

# Influence of culture on fashion



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*“ The more we learn about culture the greater our understanding of the future of global consumerism in Fashion.”*

Fashion industry is all about making fashion statements. The industry runs on the motto to be different, stylish, edgy as well as continuous changes in every season of every year. Fashion to customers is being different from the crowd or making a statement by using clothing and accessories that set them apart. Fashion industry is getting more expensive with passing time. In the United States, around 250 billion dollars is spent on fashion and accessories like bag, shoe, etc. (Anon., 2012)

When fashion industry is concerned, culture is an integral part of it. Fashion and culture goes hand in hand. Our clothes are a source of non-verbal communication which send messages about who we are, where we come from, what we do and etc. Overall, fashion is a way of expressing ourselves through our clothing and accessories. People try to stay “ in fashion” and they are mostly influenced by popular culture which is reflection of cultural forces as well as social factors.

Global consumerism: Widespread use of the internet and communications are changing how and on what people spend their money. This phenomenon has led to emergence of the global citizens who participate in the global marketplace through multinational corporations offering brands which meet their ever changing needs. (Byrnes, 2007, p. 1) This combination of global culture and global connectivity can be defined as globalization. Globalization has created a market with no border and as a result culture is running free in

this new era. Now a day, we can see Indian food in every city of the globe or people living in Western countries are wearing ethnic clothes.

Consumption is an action that varies from culture to culture. (Byrnes, 2007, p. 2) The result of adopting consumption related values on a worldwide scale has been referred to as a ' global consumer culture'. Global consumer culture is " shared sets of consumption-related symbols such as product categories, brands, and common consumption activities". (Lee, 2006)

Global fashion consumerism:

The global fashion industry is growing and changing at an incredible rate. According to a study in 2010, Dubai was supposed to reach \$655 billion in textile and apparel trade which is 6% of global exports. The data indicates how fashion is evolving in the era of globalization. UAE was the biggest market for Swiss watches in 2013 and had increased 23% year-on-year to \$835 million. (Wyne, 2013) This data shows the shift in global fashion consumerism. Meaning, now the Middle East has started emerging as the fashion hub though New York and Paris are still considered as fashion cities of the world. This change has been possible because of UAE's vast amount of disposable income and also the influence of western culture in the people's mind.

Cultural influence on fashion:

It is important to know the influence of culture on fashion industry and to foresee cultural and social movements in order to comprehend the fashion environment. Fashion is not an isolated factor of clothing or accessories but

it is connected to our life in every aspect and among them culture is the most significant. Fashion goes further than clothing and into the manner we desire to live our lives. Meaning, fashion influences our lifestyle. Fashion is influenced by cultural changes, such as modernization, art and even technological innovation.

There is an apparent interaction of shifts in consumer lifestyle, fashion and culture. It is essential to realize that fashion is made by people living in different cultures and different locations. If we want to understand fashion and its trend then it is necessary to understand what surround us in terms of the way we live. It is our society and culture which is our surrounding and they are the ones which influence our lifestyle. Development of new fashions has mainly three sources in terms of culture. They are: High culture, low culture and pop culture. (Anon., 2010)

1. High culture means elite activities like visual art, auditory art, and applied art like photography, design and architecture. In terms of influencing fashion inspiration, these sources bring new types of ideas and concepts to the designers. How art impacts fashion can be seen in the Louis Vuitton partnership with quite a few contemporary artists, like Takeshi Murakami or Stephen Sprouse, who had embellished Louis Vuitton Monogram bags in the past.

2. Pop culture or popular culture, is a cultural segment, which is followed, appreciated and understood by a larger portion of the world audience. Usually it is highly influenced by movie or music celebrities. This type of culture is seen as a mercantile culture which is produced at a mass level for

mass consumption. An example of how pop culture influences our lifestyle and our fashion can be seen by taking into account the most fashionable TV shows, like 'Sex and the City' and how everybody wanted to wear clothes like the central characters of the serial. With the progress of globalization, common trends of fashion are seen all around the globe (i. e. Levi's jeans).

3. Low culture includes local street activities like graffiti or Hip Hop. The power of subculture to fashion can be seen clearly skateboard culture from the 70s to present day. It can be difficult to distinguish certain styles as subcultures because they are quickly (predominantly clothing and music) adopted by mass culture. For example, the Japanese Harajuko girls, who are teenagers, originally from Tokyo's Harajuko district, who dress in a particular way. American singer Gwen Stefani named her 2005 world tour as well as her clothing line after these girls. In this way, a subculture or local culture has become a part of the global fashion and has been adopted by the global fashion market. (Anon., 2010)

Macro and micro trends in fashion:

Macro trends are drivers for 5-10 years whereas micro trends are drivers for 1-3 years. (Sheppard, 2014) Like most industries fashion industry is also shaped by macro and micro trends. Macro trend is a larger behavioral group and a micro trend is the mini fashion craze. Currently the micro trend is undoubtedly the skinny jeans, which is closely followed by leggings and footless tights. But a larger macro-trend for a while in the fashion has been ethical and environment friendly clothing and accessories. Trends come and go because of the impact of media in our lives. The hit US TV drama Mad

Men, which is set in the early 1960s, has had a big influence on high street fashion. Actress Christina Hendricks has helped to bring back full skirts, longer hemlines, and cropped cardigans as well as almost single-handedly brought back the curvy fit in the fashion market. The micro trends are also changing because of the internet.(Anon., n. d.)

Culture is made of factors like society, education, values, and norms and so on. Since, fashion deals with how we look and what we wear; it is largely influenced and controlled by culture. In the past, fashion was segmented and local culture influenced but with the emergence of globalization we are turning towards a more global fashion consumerism. This is why brands like Chanel, Burberry are seen in India, Thailand, and Dubai and so on.

To understand the future of global fashion consumerism, we need to understand how people interpret fashion these days and whether they are influenced more by their own culture or popular culture. Though in countries like India, local culture plays a bigger influence on consumerism but still common people are seen wearing trendy clothes matching current global fashion. This shows the cultural difference among the people in the country. Thus, understanding the culture is very important for global fashion consumerism.

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