

the sociology of

W O M E N ' S F A S H I O N



Fashion is an art form, an expression of individuality, and represents one's lifestyle. Fashion gives people a sense of identity while also being reflective of their values. Fashion can be used as a platform to achieve validation from the community; consumers can feel they are a part of something and not behind in trends. "Designers have also made it their mission to use their labels to express their beliefs, in hopes they can affect change in the world through style" (Kristy, 2018).

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Fashion is a way one can express their voice, but visually: "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" (Essays UK, 2018). The choices women make from head to toe are indicators of confidence and power as well.



In today's time, we see a mash of different ideologies in fashion that are influenced by historic trends, music-based cultures, ethnic backgrounds, global fusion, and much more. Expensive brands are symbolic of wealth and class: "... for consumers to be engaged with fashion the desire to have something unique (luxury brands) is more important than their self-

identification with the features of the products" (Loureiro, 2018). For the sake of being unique and exclusive, people flaunt expensive brands to feel connected and also popular. High quality clothing gives off the impression that they're elite. It represents the desire of how they want to live: lavishly.



The influencer above is wearing Balenciaga shoes and holding a Louis Vuitton handbag, while posing in front of a Mercedes.



The various transformations of women's clothing reflect correlating societal norms and advancements of an era; which have been influenced by politics, economics, society, and culture.

Style icon Coco Chanel revolutionized the concept of femininity through the quality of elegance.

*She gave birth to the staple item in almost every woman's closet: **a little black dress**. Before Chanel made it an everlasting trend, black was only worn to funerals and by widows. She broke those norms, and a sketch of her dress was published by Vogue in 1926 (bottom right corner).*

*In the 1910s, Chanel was among the first few designers to break conservative fashion and create outfits inspired by menswear. She shifted away from restricting garments, like skirts, to loose fabrics and created an elegantly functional trouser – **an independent look**. “Consisting of a collarless boxy wool jacket with braid trim, fitted sleeves and metallic embellished buttons with accompanying slimline skirt, the outfit was the perfect choice for the post-war woman who was trying to build a career in the male-dominated workplace” (“Seven Wonders: How Coco Chanel Changed the Course of Women's Fashion”).*

*Her new design for women's clothing overlapped perfectly with the first wave of **feminism** in the early 20th century. “Designers cannot create empowerment through design alone; it is how they can make a woman feel in a garment, the emotional connection to dressing is what empowers us” (Alexander, 2018).*



*a girl
should be
two things:
classy &
fabulous*

— COCO CHANEL —



“Rather than a king or queen, we now look up to celebrities or street-style influencers who share their latest looks freely on Instagram. What they wear is then replicated by the masses who want to look up to date and part of the style gang” (Alexander, 2018).

Consumer interests are driven by celebrities and social media trendsetters, as they are the leaders of fashion: “... when Millennials follow celebrities on social media who endorse products, they are more likely to pay attention because they tend to replicate looks of celebrities they admire for their identity development” (Min, 2019).



Rihanna is an advocate for both racial equality and women's rights. The white tee worn by her, stating **"We Should All Be Feminists"**, was first seen on Dior's Spring 2017 runway; it was released during the fourth wave of feminism.



Following the release, many stars, including Jennifer Lawrence on the cover of Harper's Bazaar, and consumers showed their support. Rihanna is among many to be a cultural icon her active followers get inspired by.



Women's fashion over the decades between the 1900s-2000s, has evolved to reflect trends and societal changes. It has become diverse in color, prints, and textures while promoting diversity in the fashion community.

After the 1930s-40s, texture added dimension, print became more popular, and the color palette became brighter and more vibrant. From the 2000s and on, women wore, and still wear, more tight-fitting, curve-hugging, revealing clothing. Using their rights in fashion, they take their style in whatever direction they like. Women can dress super edgy one day, girly or tomboyish the next, professionally for a work meeting, and then spice it up for a night out.

"Fashion is made up of internal, conflicting forces that necessarily lead to change; it is distinguished by differentiation and union, superficiality and profundity, freedom and dependence, individuality and imitation, destruction and construction, leadership and submission" (Sellerberg, 2015).

Women's fashion has become more personal overtime and it will develop even more for the years to come. Fashion is an infinite art form, expression, and lifestyle.



Annotated Bibliography

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- This media source describes the influence of culture changes on fashion including global consumerism and both macro and micro trends in fashion.

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- This blog describes how fashion is reflective of its era, often expressing each generation's thoughts, creativity, and beliefs.

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Loureiro, S. M. C., Maximiano, M., & Panchapakesan, P. (2018). Engaging fashion consumers in social media: The case of luxury brands. *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 11(3), 310–321. doi: 10.1080/17543266.2018.1431810

- This journal article describes how fashion is expressed on social media platforms as a way to engage with consumers, often sporting luxurious brands.

Min, J.H.J., Chang, H.J.J., Jai, T.C. et al. (2019). The effects of celebrity-brand congruence and publicity on consumer attitudes and buying behavior. *Fash Text* 6, 10. doi: 10.1186/s40691-018-0159-8

- This journal article describes how modern-day consumers will most likely follow fashion trends that are endorsed by celebrities, influencers on social media, and other role models, versus fashion shown at runway shows.

Sellerberg, A.M. & Aspers, P. (2015). Fashion, Sociology of. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. doi: 10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.32059-1

- This journal article provides in-depth information on the sociology of fashion; describing the behavioral sciences that can influence fashion as well as be influenced by fashion.

Seven Wonders: How Coco Chanel changed the course of women's fashion." *Wonderland Magazine*. (2013, September 4). Retrieved from www.wonderlandmagazine.com/2013/09/04/seven-wonders-how-coco-chanel-changed-the-course-of-womens-fashion/

- This online magazine describes the new clothing trends designer Coco Chanel introduced to society in the 1920s.