

# Essay on social media: the american hipster culture

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



## **Abstract**

The society is continually experiencing emergence and development of new cultures and subcultures. New cultures mostly develop from the popular culture as some individuals embrace new perspectives regarding common beliefs and values. Cultural elements present means of expression and influential habits that individuals of a particular group or belief identify with. Various cultures and subcultures are presently identifiable in the present day social media. One of such subcultures common in the contemporary social media includes the American hipster culture. The paper focuses on this culture by evaluating it from diverse perspectives. This includes providing a background of the development of the hipster culture while explaining the development and the ideas learnt from the evaluation.

## **Social Media: The American Hipster culture**

Media technologies and global interactions have changed the opportunities for how individuals identify themselves. Through social media, less popular cultural habits are easily exposed and spread within the global community. For example, elements of the American popular culture are easily spreading to both developed and developing states. Goldberg (68) identifies that even with these changes, similar patterns of how groups identify themselves exist. This situation creates a controversial state in which one wonders how cultures and subcultures initiate and build up in a highly sophisticated social environment. Culture is a form of communication in which humans have the ability to classify and explain experiences symbolically and describe their experiences socially. Global society portrays diverse cultural differences as

people vary from one civilization to another. Every culture comprise its own unique internal variations and often, variation between cultures is minimal than differences inside cultures. However, culture is flexible with social media assuming an important role shaping the current culture/counterculture and subcultures. The media has a role of providing an effective ground through which a culture spreads in the society. Various aspects of popular culture/subcultures and counterculture exist in the present day media. Evaluating the American Hipster, which is a common subculture in the modern social media, is essential in understanding aspects of culture in the social media. The paper argues that culture is constantly changing with the generations and in the current culture that entails extensive utilization of social media outlets and products such as Facebook, Twitter, Ipad, cell phones and Mac laptops, a popular culture of a group of individuals who identify themselves with products from particular companies is developing.

### **The Idea of the Development of Subcultures**

A subculture regards to a subsection of the larger culture with individuals who are part of the large culture, but share an explicit identity within a smaller group. Subcultures develop as individuals of the ethnic, class, professional, or racial background comes together to share language, practices of their heritage, food or dressing styles. Cultural practices and beliefs are critical aspect that influences the manner in which human beings behave and operate in modern society. Some subcultures develop from individuals who have characteristics or tastes that differ from that observed

from the individuals of popular culture/population. Adolescents in America, mainly form subcultures to establish a shared youth identity. Although the subject of subcultures is a new concept for sociologist and cultural scholars, scant scholarly attention has focused on the topic because information revolution is capable of transforming people's daily social interactions (Mayfield 39).

In early 1980s, evaluations of subcultures mainly focused on differences in aesthetic preferences in relation to the individuals' class, race or education background. Scholars who believed in this perspective, popularized theories that were based on aspects of place including country, neighborhood, the social world or the community (Goldberg 134). These theories identified the weighty influence of the popular culture on the individuals of a particular subculture. However, economic and social changes over time have resulted to a situation of inconsistent interconnectedness. Presently, the popular culture is ubiquitous; however, the social media provide surplus avenues for the spread of traditional physical or social boundaries and unique prospects for self-expression. With the social media, individuals with internet access can freely share their experiences, familiarize self with current events and access a bulk of information through online search tools and social platform. The increased connectedness of individuals and information highlights that expression of taste differences control the development of particular modern subcultures (Mayfield 21).

## **American Hipster Subculture in Its Initial Stages**

The American hipster is a renowned cultural figure in the modern United States. “Hipster” regards to a contemporary subculture of youths and older teenagers that trace its root in 1990s. This sub-culture relates with the Indie music and unusual music that presents a diverse non-popular fashion taste. This subculture also identifies with independent political ideologies and alternative lifestyles. In essence, the hipster subculture highlights aspects of counterculture dimensions by introducing a new style that challenges the customary views regarding dressing and interpretation of other social-economic practices. LaRose (15) highlights that hipsters identify themselves by rejecting the mainstream perspectives. This subculture spurns various belief and values of the American culture. The hipster subculture has a preference of classic dressing to fashion and a bohemian way of life to the one of power and wealthy. The hipster cultures present as a new trend among the current generation; however, the history of this subculture dates back to the early decades of the 19th century (Kinzey 24)

