

Special project on

Lifestyle Products...

By-

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Guide-

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1. Overview

Today with the **introduction of new media**, we, the consumers are exposed to different cultures, different economies and different value systems. We are much **aware about the surroundings and phenomenon** happening around us than never before. With the **advance of internet**, the entire globe has become a small village where any information is just a click away. All this has resulted into **expanded needs and demands** and enhanced ways of living. As such the word lifestyle and different products associated with it are gaining more and more attention day by day.



2. What is lifestyle?

The term 'style of life' was coined by Austrian psychologist Alfred Adler as one of several constructs describing the dynamics of the personality. According to him, it reflects the individual's unique, unconscious and repetitive way of responding to (or avoiding) the main tasks of living: friendship, love and work. The style of life is reflected in the unity of an individual's way of thinking, feeling and acting.

The literal meaning of the word 'lifestyle' is a way of life or style of living that reflects the attitudes and values of a person or group of persons as a whole. The lifestyle of rural people is totally different than that of people staying in metros.

Lifestyle does not stop only at products. Lifestyle is everything. Art, music, food, furniture, clothes, accessories, hair, makeup, architecture, automobiles - all these things go together to make a moment in time, and thus define lifestyle of that individual or group of people.

Lifestyle now influences all areas of our lives, from where we live to how we travel, what we wear and how we socialize to get certain pleasurable experiences. People are now able to adorn themselves, their homes, their cars, and even their offices with fashions, tools, toys and accessories that fit into their personal style, whatever that style may be. It is said that being different is being normal which allows one to create and sell the ultimate brand, "me."



There are two different viewpoints towards the word lifestyle and the products associated with it.

2.1 Way of life defining the products we use

Here the products that we use are there not by choice but as a necessity because of the surrounding conditions.

e.g. A farmer has to put on a 'pheta' on his head to avoid harsh sun while working in the farm and the same is used as a towel or as a mat in the resting time.



Similarly, the sadhus/ rishis carry a water container with them as they travel or stay mostly in remote places where there is no surety of finding a reliable water source nearby and it is better to carry own water container wherever they go. Same is the case with an industrial worker who has to use earplugs to avoid the noise coming from the machinery around him.



2.2 Products defining the style of life

Here the lifestyle of the person is defined largely by the products that he/ she is using. Such products are often looked upon as luxurious products which are costly and offer certain kind of experience while using them.

e.g. A fountain pen by Lamy. Though it performs the same activity of writing, the pleasure it gives while writing and its cost exclusivity makes it a lifestyle product.

Similarly, though an Aston Martin car takes a person from point A to point B, it talks about the lifestyle of the owner because of the values associated with it.



This research is mainly focused on the second category i.e. Products defining the style of life. Further, the research is limited only to products with industrial design consideration and does not deal with products that are handcrafted as we will be looking mostly towards lifestyle products which are produced industrially in the post modern era i.e. after industrial revolution.

2.3 How did the trend of lifestyle products start in the modern world?

After the Second World War, with the success of turning out weapons that were then subsequently destroyed, the 'make' and 'destroy' attitude became prevalent in American manufacturing culture.

There was a belief in the ethics of spiralling consumption.

American industry identified new with good and defended planned obsolescence as sound economics as the American consumer expected new and better products every year. Buying a new car, new refrigerator, vacuum cleaner, blender, etc. every two to three years was economically sound and was based on economy of abundance.

In a competitive, as opposed to a centrally planned economy as in USSR, the concept of best was largely defined not by the producer but by the consumer as being more than simply cheap. Best also indicated value for money, reliability and service.

The result was production of consumer durables that had quality and performance far beyond the ordinary requirements of the consumer. They could perform at levels much higher than basic necessity. Design which was once deemed a luxury became driving force in all areas of consumption, including everyday items as refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, writing instruments, various toys and tools, etc. Design, which till then operated as an extended form of advertising or in response to a simple market demand problem started showing some kind of maturity.

The abundance of such smart objects made it increasingly possible and affordable for everyday people to create a "look" and "message" that extended beyond their bodies to their lives and such products became lifestyle products for people who could afford them at that time.

