

# [Materialism in the millennial generation: impact on the fashion industry](https://assignbuster.com/materialism-in-the-millennial-generation-impact-on-the-fashion-industry/)

### Abstract

This study is to investigate the interrelation between the obsession with materialism in the millennial society and why owning luxury item gives them the satisfaction of possession in their daily life. The study focuses on the highly influential streetwear brand Supreme and history of streetwear culture and how it evolves from the perspective of art and what influenced the changes in the movement. The study aims to provide an understanding of how thematerialism grows in a youthand why they are putting off on buying homes and not investing in relationship or experience as well. The study highlights how the materialism behaviour of the youth are going to change the images of streetwear and the creative process in the fashion industry. Lastly, the study is to convey a message to the society about the effect of materialism on the youth and how it is going to shape the future of fashion culture.

## Introduction

Streetwearfashion is a street movement born in the late 1970s in Los Angeles, Californiaby the surf culture. It is defined as casual and comfortable clothing. Bytoday’s definition, Streetwear is a fashion style inspired by what is happeningor current ongoing scene on the streets. It is getting more diverse assportswear brands also play the role in the streetwear scene. Sportswear brandssneakers have made sportswear have set the brand a footwear benchmark in thestreetwear style. It is heavily influenced by the music and skateboardingstyle, which is the main interest of the youth in this generation. In this era, streetwear fashion is no longer a stranger in the fashion industry.

Streetwearbrands got influenced by certain aesthetic such as skateboarding, hip-hop musicand lifestyle. Streetwear apparels graphics are usually referring to the popculture of the following generation. Youth sort of find them nostalgic and thismake them appreciate it not on the fact that it has good graphics but it isbecause it creates a nostalgic moment that the youth are able to relate to. Design in streetwear staples such as photography, photo collage, illustration, and typography. It has the concept as fast fashion brands but streetwear brandshave an iconic identity in the fashion scene. Modern streetwear culture is notjust on the clothing line. Streetwear brands start creating more diverseproducts from electric guitar to ashtray instead of just clothing to delve intothe lifestyle of the youth.

There’sno doubt that streetwear brands have a great impact on the streetwear cultureand fashion realm. Mass media plays the role in making streetwear brand popularthrough entertainment. The youth have the easy access to the advertising andcommercial with the social media nowadays. With the appearance in popularmovies and music, youth are exposed to the streetwear brands easily too. It hasbecome the uniform of the famous artists in the media. Celebrities also startwearing certain streetwear brand instead of luxury brands. Living in the erawhere the youth is driven by possession of goods, the inflate demand ofstreetwear has become higher than ever since due to the limited quantity ofclothing released to the public. Few streetwear brands start to issue raffleticket at the entrance of their stores in order to be fair to the consumers. Theoutcome of this is the huge increase in the streetwear brands value in themarketplace. This led to the birth of reselling in the streetwear fashionculture. People start queueing up outside the store a day or two before therelease date of certain collection in order to purchase an item and resell itwith a hefty amount of price to the one who wants it. Police are on the sceneto prevent riots from happening. The reselling culture encourages youth tospend tons of money on streetwear brands to look cool in the scene. Thisspreads out to the whole world and soon after that streetwear becomes a hugeimage in the fashion scene. Youth starts paying attention to the fashionindustry. With the huge crowds of millennials in the modern streetwear scene, luxury brands are collaborating with streetwear brand in order to reach out tothe millennials. This transforms the streetwear culture from classic streetwearto luxury streetwear. From the youth point of view, it is easier to own luxurydesigner brands too. From this, it also feeds the materialism more into theyouth. Thus the materialism starts to grow inside the youth circle and soon theculture grows wider.

Thematerialism of the youth has been seeded since the young age. Children areexpecting an expensive birthday gift and Christmas present. Exposed to themodern TV commercials, the youth have been taught that money is the power andwithout money, there will be no happiness. encourages youth to steal andcommits violence.

Possessingvaluable items has been perceived as being more famous and reputable.  That’s how most of the youth nowadays makefriends. They often think that making friends with the wealthy ones alleviatestheir reputation and fame in their social circle. This led to youth starts tocategorize their friend and putting people in the box in their social circle. By this, the demand for luxury and valuable items increased rapidly. Thisinitiates the youth to use violence in their desire of owning luxury items. Those violence includes robbing, stealing, and even killing. Due to theobsession towards luxury items, teenagers are often being killed over a pair ofsneakers and sometimes got seriously injured.

