



## SHOPPING BAGS AS AN ART, ADVERTISING AND ENVIRONMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The Shopping bags are necessary part of our life. It is a tool of advertising and promotion as well as a major utility product. Carrying the branded shopping bags are become the status symbol now days. These are even collectibles for so many people because of their art, design and aesthetic values. No doubt the shopping bags are considered as an example of Art and design. These come in vary shapes and materials. Every shopkeeper advertises their product, services and brand through shopping bags. Now with the upcoming technology, much different kind of printing methods and materials is being used in shopping bags construction. These are available in paper, card board or even plastics, but the pollution and environment hazard caused by the plastic bags is a major concern. Due to the demand of clients, the experiment in shopping bags is being done time to time and due to this, the face of traditional type cloth made bag has totally changed.

**KEYWORDS:** Advertising, History of Bags, Art & Design, Role of Bags, Bags as a transit media of advertising, Benefits of Shopping Bags advertising, Materials & Shapes.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 21st Century, the world of inventions and technologies. The human mind always looks for change so as they always trying to evolve their life style to look better. We want to have good looks, good surroundings, good environment, sphere food and new technologies in our life. Now our needs are also increasing and we want to spend easy/luxurious life. Even when we talk about mobile phones, computers, internet etc, we came to know that these electronic gadgets and services have made the human life very easier and simpler even these technologies have taken control in our ever changing way of our living.

There are many examples from our day to day life's 'needed' products which are playing a major role in the success of our progress. Rather, we want our life to become more easy and convenient in every field of our generation. Influenced by this, Man keeps on doing experiment to achieve the best knowledge to serve the nation or world best and conveniently in every aspect.

Keeping in mind; the convenience the human being always wants to own the best things in their life for the easy life. The search starts from the Market. Whatever we want to buy for us we always headed for shopping to get things. The advantage of traditional shopping from the market is that we can compare many products at a time and can choose the best one for us.

When we go for shopping one thing always strike our mind and that is Shopping bags. These shopping bags are now the necessity of our life. Apart from the utility purpose the shopping bags are now a mark of status symbol. When we buy any reputed brand from the market we feel proud to flaunt the shopping bag which is complementarily given along with the product purchased to carry it. Shopping bags is the thing which is joined with our day to day life. We can say that a revolutionary change has also become in shopping bags also. People were interested to carry their 'Cloth made Shopping Bags' in 19<sup>th</sup> century, but now no body want to own cloth made 'Jhola' type bags for shopping in the ages of Shopping Mall. It clearly shows that the time has changed. This is a world of latest creative, designer made Shopping Bags which states about the personality, luxury, style and attitude.

Shopping Bags are generally used for carrying the products or goods wherever you go for shopping; you get your goods in Shopping/Carrier Bags. Shopping bags are not only for utility purpose, it is also playing role of advertising medium. It is the only medium which hit directly to the customers rather than other mediums. Shopping bags are a great example of graphic design being used directly in human hands. They have both practical and artistic purposes and come under preview of corporate identification and most shows a high level of graphic design.<sup>i</sup>

Keeping in mind the changes and necessity occurred in the shopping bags, I have tried to find out some facts and importance of shopping bags, to know about its role of utility and as an Artwork through this report. The reason to bring out the study of shopping bags is that the carrier bags can be said to be a media culturally symbolic of present day consumerism. Now, these bags have changed the way of living, because they have become as a part of our living styles rather than the utility purpose.

## 2. HISTORY

When we go to the market for shopping, what's the thing is required for carrying the stuffs- Shopping Bag. Yes, Bag is paying a special role in our day to day life since very long. It started with the time when people were in need of any carrying bag. In early days before 1960, people use brown paper and newspaper for wrapping products, so that, they can wrap all the products together in a piece of paper, which makes them to handle easily. In beginning, shopping bags utilized brown craft paper and served the utilitarian purpose of providing transportation and protections for merchandize bought in retail establishments of all kinds.

The bag has come a long way from its 'antecedent', a band box or a hat box.<sup>ii</sup> These boxes were carried extensively in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These types of bags were used for small items by different classes of society. Most of these boxes were made of cardboard, covered in wall papers, fabrics and other materials that fueled a very large cottage industry. The first in expensive machine made paper bag appeared in 1933. Earlier to that time, the paper carrier bag had handles that were stapled to card board and glued into the bag.

