

# TRENDY AND CHOOSY



**Children's clothes are today a huge industry, fuelled by demands by precocious kids and indulgent parents, reports Rakesh Kumar**

Monit is barely three but has an attitude when it comes to the clothes he wants to wear. Just to escape from the tantrum he throws if he's not allowed to have his way, his mother lets him pick his clothes. At the same time, she cannot help but recall her own childhood, when she wore what was laid out by her mother. True, the wardrobe was limited and there was little choice. Thanks to the growing influence of the West and fed on an overdose of television characters, today's children have a different definition of clothes. Apart from casual clothes there is dressing for occasions - be it a birthday party or festivals, each each demands different outfits. Parents too are willing to loosen their purse strings to buy new clothes. To cater to them are a surplus of brands - Kidology, Kids Chakra, Hot Wheels, Barbie, Lil Kangaroos and Coochie Coo to name a few, who are making a neat pile catering to just kids.

"The Indian kids wear industry is estimated to be more than Rs 80,000 crore, and is expected to grow at a compounded annual rate of nine per cent per annum," said Supam Maheshwari, CEO and Founder of FirstCry.com, an online shopping website. "About 85 per cent of this market is non-branded apparel. But this is slowly changing. Young parents are becoming more brand con-

scious both in terms of label and the latest fashion while shopping for their young ones."

#### Fashion trends

The last decade has seen a substantial rise in fashion-consciousness among children. In India kids, especially in high-income households, try to follow the current fashion trends. "The kids today no longer wait for mummies to choose their wardrobe. They are very much a part and an influencing factor of what they want to wear and what needs to be there in their wardrobe," said Nidhi Mehta, co-founder, NeedyBee.com, an online shopping portal.

Echoing this, Manoj Mahla, director of India Kids Fashion Week, said, "Earlier parents were the sole decision makers, now children are more fashion conscious and also know how to influence their parents' purchase decisions."

Like adults, the fashion trends among kids also changes with time and season. As per Vidhi Sheth, designer and owner of BrownBows (online shopping portal), this summer they are working on more blues and summer cool colours, mainly the solids. They are jazzing the boys with more accessories like

#### History of kids' fashion

Most of the fashion for children has travelled from the West. Therefore, if one peeps into the history of clothing, one could find, be it in India or in West, that children wore the same clothes or smaller versions of adult clothes. It was only in 1800s that special kids' clothing started being manufactured. Several style evolved that were meant only for children, such as sailor's suit and the Hussar's or Eton jacket. Patterns for children's garments were now extensively made. By 1900s, kids' clothing was a well-developed industry. Then the designers had only thing in mind - to make the clothes comfortable. Then development of elastic waistbands led the way to make trousers, skirts and other such clothes trouble free and easy-to-wear for small kids.

hats, scarves, bows and ties as thick shirts and coats are a no-no this summer.

Harsh Saraf, business development head of Super Knit Industries, informs that this year's trend is lovely pastels, whites, lemons-coloured dresses for girls and for boys, socks perfectly matched with the right kind of shoes and ankle length socks is the current trend now. Accessories like socks have also become a key element in pulling together an awesome ensemble.

#### Designing for kids

Kids not only pester their parents to choose the right clothes, even designers have to use all their imagination to make these kids happy. Many designers admit that designing clothes for the kids is a difficult task, more difficult than adults sometime. The only freedom they get designing their clothes is playing with colours.

"While keeping up with the fashion trends it becomes important that the clothes designed for the kids are soft on the skin of the child and also look stylish at the same time. It becomes very difficult to keep all the elements and design the entire package at an affordable cost. So striking a balance between comfort, price and style or design is very difficult," said Supam Maheshwari.

While designing garments for kids it is crucial for designers to strike a fine balance between maintaining the comfort level, quality, style and price of the clothing they design. "One has to be careful in terms of design and using too much sequins or hard embellishments like coloured stones as these could hurt the child," informed Manoj Mahala. "Embroidery too has to be done in a way that the threadwork doesn't harm the wearer. For example, instead of sequins or stones on the sleeve or under arm area it could be stitched on to the neck of the dress so that there's minimal friction." "One question that always comes to our mind before designing for kids is the weight of the garment. We make sure that we make stylish yet light weight clothes so that kids do not find them an extra baggage on their bodies," ended Vidhi Sheth, owner of BrownBows.