2.3.1 Why lifestyle products?

One of the consequences of the modernism's preoccupation with the search for aesthetic absolutes is, in retrospect, **all too obvious**. It makes change and variety much harder to justify. If you insist that this and only this range of forms, this and only this range of textures, is ideal then you end up with **everything looking similar**. This sameness is literally bad for business. Products start looking alike and that makes competitive consumer capitalist enterprise very difficult.

The ability of industrial designing and manufacturing to deliver goods that cannot be bettered; however money you possess differentiates 1990s from 1890. **The rich find their exclusivity continuously under threat and are in continuous search for new and exclusive products which will portray their personality and style to the rest of the world.**

It is observed that people seem to prefer to live in homes that are **quiet different in atmosphere to factory or office**. The rugged, efficient functionality that characterizes factory or commercial equipment is not felt appropriate for the home. This is reflected in the products as well. **The products for the domestic use give an expression of art, reassurance, comfort and domesticity.** The expression of power is quickly dampened and removed here.

e.g. The executive car is lounge-like in its seating and even the inside of most masculine objects, the long-distance trucks, the message is subdued when it comes to interiors.



3.0 Dominant design styles



Let us have a brief look at dominant design styles across the world before and after the second world war.

1920s France: Art Deco - Simple, elegant and with curved forms to the legs and arms

1930s - France: Art Deco - Less classical and more brutal, with its hexagons, octagons and cylinders. Combination of wood, metal and glass with fragmented light

1930s America: Streamlining. Objects with chamfered edges, slopes

1914 to 1935 Europe: Confrontational, angular and edgy

1930s Scandinavian design: Manufacturing and design with social awareness; Expressing the nationhood

1917 to 1940s USSR: Modernism and abstractionism - feeling of energy, logic and change - visual analogy of how the future might feel rather than what it would look like - more ornate, more luxurious than that which emanated from Bauhaus

1940s Germany: Demand from military and civilian aircraft industry - Design and styling as a science rather than art. Ergonomics as the back bone of design.

1970s Holistic approach to design and manufacturing to protect resources and environment

- Japanese design: Quality manufacturing, low prices and reliability in performance, service and delivery dates - Design and innovation into production system - new items with astonishing speed



1980s Scandinavian design: Comfort and safety of human being - design organised on social welfare principles

- Making the product stylistically different
- Style communicating the values shared by consumer

Style organised by reference to the class, profession, aspiration and age group of the target consumer group

1990s - More niche marketing, with careful styling styles to appeal to ever more rigorously defined group of consumers.

- Currently the process of design, manufacturing and marketing is oriented around the sex of potential purchaser - **Gender based design assumptions** - It is not only a question of which sex tends to use a particular category of tools, but also which sex does the buying.

-The technology and information have added to the 'them and us' situation whereby 'they' the designers and manufacturers seek to influence 'us' the consumer by

- 1) finding out what we are like, in order to
- 2) sell us that which we would buy because we like it.

The whole success of selling things depends upon selling people what they like and what they want, or what they can be persuaded to like and to want. And as such, more and more fancy items, which are **not strictly utilitarian but have certain esteemed values** attached to them are vary much popular in the consumer market.



4.0 What is Lifestyle product?

The term lifestyle product is very much context based. There is no single definition for lifestyle products as such but it has multiple understandings. What becomes lifestyle product depends on an individual's choice and what he chooses to buy. A product which is a must for someone might be a lifestyle product for somebody else.

e.g. A digital SLR camera is a must for a professional photographer which is not the case with an amateur photographer or beginner. There it acts as a lifestyle product.

These products are mostly of day to day use which are not strictly utilitarian but objects to derive pleasure from; objects which give certain kind of experience while using them. Here function is not the only criteria and it should not overpower all other needs.

e.g. A swing as shown in the picture gives much more pleasure than acting only as a seat.



Similarly, the time piece shown here acts more than just showing the time. Very first of all, it does not look like a conventional watch/ clock. The technology used is also different than the market offerings. In short, it has an element of avant garde in it in terms of looks, technology, etc. It definitely talks about the users choice and taste and makes a statement about him and hence can surely be called as lifestyle product.