Shopping became great style in 21<sup>st</sup> century with the coming of so many variety of shopping Bags, Now the dealer provided the customers with shopping bags to carry their stuff, Earlier one had to carry ones own bag to the market. The reason of success of Shopping Bags is that the consumer felt honored and at the same time these shopping bags made shopping more convenient for the consumers. The manufacturers and dealers provide shopping bags with the

target to give their consumers a status and make them feel important and elevated, so that they can build a reputation for their shop as product. Now they started to make the presentation of this very bag more and more attractive and of better quality than early 60's.

The shopping bags though never lost its functionality as it slowly became a necessity for the consumers as well as the dealers in the market, it could be reused by the consumers and for the dealer it was a means of creating a reputation for his shop and a way to make shopping more convenient. So, through the passage of time, these simple plastic and paper bags, changed their appearance and quality in the process of building a reputation for the dealer as product as for the convenience of the consumers, who used and reused these bags for carrying their belongings from place to place.

### **3. SHOPPING BAG AS A TRANSIT MEDIA OF ADVERTISING**

Advertising is a paid form of facts, description and arguments. There are so many advertising mediums these days like Television, Newspapers, Magazines, Radio, etc. They all are effective and costly media's as well as. There is one more media of advertising which is also said to be very effective as well as interesting and popular among masses and that is shopping bag. It is a medium with less input and lots of output. Shopping bags are very common and important accessory of today. Shopping Bag is now in common use throughout the world. It is made to carry all sorts of products which come in all range from large to small. These bags are playing two roles, utility and advertising at same time. This is a unique form of advertisement which reaches to its targeted audience make directly and efficiently than any other medium.

Shopping bags turn the purchases into a carrier of advertising in the most literal sense.<sup>iii</sup> It is regularly viewed by the consumers and is often reused for other purposes. It discouraged the use of wrapping paper or ordinary paper. Its advertising value has encouraged retailers and manufacturers of consumer goods to take advantage of its great virtues of economy and mobility.

Besides other virtues of shopping bags, the most important is that it turns the consumer into the media of advertising and, at the same time the consumer is proud of carrying the bag. Though he is aware of carrying a particular shop's bag, he is not aware that he is advertising for that particular shop at his cost. He is a carrier of their message, address and is also displaying the messages. With the use of bag more than one time (because it is a reusable thing) the consumer does the advertising job over and over again at no extra cost of manufacturers.

For example, if there are fifty people carrying a shopping bag of a same shop/product or Brand in a day, they used to walk on a street many times, at the same time brand name or product is exposed to uncountable people along the way and with the repetition of the same thing it forms a kind of image in the mind of the viewer, later a slight glimpse at the colour or design of the bag, one can immediately recall the brand.

Thus, carrier bags are one of the most useful media of advertising, and utility for both to the customers as well as the manufacturer or shops. So it is the most economical media to advertise at home, on roads, in offices, trains, buses, cars or just anywhere you can think of. Unlike the other media, which have a restriction of approaching their prospective consumers only at a particular place like televisions at home, hoarding on the roads, etc.

So, shopping bags are one of the most effective media to advertise anything, everything and anywhere and it is also more economical as the consumers are not to be paid to advertise, in fact he himself pays for the products, i.e.- a sale is made, then he also pays for the bag, which is

included in the price of the product but it seems to be a complementary gift and finally advertises the product as merchandises over and over again till the bag lasts.

So, like the others transit media of advertisement, Shopping Bag is also playing its important role under transit advertisement media to attract more and more targeted audiences or to convey the concerned messages for promotion of the particular product, services or events.

#### **4. SHOPPING BAG AS AN ART AND DESIGN**

The shopping bag has evolved into a unique art form. Many new attractive as well as creative designs and colours have been incorporated and new materials utilized to make shopping bags. The handles of the bags are also coming up with many innovative ideas with the creative inputs and attractive concepts.

