

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Beyond Seasons: Trends for Next Generation



Dr. Kaustav Sengupta, Associate Professor, NIFT; Head, VisioNext

14th October 2025: This panel discussion brought participants together for a thoughtful exchange on building a timeless, seasonless roadmap for conscious luxury, textiles and fashion. The moderator, Dr. Kaustav Sengupta, Associate Professor, NIFT; Director, VisioNext, began with how the industry is looking at a different cohort generation that is evolving with time and how 75% of the consumers today are not looking for a particular niche and rather, are buying all year long. The discussion also ventured into the digital frontier, exploring how AI and design are now intertwined forces of change. As technology aids trend forecasting, the panelists aimed at the role of human intuition, emphasising that emotion remains at the heart of creative decision-making. The future of fashion, they said, is not just digital but deeply personal, a seamless

blend of heritage and innovation, craft and consciousness. Dr. Sengupta has over 25 years of experience at the intersection of fashion, technology and strategic foresight. As Faculty and Link Chairperson at NIFT and Director of the VisioNxtTrend Research and AI Lab, he leads pioneering work in fashion forecasting and AI-driven insights.

Dr. Sudha Dhingra, Professor of Textile Design, NIFT Delhi,



Dr. Sudha Dhingra, Professor-Textile Design NIFT, Delhi

emphasised that passion lies in stories and not in seasonal, social or digital trends. Social media has become a major influencer, with nearly 50% of Gen Z forming emotional connections with digital creators. She highlighted that India continues to serve as a global inspiration in fashion, and stated that many brands remain loyal to their signature styles instead of following fleeting trends. Citing her work at the Khadi Center in

NIFT, she shared how her team is creating new trends out of tradition with Indigo, Katran and Anjora to craft modern designs.

With over three decades of teaching experience, Dr. Dhingra is a leading expert on Indian and global textiles and crafts. She has co-edited key publications, including Textile Crafts of India and Anant – Sustainable Handloom Textiles of India, commissioned by the Office of the DC (Handlooms). As Director of the Centre of Excellence for Khadi, she has established it across eight NIFT campuses under a Ministry of MSME initiative supporting KVIC, driving efforts to help Khadi institutions design, produce, and market high-quality, distinctive products.



Anuradha Kumra,
Design & Business
Consultant

Ms. Anuradha Kumra, Design & Business Consultant, emphasised that fashion is fundamentally about the consumer and also, that consumer behavior today is highly unpredictable, as individuals are both wardrobe-conscious and value-driven. She reflected on how 'The Kunj', in Vasant Kunj is a unique space celebrating Indian handicrafts, fostering conversations and connections among artisans and brands. It serves as a platform

where emerging trends can be observed. Modern consumers are seeking immersive shopping environments and a deeper understanding of the products they purchase, she said and highlighted that social media's success depends on the target audience, regional context and the consumer's willingness to invest in sustainable fashion.

With over 30 years of experience across retail, academia, social, and government sectors, Ms. Kumra currently collaborates with organisations creating grassroots impact. She has served as an advisor to The Asian Heritage Foundation and IIM-Mumbai and is presently a Subject Matter Expert with Deloitte India for the Ministry of Textiles, focusing on the handloom and handicraft sector. She also serves on the Advisory Boards of Shades of India Craft Pvt. Ltd. and Good Earth Heritage Foundation. As former President–Apparel & Accessories at Fabindia Ltd., she drove new revenue models, expanded brand portfolios, and led strategies impacting over 35,000 artisans through cluster-based livelihood programs. Earlier, she taught at NIFT, New Delhi, for over a decade, leading international projects and design-led cluster initiatives as Curator and Consultant.