Most of the times lifestyle products are very individualistic and they differentiate the owner from the rest of the group. They are a projection of the owner's attitude and sometimes his social status also. What differentiates them from rest of the products is that they are expression based with immense aesthetics and are mostly examples of liberal art and not applied art; something which is very exclusive.

These products are targeted towards a specific category of customers and as such require niche designing as well as niche marketing. This is also helpful from the manufacturers' point of view as niche marketing is profitable than 'mass marketing'.

e.g. A Rolls Royce Phantom has its own class and expression in terms of luxury. These are very exclusive cars which are custom made and as such are very costly and make a very strong statement about the economic status of the owner along with his concern towards luxury and exclusiveness. They differentiate the owner from rest of the crowd at the same time performing the basic function of transporting from Point A to Point B with ease and comfort.



Though these products are not designed for mass manufacturing, as the mass manufactured objects lack the exclusivity and personal identity, achieving industrialized manufacturing is the objective and are mostly batch produced.

5.0 Categories of lifestyle products

These products can broadly be classified in two main categories.

- i. For residential use
- ii. For corporate/ office use

5.1 Lifestyle products for residential use

- i. Furniture
- ii. Lighting
- iii. Kitchenware
- iv. Bar accessories
- v. Dinnerware
- vi. Bath accessories
- vii. Furnishing and decor
- Viii. Digital products



5.2 Lifestyle products for corporate use

- i. Table top accessories
- ii. Corporate gifts
- iii. Stationary
- iv. Writing instruments
- v. Accessories



6.0 Attributes of lifestyle products

Having gone through and seen examples of lifestyle products, one must define the attributes or essential characteristics of Lifestyle products along with their weightage.

i.	Objects of day to day life	***
ii.	Not strictly utilitarian	**
iii.	Objects imparting joy, tasteful experience	****
iv.	Expressive Emotional relationship	****
v.	Avant garde	*****
vi.	Niche products	*****
vii.	Exclusive	*****
viii.	Simple and elegant	*
ix.	Reliable	***
x.	Durable	**
xi.	Timelessness	****
xii.	Precise/ Perfection	*
xiii.	Status symbol	***
xiv.	Esteemed value	*****
xv.	Differentiation	****

Xvi.	Immense aesthetics	***
xvii.	Formal aesthetics	***
xviii.	Passion	*****
xix.	Cost exclusivity	****
xx.	Design language close to handicrafts	***
xxi.	Technological advancement	*****
xxii.	Attitude	***
xxiii.	Association to time and place	****

*Attributes rated on a scale of 1 (least important) to 5 (most important)

But still, if certain objects possess all the above features, they are not classified as lifestyle products or lifestyle products of the past are not there in the same category today and today's products might not be there in future.

e.g. when refrigerators were first introduced, they were looked upon as lifestyle products. But today they are an essential part of modern kitchen; a necessity.

Why? There are certain attributes which keep on changing with time or their perception keeps on changing. Avant garde, niche product, exclusiveness, status symbol, attitude and most importantly technological advancement are some of them. Even if one of these attributes is missing in a product, it is no more a lifestyle product. What was new, avant garde, exclusive in the past might be a common thing today.

Similarly, something which was exclusive because of its cost might be available today at cheaper rates by the use of mass production techniques.

e.g. Laptops, when introduced initially were very exclusive in terms of availability and cost, was a new thing at that time and was considered as a niche product and a status symbol. But today with technological advancement, they are easily available with a wide variety and that too at moderately cheap rates and are no longer exclusive. And hence, today they are not considered as lifestyle products but have become a necessity for the younger generation who keeps on moving from one place to another for education, job and career.

But, at the same time there are certain products in the same product range which are still avant garde, they use latest technology, have a powerful brand name associated with them, have higher perceived value than other products in the market and most importantly give a pleasurable experience while using them and hence are categorized as lifestyle products.

e.g. Though MacBook Air by Apple inc. Is a laptop, it is been looked upon as a lifestyle product.



7.0 Handicrafts to lifestyle products

Craft, though initially started to fulfil certain utilitarian objectives has now become a **mode of self expression**, both for the artist as well as for the owner.

