Odhani' (Figures 10 to 12).



Figure 10: Mr. Kheemraj Rathi with his son in his assigned vendor space at Craft's Museum, New Delhi



Figure 11: Red Block printed women's odhani



Figure 12: Red block printed girl's odhani

"Born in Pakistan in 1957 into a family of artisans, Mr. Kheemraj Rathi came to India along with his parents in 1971. The initial years were difficult for the family as there was not enough money. So they took up small jobs, and Mr. Kheemraj, alongside, began to learn the craft skills from his father, Mr. Nandlal Rathi. It's been fifty years now since he has been practicing the craft. Coming from a remote location and humble background, Mr. Kheemraj Rathi traces his love for Indian traditional arts to his childhood days. He always had an eye for art and understood the effort and complexity that go into the making of a handmade textile, especially in those days when technology was lacking. So he started collecting old pieces from the Thakurs and Sahukars (the upper class) of the surrounding villages, for whom textile inheritances were nothing more than a medium of making money. These old pieces of art give subtle clues that enable him to create

interesting motifs and designs in appliqué and embroidery that breathe new life into his creations. They are a huge inspiration that consistently guides his design aesthetic.

The bright red odhani he owns is around eighty years old, worn by the women of the elite during their wedding ceremonies. Hand-block printed in silver and gold, the odhani is a classic piece to treasure. As it's an old piece, there are signs of wear, and a part of it is also damaged on one of the sides. But Mr. Rathi is not afraid of pieces that show wear. The artisanship in things from the past is what his eye is after, and he collects what he likes.

Another piece he had was again a bright red, eighty-year-old odhani, made for a small girl, made in handspun and handwoven mulmul. This odhani had an almost similar layout as the one made for women but different patterning. The odhani features floral motifs with patterned borders adorned with silver and gold khari. 'These pieces are rare, as it's difficult to get both the odhanis made for a mother as well as for her daughter. They belong to the same family, and I bought it for 17,000 INR from an old woman who belonged to a rich family in the year 1992', Mr. Kheemraj mentioned.

Mr. Rathi's fondness for Indian textile craft is evident in his collection. For him, it's a lifelong passion. His deep curiosity for knowledge of old traditions and techniques is what keeps him going. He doesn't consider himself to be a 'collector' but leaves no opportunity to add a piece of art to his small collection whenever he finds it. He is open to selling his collection pieces, provided he gets a customer who has knowledge of and understands the value of these rare textiles. He would not just sell them for money. He even plans to have a small museum in Barmer, as he feels that collections are worth only when they are noticed."

Kheemraj Rathi provides an enduring example of how textile pieces of the past must be valued and preserved for future generations. First, it's ability to inspire the artisans for their own work, and secondly, it's hard to recreate such pieces of art. According to him, whatever is 'Made in India' should remain in India! Salute to his spirit!

Clothing objects are a reflection of one's identity and can also represent achievements in a person's life. This is clearly evident from the case study of Dr. Ruchira Ghose (Figure 13). Her account is an example of how through clothing choices, one can consolidate their own identity and inner self, both at the emotional level and in professional interactions, as she talked about some of her prized possessions.

"Dr. Ruchira Ghose is admired for her literary writings as much as she is admired for her sense of style. What sets her apart is her passion for hand-woven saris with minimalist aesthetics. From traditional handlooms to statement contemporaries, Dr. Ruchira Ghose has a rich mix of saris in her wardrobe. Born in 1950, she attributes her love for saris to her childhood days. She grew up feasting her eyes on her mother's saris and, since then, couldn't wait to wear her first sari.

Dressed in a serene white sari with streaks of black in soft mul, Dr. Ruchira Ghose shared her carefully curated finds—her simple yet exotic saris—from the creations of Rta Kapur Chisti, Neeru Kumar, Rukmini Devi Arundale, and more. She gazed at every sari she took out of her cupboard with fondness and passion, and her eyes sparkled when she talked about them.