Mr. Parth Parikh, Founder & Design Lead, Design Clinic India mentioned that designing beyond seasons means creating work



Parth Parikh, Founder
& Design Lead,
Design Clinic India

that outlives time and trends. True design involves evolving with honouring heritage while adapting it to contemporary contexts. He also reflected that inspiration exists everywhere and also that in a family of pharmacists, he decided to be a 'design doctor'. Mr. Parikh shared insights into his celebrated furniture collection, "Phool Mandi," which draws inspiration from the Dadar Flower Market in Mumbai. His work

blends artistry with functionality, drawing deeply from India's rich traditions while presenting them in a contemporary global context. Mr. Parikh, a Delhi-based product designer, is a postgraduate in Product Design from Domus Academy, Milan. He founded Design Clinic India - a multi-disciplinary studio specialising in furniture and lighting inspired by Indian art, craft and culture. His work blends tradition with contemporary design and has been showcased at leading international platforms. At HireDesigners, he continues to shape the design ecosystem and is a lifetime member of The Guild of Designers & Artists.



Aditi Vitasta Dhar,
Lifestyle and
Accessory Design
Consultant

Ms. Aditi Vitasta Dhar, Lifestyle and Accessory Design Consultant, discussed the evolving dynamics of design shaped by forces of change such as sustainability, AI, fast fashion, and online shopping. She emphasised that today's consumer-led forecasting determines industry direction. She outlined key emerging trends including micro and macro trends focused on localised, organic products, the Neo-Renaissance celebrating creativity, and AI-powered forecasting,

signaling the growing AI domination in predicting styles and demands. She also spoke about future directions of design driven by demand intelligence and the idea of creating "worlds within worlds," where technology and tradition merge seamlessly. With over 20 years of experience in lifestyle and accessory design, known for seamlessly combining strategic vision with creative execution, Ms. Dhar currently consults for leading leather brands and Indian businesses. She is also visiting faculty at NID, Pearl Academy and IICD. As the Founder and Creative Director of VITASTA (2011–2018), she built the label into a benchmark for homegrown leather brands in India. She continues to consult for leading leather brands and Indian businesses. ■

From Maker to Market: Decoding Brand Narrative, Visual Merchandising & Retailing

15th October 2025: This session aimed to help participants build an appealing brand by crafting product stories rooted in provenance and translating them into effective visual displays, through sightlines, focal points, colour and material harmonies, and booth or retail planograms.

Ms. Aartee Roy, Brand Strategist, Retail Innovator, Founder - The Creators Guild (TCG India), moderator, actively guided the discussion, interacting with the speakers and drawing out key insights throughout the session. She asked thought-provoking questions, encouraged elaboration, and shared her own perspectives.

Highlighting India's potential, she emphasised "Learn from the best, invest in your own India, Make in India, Consume in India, Celebrate India." She



Aartee Roy, Brand Strategist, Retail Innovator, Founder - The Creators Guild (TCG India)

encouraged participants to leverage local skills and resources, combine creativity with ethical practices, and take pride in Indian design. Arti's facilitation ensured a dynamic dialogue, helping the audience understand global trends while inspiring them to elevate Indian brands and craftsmanship on the international stage. Ms. Roy, a seasoned leader with over 20 years in branding, retail, and design-led business growth, has held key roles at Fabindia, Lifestyle (Dubai), Monsoon Accessorize, and William E Connor India. As Founder of The Creators Guild (TCG India), she mentors brands and craft clusters to build scalable, culturally rooted businesses.



The panelists (LtoR): Mr. Bertrando Di Renzo, CEO, Les-Ottomans; Ms. Anupama Singh Independent Consultant; Ms. Aartee Roy, Brand Strategist, Retail Innovator, Founder - The Creators Guild (TCG India); Mr. Ashish Tagra, Founder, A Good Life; and Mr. Gunnar Hoffrichter, Independent Consultant, Hamburg, Germany with Dr. Neeraj Khanna, Chairman, EPCH; and Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Additional Executive Director, EPCH

Mr. Bertando Di Renzo, Founder and Creative Director of Les - Ottomans, shared the journey of his Italian home décor brand.