The influence of handicraft forms on mainstream industrial design can be seen very prominently in the past, specifically with Scandinavian design. A brief review of 20th century design in Scandinavia shows that in design for the home ceramics, glassware, tableware, furniture and soft furnishings; the language of the design is very close to that of handicrafts. Even where things are machined they retain a handmade look.

The world of high design expands in an ever increasing effort both to extract **profits from the rich** and to maintain a distance of **exclusivity and luxury** from the rest of the consumer market.



The phrase high design covers two main categories of design and production in domestic or leisure products.

- i) Objects designed for rich to buy
- li) Objects bought by the 'wish they were rich'.

In all categories of high design the concept of craftsmanship is important. Leather luggage is often hand built, shoes, chocolates, sports equipments are made or finished by hands.



7.1 Why handicraft products?

Quite often hand building is the only economic way of proceeding. If the constituency for a product is small but wealthy enough to pay a premium, then it is cheaper to use craftsmen than invest in very expensive intelligent machines. There lies great scope for alterations and customization of products which are handcrafted. As payment of extra labour charges is not the consideration for the client (rich), the craftsmen also offer their best skills in the production of such things. The client expresses his or her financial (and moral) superiority over others by exercising his ability to buy unnecessary labour.



Handicrafts in the lifestyle products category are the exclusive objects that are well made, precise and rigorous in their design. They are good examples of liberal art and themselves act as their own advertisement.

e.g. Handcrafted writing instruments, Automobiles like Aston Martin, etc.



8.0 Lifestyle products in Indian context

In India, we have a long tradition of festivals and different rituals some of which are community and religion specific. We have certain beliefs and values, social customs associated with these rituals and festivals and there are certain ways in which these socials are to be carried out. At the same time, there are certain objects which are necessary or are inseparable while carrying out these activities and become an integral part of our daily life.

e.g. the Puja thali



When the values associated with such products become more important than the object itself, the product becomes a lifestyle product. Sometimes the utilitarian value and the scale of use of such product is very limited. e.g. the diya (lamp) that the bride carries with her to the new home. Though it is used very seldom, it has its own significance and importance. Here the association of the product with time and place is of significant importance.

Most of the Indian products in this category are traditionally handcrafted with intricate details and touch of art. Also, we have a wide range of products which are habit related. Such products showcase the taste and the social status of the family or that of the head of the family.

e.g. Hookah, beetle-nut cracker, etc. which are usually kept at places where guests are treated.



9.0 Current trend in lifestyle product designing

It is clear from examining how the wealthy operate and how the wealthy are served. The rich provide a separate province that ignores national boundaries. Retailers in London, Paris, New York and New Delhi know that the rich, whatever their nationality, have more in common with one another than with the poorer classes of their native countries. This can be clearly seen in the objects that are put on display. These objects have global appeal in response to the global trends rather than having any culture specific orientation.

Beyond certain relative price, the richer cannot buy a better object. What they can do or what sophisticated retailers do, is add unnecessary 'stuff' to the object.

One can have the spectacles or pen gold plated; have the wrist watch studded with diamonds, etc.

The design element is seldom innovative in such cases. What happens is that an existing design is given an exotic coat and an intimidating price which makes that product exclusive thus putting it in lifestyle products category.



This trend is now quiet common and can be observed globally. In fact most of the lifestyle products belong to this category where design or technology has very less to do with the exclusivity of the product.



9.1 Role of media in defining lifestyle products

There are certain magazines and TV channels completely dedicated to lifestyle and related areas. Most of the times they showcase products mentioned earlier, as they are getting paid for it. Museums also collect and display the same goods that are featured in such magazines and written about by trend analysts. So much media publicity turns these objects into metaphors for themselves and automatically positions them in the lifestyle products category though they lack some of the essential characteristics of lifestyle products discussed earlier.

One buys one of these things and he/she directly buys something much bigger; the official contemporary culture.

There is a privilege of owning a thing that one can see pictured in the best settings and collected by the best people. And this privilege is a bonus added to the fact that the objects, certainly those named, are in themselves well made, well designed and in their own functional and aesthetic terms a good thing.