The riseof materialism in the youth has a serious impact on the society. The market inthe streetwear fashion industry are increasing exponentially and has becomewider than ever. Several job opportunities have been provided to the industry. However, the tradeoffs of this are people are becoming obsessed with an itemand start to neglect the appreciation of people around them. Everyone isinvesting in greater happiness by spending money on objects that make them feelbetter emotionally. The future of materialistic youth is beyond the imaginationright now as it keeps evolving from generation to generation.

## Chapter 1 The Streetwear Fashion

Like theculture itself, the definition of streetwear has been circulating and changingforever in the streetwear culture. Aaron Levant, the founder of the streetwearshow called Agenda, said that you know a streetwear when you see it byyourself. Streetwear is all about the free spirits and their aspiration in thestreet culture. The design aesthetics are a mixture of New York skate culture, fashion, music and art. To put it in a simple word, streetwear is a reflectionof what is the identity of the youth of today. In today’s streetwear, there’sno longer a specific look for streetwear fashion. The separation of streetwearstyle ranges from urban goths to the skate and surfer initiates the marketer toexpand their brand to further subcultures. One of the most well-known iship-hop. The aesthetics of streetwear are always present in the hip-hop cultureand entertainment and portrayed massively through mass media. The influence ofstreetwear starts to blend into the designer brand. Virgil Abloh starts to showcasehis streetwear influenced collection in his own brand, Off-White to reach outthe teenager market. Streetwear has grown into a really massive culture and isno stranger to most of the teenagers these days. There are thousands ofstreetwear brands saturating in the current market to prevent the culture fromdiminishing. Among the brands that are really appealing to the teenagers andyoung consumers on the social media are highly reputable streetwear labels suchas Supreme and Stussy. The success of the brand is credited to their ownindependently running store and the capabilities in marketing their productsthrough e-commerce. Arguably, Supreme is most likely be the one brand that isable to cover the whole facts of streetwear fashion due to their rich history, controversial design and huge impact in the streetwear culture.

### Chapter 1. 1 Supreme, the Cult Brand

Oftenbeing labelled as a cult brand in the streetwear fashion, Supreme doesn’t needan introduction when it comes to the streetwear culture. Originated from NewYork, Supreme is a well-known streetwear brand and a staple in the streetwearfashion culture. Supreme started out as a small skateboard shop in 1994 and hasrapidly grown into a legendary streetwear cult status. Supreme was founded bythe James Jebbia who served as the store manager at both Union and Stussy inNew York back in 1994. Due to Stussy was becoming a bigger and more availablebrand, James Jebbia decided to leave the company and opened a store dedicatedto skating, which he first had the idea when he was so really into theskateboarding culture, the designs and the philosophy of skateboarding. Realizing that there was not a demanding skateboard market in downtown NewYork, he was driven to open the first good skate shop to fill the gap. Thepublic relation of James Jebbia is one of the keys to why he is able to createa successful brand too. Having friends in the skateboarding scene since theearly, James Jebbia knew the way on how skateboard market was operated, thiswas another factor that motivated him to open a skate store. By doing this, James Jebbia fulfilled the needs of the youth in the streetwear culture at thetime where youth are deeply rooted in the arts and anarchistic behaviour. Supreme has allocated itself in the streetwear market for its timeless styleand authenticity value in the streetwear culture.  The store has become the holy grail of theyouth streetwear culture.

### Chapter 1. 2 Design Elements of Supreme

Thesuccess of the brand is highly by interpreting a mix of the city’s symbolicicon covering fashion music, celebrity and politics in their design for theirclothing, shoes and skateboards. The design element is what they transpire andreflect on daily fashion style for young teenagers. Products including jackets, shoes, shirt, skateboard and accessories are designed to appeal the youthgeneration especially the one who are into the hip-hop and skateboardingculture. To give an example, the status symbol of Supreme is so impactful thateven the ‘ box logo tee’ which is a simple white tee with the Supreme logo on itare extremely valuable and usually sold out instantly when they are released. The collection offered by Supreme has a wide variety of selection. By doingthis, Supreme is able to ensure everyone can find an item they want. Alternatively, this strategy of creating varieties of products also maintainthe identity of Supreme and to ensures brand logo are able to be seeneverywhere so it helps to build the brand reputation without spending a dime onadvertising campaign.