One of her most treasured pieces from her collections is a gorgeous Kanjeevaram, bought in the early 1990s in Delhi, apparently a copy of a sari that was in the collection of Rukmini Devi Arundale in Tamil Nadu. With a wide border in contrast colors, the sari looks lovely when worn, and Dr. Ghose considers it one of her prized possessions. She remembered receiving many compliments when she wore it for a big celebration at the Swiss embassy, probably in 2015, and that was the last time it was worn. Since then, the sari has been left hanging on the rail, changing cupboards with every season! (Figure 14).

Another favorite collection of hers consists of the saris she bought from the Kalingavastra exhibition, curated by textile conservationist and cultural revivalist Martand Singh and designer Rakesh Thakore in the nineties. Simple but unusual, the saris have a unique appeal in terms of their colors and patterns. No wonder, as the collection was the result of several years of hard work by Martand Singh and Rakesh Thakore, who developed a design directory for weavers in Odisha to bring new patterns and new colors to Odisha weaving (Figure 15). Dr. Ruchira Ghose has fond memories of the exhibition, as she too was part of the project. She remembered buying around twenty saris from the exhibition for herself, her family, and friends!”



Figure 13: Dr. Ruchira Ghose



Figure 14: The checkered Kanjeevaram Sari



Figure 15: Saris from the collection of Dr. Ruchira Ghose

All these objects she has in her cupboard are soaked with her personal and professional experiences. They are an expression of her personality and achievements, generating a rewarding experience every time she sees them. Her case study clearly suggests that possessions contribute to an individual's identity (Belk, 1988), and the user may be emotionally engaged with his or her clothing objects at multiple levels of meaning and memory.

In the aforementioned case studies, the users have owned all of the clothing items mentioned for more than 25 years. The narratives provided by the users support the fact that although sustainable object attachment results from the interplay of both operative and reflective dimensions, the contribution of reflective dimensions is greater (Niinimäki, 2010; Mugge, Schoormans and Schifferstein, 2005), as it is driven by the emotions and thought processes of the individual possessing the object. It builds over time and connects the person with his or her past experiences, personal history, family values, self-identity, self-extension, satisfaction, and more. This implies that the preservation of memories can prove to be the most promising strategy for prolonging the life of a product, preventing its disposal, and thus contributing to sustainability. Attachment is highly correlated with irreplaceability and, to a much lesser extent, with functionality (Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, 2008). The reasons underlying attachment may be different in all cases, but the common point is that all objects are cherished for the memories they evoke—those of the past and those that have accumulated over time—and that attachment varies with the duration of ownership (Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, 2008). Dr. Kusum Chopra initially valued her object for its connection with her grandmother, then for its functionality, and now she is willing to part with it as she feels that her objects are of great value to the students. Mr. Kheemraj Rathi bought the object to make it a part of his collection and take inspiration from it for his own work. Now he cares for the object as, being an artisan himself, he

understands that such pieces cannot be recreated; hence, they should be preserved well for future generations. Products may remain unchanged, but their relationship with and meaning to the owners change over time (Niinimäki and Armstrong, 2013). Mr. Satya Narain Agarwal valued his object as it was representative of family traditions, while his granddaughter Anya valued it as a reminder to her of her beloved grandfather. Clothes reveal the identity of the wearer. When connected with significant events or occasions in professional and personal lives, they become more meaningful in communicating confidence, comfort, status, and feelings that make them worthwhile. From Dr. Ruchira Ghose's account, one can discern that passion, along with memories, makes one hold on to textiles for life.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that clothing objects are not merely valued for their functionality. They are also cherished for their nostalgic value, as they tell stories of the past, remind users of their loved ones, reflect values, and contribute to human identity. These items have many trajectories, from family heirlooms to individual mementoes (Stallybrass and Stewart, 1993) and hand-me-downs to reused and recycled items (Norris, 2005). In order to get a better understanding of what humans were, what they are, and what they will be, it is important to understand what goes on between them and their possessions (Csikszentmihalyi and Halton, 1981).

