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Belongingness with bags: Antiquity, assortments and maintenance

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ABSTRACT

The journey from using bags to carry loose coins, things from one place to another to the smart bags with solar panels that use the saved energy to charge a mobile/i-pod each milestone admirable and progressive. This review of fashion using bags is conceptualised based on the history and types of bags available that help in understanding the huge options for people and fashion designers.

Key Words : Bags, Handbag, History of bag, Types of bag, Raw material for bag

INTRODUCTION

Bags are essential to protect the things, carry things from one place to another, to store things for future and also by serving as an important fashion accessory. The designs for the bag, the textures used by an individual takes a lot of attention from the people. Holding of a clutch in the right way is much appreciated by the fashion fraternity. Wearing right bag for the right moment is observed to be expressing the fashion maturity of an individual. Example: party wear sari and potli purse, travel bag for travelling and not to college found to be giving a note of appeal to the peers. Fashion consultant even suggest, use of large bags to make an obese person visually small. It is surprising that more than 90% of the bags sold in the domestic market are dupes of international brands. The luxury bags and the dupes are a huge attraction and bags of any kind directly reflects the person economical state.

History of bags :

Civilisation evolved with creating materials that will aid in sophistication. Need was always a driving force for mankind to evolve with new ideas. Cave man had a role in using skin of animals, to cover their genitals and later the foot that gave him warmth, protection and to travel longer distances. In olden days, bags were made from the skin of animals and later processed hide called leather. Bags were worn in a style that defines a cross bag type of wearing it diagonally to the chest or attached to the belt. In later ages, skins were also used in the making of accessory that will help in carrying things from one place to another [1-3].



Fig. 1 : Bags used by cave men and later the hunters pouch

Egyptian hieroglyphics shows men with purse like pouch at waist. Judas in Bible, is seen to have owned a purse when he visited baby Jesus. Peasants in the olden days, have believed to have had seeds in the pouch, food for birds, hunting and also in sports. The priest of the African countries illustrated in their paintings are seen with a beaded purse. In the fourteenth century, potli like purse with drawstring and resembling a modern-day pouch carried by women. In the next century, purses were attached to a sentiment with wedding. It was gifted as part of marriage ritual from groom to bride.

The invention of a pouch like fabric to be used for the purpose of carrying things was in practice until 16th century [3-6]. Then a very interesting invention called pockets were designed. From then on, an individual carry bags lost trend. Men lost interest in bags and women were consistent in using bags as a style choice. It was after this, the bags with hooks and chains came up, to ease the bag to be attached to the garment. Bags those days were used to carry sewing kit, basic make up, house key and coins.



Fig. 2 : The potli purse – huge gown – Fashion during classism

In the 17th to 18th century, the garments (silhouettes) were made in huge sizes and carrying another accessory like a bag was unpleasant. Thus, pockets were explored to maximum and unique side seam pockets were introduced. Girls were taught embroidery and made it a tradition to work on the bags. Drawstring bags were popular in this era. Women were using the bags to attract their potential husbands. Lettering, embroidery with date, initials could be seen in the bag. When classism

regained popularity in the 18th century women started wearing garments close to body, symbolising their native culture and tradition giving a more realistic look. Dress got narrow and bags were out. The raw material was mostly silk and lace with some value addition like embroidery [7-10].

Industrial revolution :

With the beginning of industrial revolution, the need to travel and carry few materials with them to survive was needful. Hence, suitcase, travel bag, huge bags came into trend. The famous brand Louis Vuitton launched their advertisement (1843) of these items in a popular newspaper that attracted lot of attention and consumers (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 : Advertisement in 19th century by Louis Vuitton, Paris

In the 19th century, leather bag and briefcase were introduced, which men wore with their muff and robe. Nineteenth century was all about innovation. Whiting and Davis created the first mesh bag with geometrical designs in 1920, proving that bags were more than just travel aid. Increase in the empowerment of women and fashion sagacity has aroused the designers to explore on various design innovations in this area [11]. In the twentieth century, enormous growth of bag making industry subjects the reason for development from the growing GDP and per capita income around the globe. Fashion psychologists suggest the choice and the time line of consumers, boldly quoting that people easily loose interest over the purchased textile and accessories. Thus, choices and expanding market range for bags has opened carrier opportunities around the globe. Today various brands include Gucci, Guess, Burberry, Chloe, Fendi, Louis Vuitton, Prada, Hermes and Michael Kors, Nicole Miller, Chanel, Isabella, Fiore, Christian Dior, Juicy Couture, Ralph Lauren, Coach, Loro, Piana, Salvatore, Ferragamo, Eric Javits, Yves Saint Laurent, Michael Kors and Valentino are available for the consumers [12-16].