All forms of art have some limitations, 'Bag Art' is unique, in that is limited by its direction, a need to portray a concept, a product, a brand, as an institution.<sup>iv</sup> Even within the Environment its purpose has expanded from its traditional role as institutional advertising. The shopping bag has been transformed into a leading tool in brand identity. It is well utilized from a new product launches to store openings to seasonal offers, as festive promotions and new store identity campaigns. The bag in all its shapes and forms signifies exclusively for individual retailers.

The bag aesthetic value has also evolved; little artistic thought was given to the earliest of shopping bag designs. But as advertising agency designers, art directors began to realize the many available uses. In turn, the shopping bag became the focus of increasing creativity and found consumer audiences and admirers outside the quickly expanding retail arena.<sup>v</sup>

So, like the other form of Art, which has some basic elements of design like, shape, rhythm, balance, colours, etc. which gives the visual pleasure to the viewers, we can say that the shopping bag is also a form of art by which we can communicate to the people to convey the message in a more appropriate creative art form.

#### **5. SHAPES AND MATERIALS**

The revolutionary change has begun in every field of life. This is done with the latest advanced technologies. Either we talk about clothes, shoes, or any other material, many forms shapes and material we can easily see which even makes us confused as well as attracted. Now, there is a large variety in every utility product which provides an option among many variants.

Similarly, shopping bags also comes under in so many variety shapes and forms. We can easily see the more attractive varieties of these bags during all festival season. The image of 21<sup>st</sup> century bag is totally changed than its previous look and shape. Now, shopping bags are made up of plastics, papers, card board, fine paper, mount board, craft paper, handmade paper, newspapers, recycled papers, jute, cloth and other convertible materials which is made in India and also imported from China, Japan, Thailand and other countries of the world.

These bags comes under in different economical sizes and shapes either it is in square or rectangles, triangle, Hexagon shapes, etc. No doubt, these shopping bags are also giving good opportunities to our cottage industries also, in which so many people are given employment especially the people who are not highly educated, and women's, like the '*Khadi Gramodhyog*' and other NGO which are promoting the value of recycled paper and handmade paper for usage, due to these types of organizations, now a day's recycled papers and handmade papers are in good demand because of their biodegradability and looks. That is why recycled papers are commonly used in shopping bags these days.

Shopping bags were printed by hand in past time, but as with changing time period; new experiments and technologies of printing have also been incorporated. Now shopping bags are printed on high class presses using flexography or flex prints as well as offset printing. But for handmade paper, mostly prefer silk screen printing because it is better in quality printing than flexography or offset printing<sup>vi</sup> because of the embossed pattern of hand made paper. Another printing process of shopping bags is Photogravure process. This is more expensive medium rather than other mediums. Both flex machine or photogravure rotary press can use many colours at a time like four colours, five colours and eight colours also and can print on both papers and plastics direct from the rollers. But the photogravures are better in finish than flexography, thus it is costlier than flex process. In both the process a solvent based ink Toluene is used for inking the cylindrical plates for printing. Apart from this there are many other printing processes, but it is totally based on the budget or liking of the client that which printing process is appropriate for them.

The design, medium or printing can also be chosen according to the product or services. Every industry has a shopping bag. Advertising, retail stores, museums, library and electronics, to name just a few. Gift shops carry beautifully printed shopping bags, in various shapes. Many other art grade bags, celebrating birthday, greetings, anniversaries and other special occasions are now popularly seen in the market. Many gift bag, have also become the gift wrap of today. These bags simplify gift giving and enhance aesthetic values. As technology advances, that's why we are able to see interesting developments as there is no limit to creative bag design, graphics and new concepts that will serve the ever increasing usage of shopping bags throughout the world.

## **6. SHOPPING BAGS ACCORDING TO THEIR CUTS, FOLDS, PURPOSE AND MEASUREMENT**

There are many kinds of shopping bags according to their cuts, folds and packaging data. Every bag is specially designed according to the size and area covered by the product. Some of the bags are as follows<sup>vii</sup>:-

- a. Handmade European style paper shopping bags.
- b. Machine made paper shopping bags.
- c. Merchandise bags, paper with serrated edge top.
- d. Self opening square bottom bags.
- e. Handle Lock Bags, Paper fold over top.
- f. Loop Lock Bags with string attached.
- g. Gift bags/Mini Bag Foil.
- h. Serrated Edge High Density plastic bags.
- i. Draws string plastic bags.
- j. Draw tape plastic bags.
- k. Patch handle plastic bag.
- l. Snap Pack envelopes Plastic snap.
- m. Finder grip, snap handle.
- n. Over wrist snap handle.
- o. Die cut handle/Turn Top.
- p. Merchandise bags High Density plastic.
- q. Tape closure envelopes plastic.
- r. Garment Bags Plastic pullover.