The 1940s presented a period in which the idea of Jazz music was developing in United States. Artists were regarded as “hepcats” and had a soft relaxed quality that contravened the upright mainstream lifestyle. The idea of hipster developed from the social perspective that individuals regarded themselves as “hep” or “hip” following the Jazz values while individuals who were “square” followed the society’s rules. The idea of hipster spread among the young people who felt that various social norms and beliefs were outdated. The subculture spread from music and fashion assuming attitudes and styles related with the jazz culture. In terms of language, the hipster slang

presented intentionally ambiguous construction (Kaplan 57). The hipsters could often communicate using ironic statements to ridicule mainstream's perspectives and formalities. The Jazz culture was developing radically by 1950s thus various traits of hepcat subculture were becoming usual. During this period, a new subculture regarded as the " Beat Generation" comprising of the antimaterialistic and anticonformist started to develop. Some writers adopted ideas of the Jazz music embracing the radical politics. As the lifestyle developed, college students adopted its values thus started dressing in black-rimmed glasses, berets and black turtlenecks. Furthermore, women started keeping their hair long and wearing leotards. The weakening of the lifestyle presented by the Beat Generation was succeeded by the introduction of a closely related new generation. This movement emphasized the idea of breaking social boundaries; however, it also promoted freedom of expression. With time, the " little hipsters" of 1970s regarded themselves as " hippies" (Mayfield 54).

### **The Established State of the American Hipsters Subculture**

The generation of hipsters that is popular in the current social media developed from the hippie movement in the similar manner that hippies developed from the Beats. The current hipsters may fail to present many similarities with the hipsters of 1940s; however, emulation of the idea of non-conformity still exists (Kinzey 81). Studies conducted by reputable sociologists on the subculture of America highlighted that many aspects that bond members of this group together do not relate with musical taste, fashion or a particular point of disagreement with the mainstream. Studies

have argued that hipsters identify themselves as pioneers of novelties. The sense of pioneering ideas or styles motivates hipsters into searching for unique lifestyle or habits that identify them from others. Furthermore, the habit of hatred is prevalent among the hipsters since they perceive the weakness of everyone's perspective, including their own (LaRose 8). In a similar way that the hepcats of the jazz period resisted common culture through strategically crafted habit of coolness, hipsters in the present day social media snubs mainstream values through a purposeful apathy. Youths are often drawn in rejecting the mainstream conventions as they emulate the habits presented by popular celebrities and the royal in the social media, who they identify as their role models. In this respect, hipsters are still embodying a subculture while affecting the mainstream culture in diverse ways.

Kaplan (45) describes the subculture of hipster as omnipresent while exploring its spread in the present day social media. The scholar observes that the culture is currently dominant in music, fashion and lifestyle. The culture surpasses the boundaries of social-economic status, ethnicity and sexual preference. Damon (95) describes the paradoxical states of this subculture in the modern society by noting that individuals who are not hipsters commonly express hatred on hipsters while the people who presents as hipsters hate to be identified as such. In this context, the satirical part is the aspect that hipsters' antagonism to pop culture is silently becoming a pop culture. In the modern society, the culture popularized by the hipsters is about anti-trends. The scenario presented by the hipster culture highlights that culture is ever evolving. Furthermore, it is apparent that new aspects

are introduced to the material culture daily. Surprisingly, the introduced materials have the potential of affecting the non-material culture. Cultures assume a new dimension when developments provide new opportunities and when new ideas find their way into a culture. This explains the continued complication and development of different subcultures with the introduction of interactive social media.