### Chapter 1. 3 Promotional Campaign of Supreme

Becauseof social media, the streetwear culture will never fade away due to most of theconsumers are the young teenager who is attracted to the screen. Related tothat, the mysterious successful brand Supreme never really rely on theadvertisement campaign to become this popular. It always abstained printadvertisement and physical advertisement. In this digital age, Supreme utilizesthe social media platform to reach out to their consumer instead of usingcommon marketing strategy done by the other fashion brands. Supreme has nevermade any appearance in the fashion show to reach out their consumer. Thecontroversial brand and their brand logo itself are mostly circulating onsocial media and the word-of-mouth of teenagers through the street scene. However, one of the most recognizable advertisement every done by them will bethe New York poster advertisement campaign. With the poster of their photo teesfilled up on the wall of their flagship stores and the landmark around thecity, the poster signifies that there’s a new collection of the season arrivingsoon. It may seem like a very cliché advertising campaign, the advertisementstunt is so covetable that people often rip it down from the wall and take itwith them. The level of obsession is so high that even the advertisementmaterial of the brand has a value on its own. One good approach done by Supremeis the physical store is not only open for shopping, they’re an epicentre ofthe skate scene in the city. Teenagers come around and hangout at the spot. This brings the community together to push the streetwear culture.

### Chapter 1. 4 Celebrities and Supreme

Thecelebrity culture is also one of the sole reason why Supreme is wildly popularamong the youth generation. Celebrities such as musicians started wearingSupreme either they got sponsored or they bought it. This genius idea ofpromoting the brand through entertainment by Supreme implies that the brand iswidely exposed through mass media. Supreme knows how to boost their popularityin this generation where youth mostly spent their time on their electronics. The marketing strategy of Supreme plays the role of growing more materialisticteenager. There’s no mass production for every Supreme garment and having onlylimited quantities of their products, Supreme products are so exclusive andrare. The huge demand for the products makes teenagers start to queue upovernight in front of the store before the release date in order to get someitems. Lines snaked around the block around the store by teenagers ready tospend all their savings on the clothing and make profits from it by resellingthem to those who didn’t get anything from the releases. With teenagers soobsessed with the brand, they are willing to pay the extra amount of money tofulfil their desire. This determines that the flourishing second market ofSupreme products also contributes to promoting materialism in the youthgeneration. Violence and crime occur when some people didn’t get anything fromthe releases, they decided to rob or steal from others. This pushes the companyto increase the security at the store and ensure there are no riots happeningwhen the youthful crowd are lining up.

### Chapter 1. 5 Supreme Collaboration with Other Brands

Supremealso reaches out several brands to have a collaboration to get exposed more toall age groups. A further instance of this is, the collaboration of Supreme andLouis Vuitton is the most controversial and most prominent collaboration doneby Supreme to date. Able to collaborate with the biggest luxury label in theworld, Supreme has become well-known among the older generation too. It breaksthe barrier between streetwear fashion and high luxury fashion. Thecollaboration is a great opportunity for Louis Vuitton to get exposed to thestreetwear scene and able to up its cool factor among the youth culture. Technically, the blends between streetwear and luxury brands exist in thiscollaboration, providing teenagers with the satisfaction of owning luxury andcultural element in it. To support this statement, Juliet B. Schor explainsthat the brand teenagers want aren’t just any brands. Instead, they craveluxury brands and high-end items. To point to evidence, parents and buyersreported a change as girls aged six to ten became more label conscious. Withthe amount of youth surrounding the crowds in the queue on other streetwearstores such as Bape and Palace Skateboards, it can be seen that Juliet B. Schor’s statement is true.

Inconclusion, streetwear culture has been for ages and it evolves in a uniqueway. By now when you’re reading this, the definition of streetwear today mightnot be the same one tomorrow. The brand is able to grow exponentially are dueto the consumption behaviour of the teenagers who are bonded to a specificbrand. Knowing this, in order to make more profits from the teenager highconsumption behaviour, the brand continues to make products to expand theculture and appeal the teenager to follow the brand. The portrayal of celebritiesin the streetwear brand amplifies the influences of the culture and with this, the underground subcultures are now easily accessible to the public.