In the by gone days tools for hunting, take back items from hunting, and other accessories used with clothing was taken in a bag. Even today, with all the development, we can see men and women carrying a bag that can hold a variety of things like, sewing kit, note, make up kit, mobile and power bank, cash and cards, hand perfumes, bottle, wipes, medicine and much more based on

individual. Today, bags are a symbol of status and fashion choice of a person. Blog writers and fashion magazines along with you tube, open up a specific genre called ‘what’s in your Bag’: where celebrities disclose the contents in their hand bag and share the brands and innovative life hacks followed by them. A huge number of viewers follow this trending videos to like and follow celebrity lifestyle, which a common psychology of teenagers. The need for bags has grown up multi-fold and now women use it as a basic entity in fashion world. The members of the royal family the heir of traditional Indian kingdom, the celebrities and a small clutch with a party wear/ reception attire all symbolise the role of bags in showcasing one’s stature in the society [17-18].

Bag as symbol of social status :

There is a famous phrase, “Your bag is your car”. Because a bag should contain all that is needed to keep going at the same time with good quality. The luxury sign attached with the bags are due to the fact that bags are completely hand made. Hand-cut, hand-pasted and hand-assorted. Such a bag is seen as a master-piece, that embodies highest sign of quality and craftsmanship. For example, the world-renowned Speedy bag is made as a result of four hundred steps in the making of that bag. The fabrication involves beautiful labour infused by the artisans (Fig.4) [19,20].



Fig. 4 : Raw materials used in making of Speedy Bag

Raw materials for bag making :

The common materials used in making a bag are include leather, fabric, vinyl, rubber, polypropylene, cotton, canvas, twill, satin, linen, polyester, blends, rayon, silk, tapestry, velvet, velveteen, real skin (snakes, cow and eel), suedes, straw, burlap, canvas, corduroy, linen, velvet, peau de soil, faile, rug, gros pointe, petit point, silk brocade, crepe, bengaline, moire, rayon blends, metallic fabrics, fur, paperboard, novelty fabric and velour.

Leather is a very important raw material in luxury bags. Since the process of making leather is laborious, leather is used in designer and expensive varieties only. There are different forms of leather also, namely painted leather, dyed leather, antique leather, suede, nubuck, patented leather and embossing. Vinyl bags are often confused for leather, and used as a replacement for leather to cut down the cost. These bags are also water proof. It can give an expensive look as well as water proof. Rubber bags are also not easy to make and hence priced higher.

Polypropylene is referred to eco-bags and are used instead of plastic in many countries. Along with this outer material a lining cloth made from cotton or canvas will be used to protect the original fabric from stain or dirt. The purpose to have an inner cloth is to give better shape and rigidity to the bag [21]. Cotton is commonly seen in fabric bags, for the purpose of easy cleaning. Apart from the outer cover, Cotton, silk and polyester batting, fleece, fusible interfacing, fusible web and spray adhesives are used in the interlining. There are different types of raw materials involved in the making of luxury bags, they are discussed as below [22-25].

Table 1: Raw materials used in making bag			
Sr. No.	Raw material	Source	Quality
1.	Calfskin	Hide of young cattle	High quality luxury bag
2.	Goat and pigskin	Skin of goat and pig	Soft, supple, durable. They are used as suedes to leather, softer than cow and sheep.
3.	KIP	Steerhide	Medium fragility fine and supple
4.	Cow hide	Cow	Used in handbags
5.	Sheep and lambskin	Sheep and lamb	Lighter, fine grained and seen in imported handbags
6.	Reptile skin	Snake, turtle, lizard	Distinguished patterns, requires skill in construction to match the scales of the reptile and create the final product.
7.	Crocodile	Crocodile	Expensive, fashionable and exotic, strong, durable.
8.	Ostrich skin	Ostrich	Uniqueness is their quill follicle patterns, that makes it naturally water resistant and durable
9.	Eel skin, Fish skin	Skin of fishes	The skin is extremely good for making purses. Such skins are always maintained with care, to maintain the color and texture.

Anatomy of bag :

The handbag features (closing) as an important element in quality of the product. The different types of closure include zipper, a flap with magnet, hugging criss-cross knob, draw string, loop and button and handle. The other parts of the bag are given as in the illustration below.



Fig. 4 (a) : Anatomy of bag - Illustrated measurements required for making bag

Design development of bag:

In order to design a bag, the following measurements are used.

Drop: Measure from the height of the top handle (in the middle of the handle) down to the top seam of the bag body.

Height: Measure from the centre top seam of the bag to centre bottom seam of the bag.

Length: Measure the front of the bag from the bottom left seam to the bottom right seam.

Width/ gusset : Measure from the front side seam to the back-side seam [26].