## **Re-thinking the Hipster Subculture**

The idea of hipster culture sounds different under perspectives of various people. Most people simply regard this culture as a mere insult that describes the insincere and unreasonable trend-followers. Other people associate the hipster culture with the group of individuals who associate themselves with progressiveness and counterculture while familiarizing trends of less significance. The concern challenging the contemporary society remains the ever-increasing popularity of the hipster culture while no person wants to identify with the movement. Notably, the lifestyle related with the hipster culture varies extensively. In this context, sociologists and cultural theories have posed a concern questioning what would be the next in relation to the American youth-based movements.

Considering the development of distinct subcultures from Beatnik, Hippie, Punk, Grunge to Hipster, attempting to think of the future cultural developments become essential. According to Damon (20), all the identified subcultures were associated with different aspects of cohesion, developed response to diverse social conditions and they resulted to various results. For instance, the beatniks and hippies essentially developed following reactions



of the youths on social-level traits such as conformity and cultural conservatism. Furthermore, the Punks and Grunge mainly highlight cultural rebellion as the promoters of these lifestyles reacted against a particular ossification in the mainstream culture especially the music. Lastly, Hipsters appear to be a broad taste culture that embodies numerous diverse critiques of the current society in a more holistic but undefined way. Austin (27) argues that hipsters present a unique group because they present anomaly to the basic principles for the establishment of the subcultures. From one perspective, the group presents a material subculture that often symbolized by elements and style developed from past eras, intended to appear ironic or new when applied in the contemporary setup. However, in contrary to previous subcultures, hipsters discourage categorization and still are capable of establishing distinct in-group conformity by presenting defined patterns of styles and codes.

Predicting the fortune of hipsters is however challenging because unlike other subcultures, this lifestyle fails to claim a title. Besides, it is indisputable that subcultures mainly develop as a response to some form of perceived cultural consistency or hegemony. This means the use social media particularly the internet present such conformity. However, reacting against this modern technology is seemingly not possible because it has become intertwined in the contemporary life. Austin (34) observes that the new social structures and complexities that emanate from interconnectedness presents subsequent concerns when thinking about hipsters culture. Initially, it is questionable whether the hipsters will be in the position of maintaining a cohesive subculture, yet they deny group identification. Furthermore, one

questions whether the hipsters present a new form of subculture and if their presence highlights a change in the entire socioeconomic structures (LaRose 5). This highlights the need of evaluating this subject further to develop the knowledge of these concerns. In essence, the topic of American hipster subculture remains controversial. However, the identified concepts that explain the development and establishment of the hipster culture and others shed light on the position of this subculture especially in the modern world of increased social interactions. It is apparent that further developments and introduction of new models of social media will mainly result to the introduction of more subcultures.

It is worthwhile noting that the popular culture of social media in today generation differs with the previous generations. The popular culture of the modern generation is characterized by the increased usage of the social media outlets and products including Twitter, Facebook, Ipads, cell phones and Mac laptops. A subculture has developed in relation to this technology as a group of individuals what to identify themselves with particular products that are considered classy. This culture differs with the popular cultures in previous generations particularly the discussed hipster culture that emerged as some individuals deviated from the customary formalities. Unlike some cultures in the previous generations that developed following objections, the popular culture in today's social media is based on a sense of differentiation. The modern generation identifies individuals who owns or use products from some companies as members of a wealthy group. For example, in relation to social networking products, the Apple products are regarded to be better than others are. The present day generation has developed a notion that

Apple products are of high quality and that they outweigh other products in the market. In this respect, owning Apple products presents as a fashion in the contemporary society. This means that the development of this popular culture in the present day social media lays its platform on the idea of taste and preferences. The notion has essentially developed following the experiences provided by people as they interact through social media. It is however important to note that the described popular culture of identifying with the Apple products is not well defined because within the modern generation, other sub-groups of individuals who identify with products from other companies can be identified. Whereas some people may consider owning Apple products as fashion, some individuals fail to embrace this perspective thus identifying with other products. This means a group of a popular culture in the social media that identify with the Apple products cannot be argued successfully. However, the perspective that argues the development of culture of individuals who identify themselves with the products of some defined manufactures in the present day social media is unquestionable. Following this evaluation, it is apparent that culture is highly vibrant and development of new technologies and information results to emergence of new subcultures as individuals react to the situation.

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