Bertrando Di Renzo, CEO, Les-Ottomans

Founded 11 years ago, it began as a one-man venture driven by Di Renzo's passion for colours, patterns, and handcrafted design. Living in Istanbul at the time, he discovered Ikat textiles from Uzbekistan, which became the foundation of his early collections. Despite starting during the peak of minimalism, his bold, maximalist aesthetic soon gained attention for its vibrant mix. The brand's growth was gradual but consistent from textiles and cushions to tableware, despite initial market resistance. He emphasized "perseverance, creativity and staying true to one's vision rather than chasing trends." "We bring new things into the market which are durable and quality wise, superb". Over the years, Les Ottomans has

collaborated with renowned designers including Vito Nesta, Marco Parmigiani, and Matthew Williamson, whose partnership brought the brand into leading stores like Harrods, London. He described his brand as an "incubator of ideas", valuing originality and continuous innovation. Today, it is celebrated globally for its vibrant, eclectic style that blends cultural influences with Italian craftsmanship. With 40% supplies from India, the products are 95% handmade.



Anupama Singh
Independent
Consultant

Ms. Anupama Singh, Independent Consultant and a veteran with over 30 years of experience in the handicrafts, gifts and furniture industry, shared her insights on India's evolving design landscape. Attending the fair for the sixth year, she expressed delight at the visible transformation from innovative furniture to improved booth presentations and market-aligned designs. Speaking on the "maker-to-market journey", she

emphasised understanding the artisan's perspective and preserving the pride and craftsmanship that define Indian handicrafts. Ms. Singh highlighted India's strengths its rich artists heritage, handmade products and diverse materials.

Encouraging originality, she urged the industry to adapt traditional crafts for modern markets rather than imitate others. She also called for greater collaboration with young designers and interns, stressing their role in bringing fresh ideas and aligning design



Gunnar Hoffrichter,
Independent
Consultant, Hamburg,
Germany

with global trends. Addressing exporters, she underlined the need to overcome quality control issues, supply chain delays and improve infrastructure and transparency, ensuring sustainable sourcing and compliance with government norms. With technology and AI redefining design possibilities, Ms. Singh concluded by urging the industry to balance innovation, sustainability and craftsmanship.

Mr. Gunnar Hoffrichter, Independent Consultant, Hamburg, Germany emphasised the need for passion, creativity and innovation in India's craft and manufacturing sectors. He observed that while Indians are naturally passionate, this energy often appears only during festivals like Holi or Diwali, and encouraged designers to channel the same enthusiasm



consistently into product development. He urged artisans and entrepreneurs to move beyond imitation, explore global trends, invest in technology and create unique, concept-driven products that reflect both skill and originality. He highlighted the importance of authenticity, belief in one's vision, and storytelling to make products stand out internationally. He also stressed curation and concept-based presentation, showcasing products as cohesive collections rather than isolated items. Mr. Hoffrichter called on Indian creators to blend skill, innovation and sustained passion, fostering a culture of creativity that elevates their craftsmanship on the global stage.



Ashish Tagra,
Founder, A Good Life

Mr. Ashish Tagra, Founder, A Good Life, shared his journey of establishing a sustainable and holistic home décor brand that transforms industrial wood waste into handcrafted décor pieces. By upcycling discarded pine wood sourced from industrial areas in Noida and Sidkul, his brand promotes ethical design and environmental consciousness, turning waste materials into elegant, functional

products ranging from small décor items to larger furniture pieces. With over 15 years of experience in design and branding, he emphasised that every successful brand must be built around a core narrative a clear sense of purpose and impact. He urged creators to move beyond product aesthetics and focus on usability, purpose, and social value. Highlighting India's immense creative potential, he encouraged entrepreneurs to tell authentic brand stories rather than merely following global trends. Reiterating that "the customer is the king," he stressed the importance of understanding consumer needs and feedback in shaping a brand's growth. Mr. Tagra concluded by motivating young designers and exporters to blend innovation, sustainability and storytelling in their work, thereby creating meaningful, distinctive brands that reflect both craftsmanship and conscience. ■