## Chapter 2 The Teenagers Consuming Behaviour

Themodern teenagers are essentially taught to treat money and consumption as theway to live a lavish life. In order to understand how materialism wasintroduced to a teenager, we need to start by observing the basics ofpsychology and behaviour of a human behaviour. The patterns in consumer buyingbehaviour can be identified when we understood the human behaviour. It seemsthat the patterns are highly influenced by one’s motivation. Thus, themarketers take advantages of this factor to and infuse it into theiradvertising campaign. The marketers know how to motivate and create an urgencyto persuade the teenagers. The emotion felt by a teenager when checking outproducts are the main causes of what they will buy. Teenagers somehow areemotionally attached and obsessed with a product as if all these products havecertain personalities that are conveyed through visual and image. The fact thatmarketers stated that emotions do drive up their sales, the marketers theninvest in creative and persuasive advertisement campaign in a way to evoke theemotions of a teenager. To point an evidence, teenagers do have a choice topurchase an identical item that is cheaper and still work the same way. However, they rather choose to purchase the item with a brand that has apersonality that ‘ communicates’ to them, relating to their emotion withdecision making. Thus, it is never about a good decision when it comes todeciding which item to get, rather, it is about how the teenagers feel aboutwhat they see, touch and smell that decides what they buy. It clearly meansthat the emotions of teenagers contribute materialism and buying powers intotheir consumption habit.

### Chapter 2. 1 The ‘ Cool’ Culture

Thepressure of being cool has been around for decades. The definition of cool isalways hard to pin down because the today’s cool might not be cool tomorrow. The trend of cool is constantly changing from a different aspect. Cool cats andhipsters were the cool categories back in the fifties. In those days, the teendefines cool by many acceptable personal styles. The definition of cool hasbeen fitted into the modern era. Cool is defined as something every product istrying to be and what every teenager needs to have to fit into the streetwearsociety. The marketing strategy of defining cool as the key to social successhas elevated the teenagers’ level of materialism. A report has been done bybranding expert Martin Lindstrom stating that the attraction of the brands hastaken over the functionality of the product of the brand. Teenagers often spendso much more money on purchasing a more luxury brand because owning anexpensive item is the theme of cool.

In thebook Born to Buy by Juliet B. Schor, she stated that the teenager in thisgeneration demands particular brands when they’re asked. The brand-consciousbehaviour in this generation of teenagers is what encourages materialism to anindividual. Teenagers want to be socially accepted in the cool peers to feelsuperior in popularity and determine who belongs in the cool category. Being soconcerned about their appearance, teenagers are bonded to a specific brand asthey have a clear preference for them and they know which brands are recognizedas the ‘ cool brands’ in the culture. In order to stay feel superior in theculture, the teenager then starts to covet and pay attention to the advertisementof a brand. As a result, brand starts to portray superiority in the marketingindustry, it basically conveys the idea of having something that others do notis cool. It can be seen that this is true. To give an example, relating back tothe exclusivity and flourishing second market of Supreme clothing, teenagerswilling to spend the extra money to purchase the exclusive item so that theyown something that the others do not, thus it makes them feel superior.

### Chapter 2. 2 Social Media and the Teenagers Consumption

Streetwearfashion brand and social media shares a very extraordinary bond. They bothdepend on each other to able to reach out the consumer. The enormous number ofconsumers using social media is impossible to be exactly listed. For example, Instagram tends to have more users in the age group of the youth. It turns outthat social media play a very big role in manipulating a teenagers behaviour inconsumerism. The key of why teenager turns to social media is to seek thelatest information on a brand. By this, they get a recommendation on apotential purchase. Teenagers are widely influenced by social media whendeciding which item they should buy. The word ‘ hype’, which is used to define ahigh demand clothing are what drives a teenager to spend more time on socialmedia to look for the product they want. This is because the purchase decisionof everyone on social media is influenced by the fashion blogs and fashionista. In the streetwear fashion culture language, a fashionista who collects hypeproducts is called as an ‘ hypebeast’. Teenagers often look up on them throughsocial media for inspiration on several product categories such as apparel andaccessories. This is one of the factors that increase the demand of a specificclothing. Relating social media and fashion, the teenagers are classified asfashion followers, which is known as those who go for a specific fashion trend. The youth don’t have the luxurious time and money to spend on fashion pursuits, which draw them to feel insecure about their fashion taste. Therefore, themajority of the youth look up to fashion influencer in the social media toimitate the trend they are setting. Teenager do this because by owning a pieceof clothing that is widely trending and exposed in the social media, theteenager feels great for getting all the attention and keeping up with the pacein the streetwear culture.

### Chapter 2. 3 The Youth Portrayed by the Mass Media

The massmedia can be classified as the most significant platform for young modernteenagers to portray their lifestyles in an individualized perspective of view. Mass media has always been emphasizing the concept of youth representing ameaningful and influential phase in a person’s life actively. However, theappearance of youth as a symbol and victim as well as threat to the societycontradicted the media action.  Boëthiusstated that popular culture portrayed in the media has always been a threat tothe teenagers and the threat has been expressed very clearly through a processwhich the media overemphasize the criminal behaviour of young teenagers for itsown good, called as ‘ moral panics’. Osgerby (1998b) argues that the economicboost of the 1980s teenagers were rarely symbolized as an icon of ‘ consumerempowerment’ when there’s a statement pointing out that the teenager’s use ofthe media is encouraging their consumer lifestyle.