Accessorising bags :

Handbag is referred as a women's best friend holding all her assets, essentials and secrets. It is important to buy a bag unique and to maintain it well. International brands make it essential to have a unique ensemble like a silk scarf rolled into the handle, unique key chain, an ensemble that has the logo in a metal made like a hanging. New materials like lace, glass, crystal, plastic and wool (crochet) is also a trend. Travel bag like suitcase and *vice versa* are commonly seen among adults. School bag with trolley are trending for school going children.

Online shopping sites are now marking the "hand bag organiser" to be one of the best sellers, showcasing the increasing awareness among consumers on using a day to day accessory bags. Artisanal craftsmanship, high-quality materials, timeless design and fashion innovation are major factors in the bag. During shopping for bag, the lining, closures are also evaluated and purchased. [27-30].



Fig. 5 : Cross stitch Sling bag, Studded miniaudire, scarf as fashion accessory

Bespoken Fashion Choices

Tote bag: The best material for carrying the items purchased from shopping and mostly found without any cabins are tote bags. In the recent innovation canvas tote carry bags with compartments to carry different vegetables are seen in the market. These bags are made from cloth, large in size and unfastened. Parallel handles emerge from sides to hold the weight. Twill weave and canvas fabric are the commonly seen (Fig. 6).

Clutch: When the structure of the bag resembles an envelope, the bag is called clutch. These are mostly seen in the evening as part of party wear ensemble (Fig. 6).

Hobo bag: In this category bags are large in size and resemble size of a half moon. They have an adjustable strap but chosen to be worn on the shoulder and never to be holded like a clutch.

Flexible materials like soft leather, microfiber or suede (artificial leather) are used in this bag. Bags slouch on long use and look like its lost in shape even while hanging from the shoulders (Fig. 6).

Satchel bags: The meaning of satchel in Latin is sack. It represents the shape of bag made from a flexible leather and is often worn diagonal to the body. Usually these are structured bags and now are referred to anything that is rigid in shape [30] (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6 : Tote – Clutch – Hobo - Satchel

Messenger bags: Bags that was once used by courier person in abroad, is now a common style of bag worn by adolescent college goers. These messenger bags are casual and trendy look of the bag makes it indispensable and elegant to wear (Fig. 7).

Shoulder bags /back pack: The shoulder bags are found in every home from children wearing it to the kinder to college and now the working professionals as well, to carry the laptop. Back pack or the shoulder bag are one product in which many researches are done by the scientists. The latest being incorporating solar panels in the bag and storing the energy for charging a bag. The adjustable straps, attachments and pouches, materials used are some of the prominent features in a shoulder bag (Fig. 7) [31].

Beach bags: Bags are an essential accessory for a travelling and in specific to visits like forest in the form of trekking and sunbath in beaches. Beach bags are made of water repellent material, bright colours and trendy patterns. They have pouches to hold the sun screen, wipes and wet clothes, drier. Sometimes, bags made from straw is also used. The basic idea is using a medium that will protect the bag from moisture (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7 : Messenger-back pack-beach bag-saddle bags

Sports or gymnastics bag: Similarly, sports or gym bag, is an accessory that will carry the wipes, lemon drink, protein shake and its cup. Hair band, hand glove, i-pod and earphone, loose coins, money and card. Power bank and mobile phone compartments are commonly seen. Depending on the type of exercise or sports, the accessory and the bag design changes [31] (Fig. 7).

Saddle bags: During WWI these were used to carry first aid kit. The bag that resemble the saddle of a horse. Inspired from the saddle bags seen in horse riding these bags are now the significant accessory in bikes like Royal Enfield and among college goers for their academic purpose. The original saddle bags, can be worn in the front, back and sides of a horse. These bags are made of pure leather and dupes from nylon (Fig. 7).

Duffel bags: Rangefinder duffel bags are extremely popular around the globe. These are used during travelling and available in the most diversified fabric textures and colours. It is also seen with trolley model for ease in transportation. The basic advantage of this category is the abundant space and compartments in the bag. The invisible compartment helps in keeping the extra shoes inside the bag itself. The very famous Tumi Alpha 2 Split Duffel bag helps in carrying all that's needed for cooking except the kitchen sink [32] (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8 : Duffel – minaudiere – sling – muff

Minaudiere: Introduced in 1930, this is a small in size decorative hand bag used for party wear garments. It was used by the upper-class people in the society to hold their makeup, glasses and keys. Comparing all the styles of bags available, these come in the top rank for showcasing extravagance. These are generally made of metal or any rigid material planned with high aesthetics of luxury in the designing. Sometimes using a chain part of the minaudiere is seen, that helps in holding the bag to the garment [33] (Fig. 8).