Most of the treasured keepsakes are old, handmade, high-quality pieces made from more sustainable processes and raw materials that can last longer. They are timeless pieces that have the potential to lead the way for slow fashion, a concept that is already making strides in the fashion industry but whose current approach is ad hoc. Fostering personal connections with textile possessions can prove to be a strategic approach towards sustainability. Products with which the users experience attachment tend to last longer as the users want to prolong the memory; hence, they prolong the item by taking greater care of it, thus contributing to a sustainable society. Studies have been done using a quantitative approach to examine product attachment, but few insights have been provided by them into the underlying emotions and memories that the products hold—a crucial factor in determining consumer-product attachment. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative studies are necessary to provide a thorough understanding of the concept of product attachment (Mugge, Schoormans and Schifferstein, 2005). If durability is considered to be one of the most obvious strategies for longevity of product life span (Weizsacker, Lovins and Lovins, 1997, as cited in Ramirez and Ward, 2015), there is certainly a need for a more holistic approach to durability—one that not only considers an item's physical but also emotional resilience.

References

- Bayus, B.L., and Gupta, S., 1992. An empirical analysis of consumer durable replacement intentions. *International Journal of Research and Marketing*, [e-journal] 9(3), pp.257-267.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-8116\(92\)90021-C](https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-8116(92)90021-C).
- Belk, R.W., 1988. Possessions and the Extended Self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, [e-journal] 15(2), pp.139–168. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209154>.
- Cooper, T., 2005. Slower Consumption: Reflections on Product Life Spans and the "Throwaway Society". *Journal of Industrial Ecology*. [pdf] Available at: <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1162/1088198054084671>> [Accessed 17 August 2022].
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., Halton, E., 1981. The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self. *Contemporary Sociology a Journal of Reviews*, 12(4), 1-14. [online] Available at: <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/224927533>> [Accessed 19 June 2023].
- Davis, Gary 2002. Prolonging the Pleasure. In *Pleasure with Products: Beyond Usability*, eds. William S. Green and Patrick W. Jordan, London: Taylor & Francis, 315-319.
- Debell, M., and Dardis, R., 1979. Extending Product Life: Technology Isn't the Only Issue. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 6(1), pp.381-385. [online] Available at: <<https://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/9580>> [Accessed 18 August 2022].
- Fast Fashion and Its Environmental Impact. In: Maiti, R. *earth.org* [online]. Hong Kong, June 2022. Available at: <<https://earth.org/fast-fashions-detrimental-effect-on-the-environment/>> [Accessed 20 August 2022].
- Hinte, E.V., 1997. *Eternally yours: Visions on product endurance*. Rotterdam: The Netherlands: 010.
- Hwang, Y. and Self, J.A., 2015. *Exploring Symbolic Meanings behind Personal Products of Attachment*. [pdf] Korea: International Design Congress. Available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/514ba64be4b09fef8c0a47f1/t/59d430de9f8dcea3fbbd91a4/1507078368655/EXPLORING+SYMBOLIC+MEANINGS+BEHIND_KSDS_0.3_YH_JS_2015.pdf> [Accessed 4 August 2022].
- Jackson, T., 2005. *Live Better by Consuming Less? Is There a "Double Dividend" in Sustainable Consumption?* [pdf] *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, Available at: <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1162/1088198054084734>> [Accessed 17 August 2022].
- Kleine, S.S. and Baker, S.M., 2004. *An Integrative Review of Material Possession Attachment*. *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 1(1). [online] Available at: <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242546021>> [Accessed 30 June 2022].
- Mugge, R., Schifferstein, H.N.J. and Schoormans J.P.L., 2005. Design Strategies to Postpone Consumers' Product Replacement: The Value of a Strong Person-Product Relationship. *The Design Journal*, 8(2). [online] Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2752/146069205789331637>> [Accessed 15 July 2022].
- Niinimäki, K., 2010. Eco-clothing, consumer identity and ideology. *Sustainable Development*, [e-journal] 18(3), pp.150-162. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.455>.