## Chapter 3 Brand Marketing and The Influences of Attitudes

Themarketers of a brand are always implying the message that wealth and aspirationto wealth are cool. This sparks the urge in a teenager to keep possessing moreitem in order to fulfil their materialism and increases consumerism at the sametime. On what stated at Chapter 1. 2, we can conclude that discount and lowprices are not the crux of attracting customers as well as to boost the sales. The marketers are influencing the attitudes of consumer through design. Thefunction of attitudes, a theory developed by psychologist Daniel Katz, explainsto us the four classifications of what attitudes served us are utilitarian, value-expressive, ego-defensive and knowledge. Utilitarian function of attitudehelps us to focus on a product benefits by reaching our goals. Marketers workto change our buying attitudes with problem-solving capabilities of their productswith the utilitarian function. The value-expressive function, which is beenpracticed by the teenagers in the streetwear culture, means that we areexpressing our personality and image through the products we buy and wear. Thefunction of value-expressive attitude has been widely used by the marketers byassuring a more lavish and happy life when you own their products, whether itsaccessories, cosmetics or clothing. The ego-defensive function, an attitude weformed to protect us from anxieties from being judged. The concern about ourlook motivates us to pay attention to our grooming and use products to impressthe public. Lastly, the knowledge function of attitudes aids us to order theinformation we encounter. The new products proclaimed by marketing informationreaches us through every direction of media, including the magazine, the Web, billboards and television. Due to the different individual way ofdifferentiating our values and what is important to us, the way we use ourattitudes functions are different from the others. Marketers are aware of theseand have reach out to us in various ways. There are several influences thatcontribute to how we shape our attitudes like our own personality, theexperience we had, family and friends. A human personality is the psychologicalcharacteristics of a person that routinely influence the way people respond totheir surroundings. The personal characteristics are what makes us unique anddifferent from others. Some of the characteristics are known as extroverts orintroverts, passive or active, leaders or followers are part of our ownpersonality. To support this statement that relates to my research, whenteenagers is considering a new fashion look, the one who is more of a followerthan a leader often will wait until they see others wearing the style beforethey will wear it. Thus, the very own individual characteristics of eachindividual influences the person’s decisions and resulting behaviour. Ourpersonal experience with a product also influence the kinds of attitudes weshape. For example, a consumer always looks for the same brand again when weexperienced a great success with a certain brand. We gather information to helpus to gain experience at the same time. The media bombarded us with multiple marketingmessages to persuade us to purchase a product so we don’t really have to lookfor it. The role of family and friends also affects our attitudes. In the caseof family, we are mostly influenced when we are young due to them being thedominant figure in our lives as children. A child would tend to follow theirfamily decisions because they are still not exposed to the other influences. When we talk other influences, the common one will be friends. Friends andpeers are the main influence of our attitude formation from childhood onwards. Peers often have similar attitude towards something such as fashion, games, food and entertainment. The influences of teenagers towards each other areprobably the most critical one. To relate my research to this statement, theteenager in the streetwear culture often compare themselves among their peerswith their clothing apparels, their expensive items. This influences thedesperation of an individual to get what their peers have; thus it promotesmaterialism in the youth.

## The Final Word

Althoughstreetwear culture is not that popular in the older days, we can’t concludethat today’s streetwear culture is the same as the previous one. The progressof their culture is growing rapidly and new trends keep appearing every day. The popular brand like Supreme always continue to come up with new relevantstreetwear products to persuade the youth to keep buying their product, thusmost of the youth are loyal to the brand. Brand like Supreme could alwaysproduce more quantity of their high demand products but in order to maintainthe exclusivity of their product and always stay relevant in the culture, thebrand remains their old ways of business thus increasing the number ofresellers in the culture and this encourages teenager to spend extra money fromretail price to own the piece they want. The materialistic teenager’sbehaviours and attitude cultivated by the marketing strategy by the streetwearbrands are the reason why the culture is able to grow and last for so long. Thebehaviour continues to amplify and will eventually be exposed to the futureyouth generation through the same method, which is the mass media and socialinfluences. The advertising campaign by a brand does play a part in developingthe materialistic youth in the streetwear culture, either through printmaterials or in the digital world. The portrayal of youth by the mass mediaencourages the marketers to promote their brand in a way that youth will paymore attention to them for their own good.

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