Sling bag: The bags that are sleek, very feminine and found in the end of chain are called sling bags. These are having a huge design range from geometric to traditional, abstract to monumental design and leather to netted fabrics (Fig. 8).

Photographers bag: The sensitive camera, lens, aids to be kept with the photographer like the laptop, memory card, wipes, microfiber cloth, charger, battery, extra lens, water bottle compartment are all kept inside the bag which can be kept in a water proof, tear proof black bag. The bottom has three layers to minimise the impact. Along with this universal compatibility and exterior pockets. The opening of this bag is designed in an aesthetic way to enable maximum safety of the fragile items in the bag.

Guitar bag: It is yet another type of bag that helps in protecting the musical instrument. Lateral dry bags are used in cycling and other road-based sports to take the belongingness from one place to another. These water repellent material makes the purpose very satisfactory. Apart from the regular bags, the handmade and eco-friendly bags made from green sources are used with a message promoting sustainability. Materials that could be a waste are recycled into bags, which are used both for trendy and eco—friendly product development.

Miscellaneous styles :

Many interesting bags are available in today’s world. For example: **Muff** is a winter bag made of real or faux fur, wool or velvet that has zippered compartments and a slip opening for keeping the hands inside (Fig. 8). The other styles include **Baguette**- which s Wristlet for holding make up kit; **Cross body** – bag of any type worn diagonal to the body, **bowling bag** – designed originally for holding, bowling ball, **Potli purse** -made with rich surface embellishment, **athletic bag** – for carrying sports equipment and dress, **bucket bag** – open in top and with shoulder strap and fold over clutch.

Diaper bags that are used by new age mothers are used to keep the new born related kit which includes feeding bottle, bottle sanitiser, wipes, diapers, scarfs, breast feeding pads and so on. Today doctor’s kits are taken in a bag assorted to help their patients. The **make-up artist** who has huge collections of concealers, foundation, lip shades, brushes, comb and tools find bags to be of utmost importance. As a means of expressing tradition, hand-made, hand worked, embroidery of unique motifs is made on small pouch with draw strings called potli bags. **Jolna bags** are items made from bright coloured fabric and traditional embroidery used by the northern parts of India.

Researches are done in reducing the weight of bag, annexing the accessories into the main frame of bag and having waterproof shield. The daily use bags like **plastics and handmade paper bags** are also flooding in the domestic market. A small accessory like a bag, has cloud of choices in today’s consumer centred market. It is encouraging to see many new products coming up every day. There are bags with innovation, unique ideas that attract the attention of the consumers and hence promote the sales (Fig. 9) [30-35].



Fig. 9: Latest trending paper bags with innovative designs

Care and maintenance of bags :

The sample swatches here showcase the difference between real and dupes of international brands. As said in the prologue, 90% of the bags available are dupes of the original brand. On the other notes, expensive designer bags should be taken utmost care. The bags should be preserved in a proper carton box or a dust cover. Designer bags are usually made of leather, which should not be

exposed to humid, hot environment or direct sun drying. Plastic based covers should be avoided as it is not breathable. Bag liners are available in the outlets, which helps in collectively handling the various items in a bag. These also prevent the bag from staining. Alcohol based products like perfume, cosmetics, face cream can affect the bag, buckle, accent, strap and the decorations in the bag. The use of purse hanger will also aid in keeping the purse safe in storing [30-33].



Fig. 10 : Dupes and Original labels

The bags can be affected by rain and water, it is advisable to avoid it as much as possible. Water proof protectant spray are available that help to waterproof the bags before stepping out in rain. Those living in raining areas can use this to protect their expensive bag. To maintain the shape, the bags must be stuffed while storing. Washing and conditioning of the bag is very important step, which will be based on the care instructions given while purchase of the bag.

Based on the dyeing done for silk sari, old bags that have faded in colour can be re-dyed for a fresh look. Crocking on the other hand is the common problem faced while using bags especially whites and light colour materials. Based on raw material the stain removal technique is chosen. Even placing the bag on restaurant floor and chair nearby is not recommended. Purse hook is generally used to hang the bag in public places and carried as an accessory with the bag [34].

Conclusion :

Bag is a very essential accessory that has both functional and decorative use. Tea bag, air bag, black colour disposal bag for wastes help us in our daily chores. In fashion, bag is used to explicitly show the status and fashion sense of the particular person. The individual purchasing power has increased in the last decade that has opened vistas in launching new bags every day for every need. In an era, where plastic pollution has been a major threat, the paper has addressed the innovation in brown paper craft as well [35-37]. It can be an opening for fashion designing students interested in accessory designing, home scientists who are interested into textiles and fashion, budding entrepreneurs and research scholars. The future is bestowed to have multi-disciplinary applications of electronics integrated smart fabrics for making bags.

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