**s. Garment bags, vinyl zipper.**

**7. CATEGORIES OF SHOPPING BAGS**

There is different identity of every organization according to their services. Like different services of every institution, there are some categories of shopping bags also which makes some bifurcation between them. The five basic kinds of shopping bags we generally see are<sup>viii</sup>:-

- a. Product bags**
- b. Departmental stores**
- c. Special events and shows**
- d. Festival bags**
- e. Service bags**

**a. Product bags**

These types of bags are very popular bags which we can see in everyday life when we go to buy a product, these types of bags are basically called product Bags, which we get along with any kind of product. It may be designer or simple one. These kinds of bags indicate a single product or services like Levis is a famous brand of Jeans Wear. So when we go to purchase a Jeans from Levis store we get Jeans in Shopping Bag to carry it easily and the brand name Levis must be printed on Bag, which indicates the product Jeans by its brand name only. Hence, these kinds of bags are called product bags.

**b. Departmental stores**

Departmental store bags are those which are used for many products in a single bag. Like in departmental stores we get so many products under single roof together, it may be clothes, foods, accessories, toys, toiletries of various brands etc. So these kinds of stores are called Departmental Stores. They do not provide different branded shopping bags for separate branded products, like products bags, while they provide uniquely designed shopping bags for every purpose or any product like Big Bazaar is a famous store, where we can get so many things in a single store, but they only provide a single designed bag for all products purchased at a time on which their store name is printed. These bags are called Departmental bags.

**c. Special events and shows**

These types of bags usually indicate a special event or show. By which the consumers or target audiences easily understood about the occasion. Suppose an organization is going to organize a fashion show, just before the main event (fashion show) they make a planning how to advertise the upcoming show, how to make gathering a success to the show. Keeping in mind all the points they used to provide some stationery T-Shirts, caps and shopping bags along with the other print as electronic media. In this way by these shopping bags or accessories they got benefited as they are also advertised by shopping bags also.

By the use of shopping bags, the carrier of that bag usually roams around with the bag and gives the information about the show to the other concerned or unconcerned persons also. Indirectly they advertise the event or particular product. These type of bags are called special event and show bags.

#### **d. Festival bags**

These types of bags can usually be seen near all festive season. The bags which are basically designed to make essence of any festival to attract people during festivals are called festival bags. We usually see some special kind of packaging near any festival season, like during Diwali many products come with a special designed packaging to promote the product related to the festival. Some products are also given to the customers in special designed shopping bags which are usually being made for the season or festival. Those kinds of bags are called festival or festive shopping bags.

#### **e. Service bags**

Service bags indicate about the service of the organization or shop. Let's take an example of any boutique, we can easily understood after having a look of shopping bag of that particular boutique shop, which indicates the service of that particular shop, because there is only service which they are giving us or selling to us. That type of shopping bags are called Service based shopping bags. Another example is Sify Broadband Internet. This company provides internet service to our doorstep. Internet is a service which we use through our computer system. So, if this company advertises their service through shopping bags, that type of bag is called service bags.

### **8. BAGS AS A STATUS SYMBOL**

The shopping bags have become more than the functional item as it was at the beginning. Today's shopping bags defines you, almost like wearing apparel. It communicates our lifestyle, in fact, the bag might tell more about our personality than its contents. A shopping bag is a structure which marches along in one's arms as hands or even over one's shoulder, it holds objects of varying weights, shapes and sizes, it gets folded and crumpled, thrown into back seats of cars, it may even be framed as though it were on canvas. Shopping bags are exiting mobile pieces of architecture which want strong design elements in order to be noticed and appreciated as they move with us down the street.<sup>ix</sup>

Now, shopping bags has become a status symbol for our community, people feel proud to carry branded shopping bag. The well designed bag allows the customer to make a lifestyle as status statement. It also addresses issues of comfort, capacity and utility. A great bag is one in which all the design elements: shape, handle, size, colours, material and ink, uniquely fit the purpose of the bag.