- Niinimäki, K. and Armstrong, C., 2013. From pleasure in use to preservation of meaningful memories: A closer look at the sustainability of clothing via longevity and attachment. *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, [online] Available at: <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271673029>> [Accessed 18 August 2022].
- Norris, L., 2005. Cloth That Lies: The Secrets of Recycling in India. In: Küchler, S. and Miller, D. Ed. *Clothing and Materiality*. Oxford, New York: Berg
- Papanek, V., 1984. *Design for the real world*. 2nd ed. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Ramirez, K.K. and Ward, S., 2015. *A Framework for Understanding the Role of Product Attachment in Enabling Sustainable Consumption of Household Furniture*. [pdf] PLATE Conference. pp.173-181. Available at: <http://www.plateconference.org/pdf/plate_2015_proceedings.pdf> [Accessed 17 August 2022].
- Schifferstein, H.N.J. and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, E.P.H., 2008. Consumer-Product Attachment: Measurement and Design Implications. *International Journal of Design*, [pdf]. Available at: <<http://www.ijdesign.org/index.php/IJDesign/article/viewFile/325/205>> [Accessed 17 August 2022].
- Schultz, S.E., Kleine, R.E. and Kernan, J.B., 1989. These Are A Few of My Favourite Things: Toward an Explication of Attachment as a Consumer Behaviour Construct. *Advances in Consumer Research Association for Consumer Research*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235361526>>
- Schumacher, K., and Forster, A.L., 2022. *Facilitating a Circular Economy for Textiles Workshop Report*. Report no. 1500-207. [online], National Institute of Standards and Technology. <https://doi.org/10.6028/NIST.SP.1500-207>.
- Stahel, W.R., 1986. Product life as a variable: the notion of utilization. *Science and Public Policy*, [e-journal] 13(4), pp.185–193. <https://doi.org/10.1093/spp/13.4.185>.
- Stallybrass, P., 1993. Worn Worlds: Clothes, Mourning and the Life of Things. *The Yale Review*, 81(2), pp.35-50.
- Stewart, S., 1993. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. London: Duke University Press.
- Wallendorf, M. and Arnould, E.J., 1988. "My Favourite Things": A cross-Cultural Inquiry into Object Attachment, Possessiveness, and Social Linkage. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14(4). [online] Available at: <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247560620>> [Accessed 18 August 2022].
- Werbach, A., 2009. When sustainability means more than 'green'. *McKinsey & Company*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/when-sustainability-means-more-than-green>> [Accessed 30 June 2022].
- Whiteley, N. 1993. *Design for society*. London: Reaktion Books.

About the authors

Sareekah Agarwaal is an Indian textile archivist, curator, academician, research scholar, and textile professional who obtained her Master's degree in Fabric and Apparel Science from Delhi University. She started her career as a freelancer and made her debut in the corporate world in 2006 with a consulting firm for technical textiles. She even worked as an assistant professor in the Department of Fabric and Apparel Science at Lady Irwin College, Delhi University, and also served as a senior consultant at Indira Gandhi National Open University. Sareekah has authored many chapters in books and also has some MOOCs to her credit. Sareekah is currently working at the National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi, to develop a national knowledge portal named 'The Repository: Indian Textiles and Crafts (RTC)' for the Ministry of Textiles under the Craft Cluster Initiative of the NHDP program being implemented by the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handlooms and Handicrafts).

sareekah.agarwaal@nift.ac.in

Ruby Kashyap Sood is a Professor in the Textile Design department, National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi, and Head of the Publication Unit. She has more than two decades of teaching experience. Her areas of specialisation include surface design, craft studies and textile art. A Master's in Textiles and Clothing from Delhi University, she has done extensive research on traditional Indian textiles and costumes. Ruby has co-authored books titled 'Celebrating Dreams – Weddings in India' and 'Traditional Indian Textiles'. Her doctoral thesis, titled 'A Study on the Metamorphosis of the Indian 'Choli' Blouse and the Development of a Readymade Sari Blouse', is an extensive body of work on the Indian blouse. She has presented research papers at prestigious conferences and published several articles in reputed journals and periodicals. She is also a member of the Advisory Board of *The Journal of Dress History*, UK.

ruby.sood@nift.ac.in