Can We Relate the Style to Money

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*Abstract*

This paper investigates the connection between style and wealth, exploring how one's financial status influences their personal style choices. It analyzes fashion trends, luxury brands, and consumer behavior to understand the interplay between style and money. The paper also examines societal perceptions and the role of social status in defining one's style. It uses historical and contemporary examples to illustrate how economic factors shape individual style preferences and how fashion can be used to display wealth or social standing. By examining this relationship, the paper provides insights into the motivations and implications of style in relation to money in various contexts.

Fashion and style have long been intertwined with notions of status, power, and wealth. The association between money and style is evident, as those with greater financial resources often possess the means to acquire high-quality clothing, accessories, and beauty products. The assumption is that individuals with more money naturally possess a refined and sophisticated sense of style due to their access to abundant resources. However, the relationship between style and money is not as straightforward as it seems. This research essay aims to delve into this relationship and provide insights into whether style truly correlates with wealth.

Undoubtedly, individuals with more financial means have greater access to fashionable items. Their purchasing power allows them to indulge in designer clothing, high-end accessories, and expensive jewelry. It is expected that their style would be more refined and tasteful owing to the abundance of resources at their disposal. However, this assumption does not always hold true. While affluent individuals may have access to luxurious items, it does not automatically imply that they possess a superior sense of style. In fact, some people with more money may rely heavily on their wealth to create an impression of style rather than relying on their personal taste and creativity. They may gravitate towards expensive clothing simply because of the brand name or price tag, rather than genuinely appreciating the item.“You used to be able to look at someone and tell that they were rich. Clothes have always been an important class signifier.” (Kate W., 2023). We often view people with money tend to dress extravagantly and flaunt the most expensive things they own. As someone with higher status and ability to afford luxury goods, it has always been a symbol of wealth that the way you present yourself in public has to be proper and with brand name clothes to feel superior. Although, people with higher status are not dressing themselves up for creativity but rather in clothing full of name brands that are straight from the runway compared to having unique pieces to put together. “I have looked everywhere on the high street, and every pair is slightly wrong; the proportions are out, or the leather is too orange or they are badly made and uncomfortable.” (Jess C., 2007). Even if luxury goods looks disproportionate, consumers buy these pieces for status appeal rather than for style.

Conversely, individuals with fewer financial resources often exhibit a keen sense of style borne out of necessity. Limited funds force them to be creative in their clothing choices, encouraging them to experiment with mixing and matching various pieces to create unique and personalized looks. Without the luxury of relying on expensive designer clothing, these individuals cultivate their style through resourcefulness and imagination. They learn to appreciate the value of individuality and self-expression, using fashion as a means to showcase their creativity rather than relying on material possessions. This boosts creativity and a more sense of style since the thought of buying an item mainly because of the brand is completely out of the equation. Just by going on the streets of Soho you can see different ways people incorporate different styles into their fit.

Thrift shopping is not only a sustainable and cost-effective way to obtain clothing and goods, but it also contributes to reducing waste and supporting a better economy. By purchasing second-hand items, individuals extend the lifespan of products and reduce the demand for new manufacturing. The RealReal, a leading second-hand company, has emerged as a prime example of the growing market for affordable luxury goods. They curate a wide range of high-end fashion items at a fraction of their original retail prices. This enables individuals to access luxury fashion without breaking the bank. Rival company Reflaunt is a similar company but follows a more consumer to consumer business model wherein the consumer has full control of pricing and shipping, the CEO quoted “As a retailer, you are providing an extra, positive service to customers where they are invited to resell before buying new.” (Pamela D., 2022). Ultimately, both companies are promoting affordable prices for high-end luxury items and encouraging people to buy, resell or used rather than paying the retail price which is usually an absurd amount of money. In hindsight with these platforms one doesn’t necessarily need to have a lot of money to dress the same style as someone that is a higher class.

The influence of social media has profoundly shaped how people perceive style and wealth in contemporary society. Influencers and celebrities dominate social media platforms, flaunting their designer clothing and luxurious lifestyles. This portrayal creates an illusion that style is intrinsically tied to wealth, contributing to a culture of consumerism. People often feel pressured to conform to the latest trends by purchasing expensive clothing and accessories to fit in. The belief that fashion is a status symbol perpetuates the idea that money dictates style choices.

However, social media has also given rise to a counterculture of fashion influencers who advocate for sustainable and ethical fashion. These influencers promote the concept of investing in high-quality, long-lasting clothing items rather than succumbing to the allure of fast fashion. They encourage individuals to consider the environmental impact of their choices and prioritize ethical production practices. By shifting the narrative surrounding fashion, these influencers inspire people to view style as an expression of personal values and creativity rather than a reflection of wealth or social status.

A good example of this is the recent event of Lionel Richie’s daughter, Sofia Richie’s wedding in the South of France has been talked about all over social media of how quiet luxury can be taken in a wedding event. “I’ve always loved his timeless pieces. Sofia adds.” (Alexandra M., 2023). In terms of this, it has also shown that it is not necessarily something new in trend or style but rather a classic piece that has never been affected by how fast fashion changes over time. Financial stability plays a big role in this as it affects how they dress and their overall everyday lifestyle. “But its real meaning goes deeper: ‘quiet luxury’ is, in fact, a whole mindset for living. It’s showing an inclination towards premium basics – not just in your wardrobe, but in every aspect of your life” (Clara S., 2023). The concept of this is showing sophistication not only in occasions but as everyday luxury where it tends to be on the no-logo side of fashion. This type of everyday luxury focuses more on high quality pieces that tend to last a lifetime as it is “quiet luxury” and considered having elevated classic pieces. In terms of wealth and social status, one of HBO Max’s on-going TV show, “Succession” has successfully played a role on “quiet luxury” as it has grown into the viewers. “Like the sophisticated older siblings of the 2010s “normcore” aesthetic, the growing cultural fascination with quiet luxury has emerged with a focus on costly pieces from high-end brands that are meant to appear understated.” (Sage A., 2023). The impact of the hit TV show has shown that “less is more” although the products are of high-end prices, this creates simplicity and elegance as it is the opposite of flashy and noticeable clothing.

Another example of social media's influence is through social media platforms like TikTok and YouTube have a significant impact on society, evident in the success of accounts that showcase street fashion and conduct interviews with strangers about their clothing choices. One notable example is the TikTok account @Nyctrencs, which highlights New York City fashion trends across various neighborhoods, revealing the evolution of styles. Another notable example is the YouTube account Starlinc, which takes a similar approach by interviewing individuals about their personal style and the factors that have influenced it. When asked about their sources of inspiration, the response is often to mention browsing social media platforms or simply observing the vibrant street fashion scene in New York City. This demonstrates how digital and real-world experiences synergize to shape contemporary fashion choices.

In conclusion, the relationship between style and money is complex. While individuals with greater financial resources may have easier access to fashionable items, it does not guarantee a better sense of style. In contrast, individuals with fewer financial means often exhibit a heightened sense of creativity and individuality in their fashion choices. Social media has played a significant role in shaping the perception of style and wealth, perpetuating a culture of consumerism. However, a growing movement toward sustainable and ethical fashion challenges this notion by emphasizing the value of quality over quantity. Ultimately, style should be regarded as a reflection of one's individual taste, personality, and values rather than a mere reflection of wealth or social status. By recognizing the diverse factors that influence personal style, we can foster a more inclusive and authentic fashion culture.

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