### **9. SHOPPING BAG AND ENVIRONMENT**

In today's world, environment is an important consideration in shopping bag design, while the shopping bag is disposable; it is also reusable, so it should be designed in such a way that it can accept a bit of wear and tear. A functional bag that is environmentally sound will increase the longevity of the advertising. Consumers are increasingly enlightened and environmental conscious. It would be a bad advertisement to walk around with something that is not working well ecologically. Designing for durability will increase the functional aspect of the shopping bag, assure the longevity of the advertising and convey ecological responsibility.<sup>x</sup>

Today, we can see the basic changes throughout the world in order to protect the environment. We have become thoughtful about the environmental effects of design and manufacturing choices, one designer/retailer recalled a shopper who refused to accept a plastic bag because it

was “not biodegradable”, the designer began to do some research. This experience is not a typical; most of those involved in the creation of shopping bags have assumed that the use of plastic would diminish because of the growing need for recycling and biodegradability.

## **10.CONCLUSION**

Shopping bag is a major form of advertising, a promotion; it is a way of gaining recognition. Shopping bags compete more favorably with advertisements in the print media, television, bill boards, flyers and brochures. Many of these types of advertisements like on shopping bags which will be creatively designed and produced can carry the message both effectively and efficiently. It is a fact that shopping bags, always seen as having advertising effect when displayed or carried, are now finally recognized as an efficient, effective and comparatively inexpensive way to advertisement.

Shopping bags continue to show case the trends of popular culture and style, no less than a couple of decades ago when the creative design explosion in shopping bags begun. Shopping bags are probably the most effective form of graphic art, especially because they are a part of our daily life. Other bags, equally effective for their purpose, remind us of the quality of the product or standard they represent and give us a sense of change among the rapidly changing aspects of our daily life.

The utility and traditional value of a shopping bag is well understood that they are now available for retail sale. These resale bags not only create a sense of economic value for bags which generally are given away for free, but also reflect earlier trends in design and public interest.

Shopping bags are also collected and treasured as a hobby. They are collected as art also or as a remembrance of a time, place or cherished gift. Shopping bags will continue to reflect changes in our culture, influenced our buying decisions and communicate new information while still being a bag. But apart from all these facts there is one major problem for which there is not any appropriate solutions of it until yet found and that is “Environment Pollution”.

We agreed the usage and value of these shopping bags in our busy day to day life. But the problem which seems to be a major problem is the plastic bags. These are cheap in cost so are used widely. These cheap ones reach the trash, soon after use, while the good ones after some time, but finally both reach the same place. After this, the problem begins as plastic bags are environmental hazards, as they are non- biodegradable. Day by day the piles of these non degradable bags are increasing and the only solution to this problem is to reduce the use of plastic. But the shopping freaks don't have to worry because there are much more alternatives instead of plastic like recycled papers. The government has recently made a law to fine on the use of these plastic bags but the leniency of our government rules and of law and order doesn't worry shopkeepers to break the law. As a result of which the use of plastic bags is constant in every part of the country.

Finally, to sort out the major environmental problem, our marketers are required to think about this critical problem of plastic bags. They are required to work about our environment, even not only marketers and manufacturers, but we must also have to pay attention towards our environment and to think about “how we can do better for our surroundings and how can we make our society environment conscious”. To support this statement we must be very conscious about plastic bags uses, we must ask for paper or recycled bags. It is not necessary that paper bags cannot afford the weight of product like plastic. Even paper bags also come in so many card grade qualities. That is much better than plastic as paper is recyclable.



After the evaluation of all the facts and findings it is found that the essence of art is only successful if it is ecological and environment friendly. Hence, in that concern we all must take initiative to make the shopping bag art live forever with the message alive that **'SAY NO TO PLASTIC BAGS AND YES TO ECO FRIENDLY BAGS'**.

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