The modern world has generated many pseudo-tools, objects which look like tools, function as tools when used by professionals but which are purchased more often by amateurs who buy them for their own sake or just because they make a statement about their lifestyle or put them in a different class of people. The massive growth in leisure and hobbies has fueled this phenomenon worldwide.

Take an example of digital SLR camera. A good digital SLR camera with advanced functions and settings is a must for a professional photographer which is not the case with an amateur photographer or a beginner who can do well with a point and shoot camera. In such cases the quality and performance of the product often exceeds the need of the user such as shutter speeds measured in terms of 1/4000 or 1/8000 of a second. Much of the quality here is not just excessive, but is unusable because the owner does not know how to use it or what to do with it.



10.1 Case study - Titan Watches



Rs. 393



Rs. 1585



Rs. 2975



Rs. 3185



Rs. 3570



Rs. 4435



Rs. 5500



Rs. 6800



Rs. 7800



Rs. 50000

Let us look at an example of Titan watches for men. It offers various products in different ranges targeted at different customer segments in a wide range of cost from Rs. 393 to Rs. 50,000. Though they all act as lifestyle products for different group of people in different contexts (urban, rural, teenage, elders, etc), they can be broadly classified in to four segments according to cost as shown. Each segment differs from the other in terms of finishes, features, specifications, etc.

The products in the **first category** have the basic features and specifications (except the 'fatsrack' series which is targeted towards the youth) They follow very traditional approach towards the form and color as they are basically meant for the customers at the bottom of the pyramid.

They imitate the finishes of the costly materials like gold to cater to the demands of the group of people who fall under the 'wish to be rich' category as discussed earlier.

Though the Fastrack series comes under the same price band, it follows very radical approach towards design. The forms and materials used are very contemporary in contrast to other products in the same price range. It is targeted towards people who want to be radically different, exclusive and make a fashion statement at relatively lower cost. The brand has become a lifestyle brand in very short time as it shows the attitude and personality of the target user very effectively. The advertisement has also helped in establishing the brand in that category.

The products in the **second category** are available in a wide range of features and finishes like multiple time zones, radical forms and textures and color schemes. They portray certain associations with the global concerns (like the wildlife series) and are targeted towards the customer who want to make a statement and is ready to pay moderately for it.

The products in the **third category** are a bit expensive, more formal in appearance though they try to go away slightly from the traditional forms. Some of them show historical and cultural influence in design. They use expensive materials like genuine leather, high quality glass, etc. Some of them are technically advanced than others which is their USP. They are targeted towards the executives who want to be formal or towards customers who want to make

a very strong/ bold statement through accessories that they use.

The products in the **last category** are exclusive which are technically superior, have some cultural influence, lifetime guaranty, etc. Most of the times the form is not radically different (to make it exclusive as Fatsrack series) but above all, they are decorated with 'stuff' as discussed earlier which make them a lifestyle product.

Though all of these perform the basic function of a time piece, each product in its own category makes a statement about the style of life of the owner. But the products in the last two categories give an altogether different experience and have higher perceived value and hence are categorized as lifestyle products.



Rs. 7000



Rs. 7900



Rs. 8200



Rs. 12100



Rs. 17400



Rs. 32000



Rs. 26000



Rs. 30500



Rs. 33500



Rs. 60000

10.2 Case study - LG Washing Machines

Let us now look at an example of LG Washing Machines (6.0 to 7.5 Ltr capacity). Here also the products are available with different features and specifications in different price range. It must be noted that the front loading machines are very easy to operate and use the latest technology compared to top loading machines.

The **first category** contains manual top loading washing machines. They come with basic features and follow traditional approach towards the form, finishes and materials of the machine. They come without any extra efforts to make them look better in terms of finishes and give a bulky look. They are available at relatively cheaper rates (Rs. 7000 to Rs. 10000) and are certainly not been looked upon as lifestyle products.

The **second category** contains automatic top loading washing machines. These are more convenient to use than manual ones and offer **different features** like digital display, self cleaning mechanism, multi-step washing, etc. which makes the activity much more **easier** compared to earlier ones and are available at **slightly higher price range**. (Rs. 11000 to Rs. 32000) The higher version comes with **different finishes** and follow **contemporary visual language** in terms of colors and patterns which is the main differentiating factor in the same category. This takes the normal washing machine to a lifestyle product category and are available at premium prices.

The **third category** contains fully automatic front loading washing machines. They use the **latest technology** and offer **different features** like automatic sensors for water quality, detergent and water type, air dryer, prewash and warm wash, waterfall effect, etc. Due to which the tedious activity of washing clothes not only becomes **simpler** but also **pleasurable and enjoyable**. These machines follow visual language which gels very well with the contemporary interiors. They have their own **expression of class and luxury** and are available at higher price range (Rs. 25000 to Rs. 35000) All these features add up to the **exclusiveness** of the product thus making it a **lifestyle product**.

The products in the **fourth category** offer almost the same features as in the third category with a few additions like automatic in built drier. But here the product is clad with **'stuff'**. It is available in a **limited version** printing option which adds up to the **exclusivity** of the product. It also gives a **different expression** to the product and all this is available at **premium price** which finally makes the product exclusive in terms of cost also. Thus the product is completely transformed from a utilitarian consumer product to a lifestyle product using **technology and design**.



Rs. 5990



Rs. 6950



Rs. 7590



Rs. 7650



Rs. 9590



Rs. 13999



Rs. 17900



Rs. 7990



Rs. 8990



Rs. 13990

10.3 Case study - Water Purifiers

Let us take another example of water purifiers for domestic use. But this time we will look into products from different manufacturers as the range offered by single manufacturer is too limited to compare.

Till recent past, water purifiers were looked upon as a something to do with good health, a medical product and so was reflected in their design. They did not have the feel of a domestic, household product whatsoever may be its cost. In fact, more the cost more was the feel of a medical, hygienic product. The overall form of the product, the colors, materials and finishes used reflected the same philosophy. This can be very well observed in the products in the first two rows though they come in a wide range of price from Rs. 5990 to Rs. 17900.

Here, neither cost nor features nor specifications nor the technology used help them to position as lifestyle products. In fact, all of them use the latest UV technology available in the field of water purification. The last two models in the second row use the Ozone treatment technology and have higher purification capacities and as such higher price. But still they have the same medical/ industrial products look and are not considered as lifestyle products though they have some of the important characteristics of them like avant garde, use of latest technology, exclusivity, expressions, etc.

But on the other side, the products in the last row (first two by Philips and last one by Eureka Forbes) portray a different look and feel. They use the same technology of UV filtration, have almost the same features like others, are

available in the same price range; in fact at lower prices. But still they are considered as lifestyle products. Though their advertising plays a major role in positioning them in the lifestyle products category, they give a **feel of domestic product** rather than that of an industrial product and as discussed earlier, people prefer to have **different products at home than those available at offices**. The clean and clear surfaces, sleek looks add up to the 'class' of the product. Also, though the material used is the same as in earlier cases (ABS/ Plastic), the **colors and surface finish** give the product a feel of **luxury** without hampering its image of that of a medical/ hygiene product. All this help the user develop a special **emotional bond** with the product which eventually leads to an **enjoyable experience**.

A pilot survey carried out to categorize these products as lifestyle products revealed the same results for all the three product ranges under consideration.

From the above example one can conclude that its **not only the content of the product** in terms of technology, materials, etc. which make it a lifestyle product but **also the packaging and advertising** which actually gives the product an **expression** and help developing an emotional bond with the product thus increasing its **esteemed value**.

11.0 Conclusion

What determines the constituency for lifestyle products is not wealth or even the desire to be associated with wealth, but a consideration or a hobby taken seriously to the point of a passion or in other words, the esteemed value of the product for the consumer.

Many people consider lifestyle products only as a status symbol at affordable price. But this is only half side of it. **Lifestyle products are the products which develop certain emotional relationship with the user and impart joy, happiness, certain good experiences while using them. They are the expression of values and beliefs of a group of people expressed in an aesthetic manner.**

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