

Diversity Of Religion In The Fashion Industry

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Abstract

This paper identifies several published articles that discuss the relationship between the fashion industry and religion. The articles all agree that fashion and religion are connected and unite people from all over the world to learn and understand one another's culture. Different types of religious clothing exist everywhere. Some famous religious clothing would include hijabs, bonnets, kippahs and turbans. Certain individuals wear special or particular clothing because their religion requires or recommends that they do so. The fashion industry is becoming more open and starting to embrace religion and culture because they see the impact they have on society. Fashion gives individuals the ability to express themselves in what they wear giving them the platform to showcase their religious beliefs and cultural viewpoints. Sometimes, especially in recent years, fashion and religion affect one another. However, one has to be mindful and careful because certain fashion statements might create controversial debate because of how seriously individuals take their religion.

Diversity of Religion in the Fashion Industry

Many religious individuals believe that clothing has a religious identification. The fashion industry platform has grown over the years by accepting and embracing individuals from all over no matter their size, religion, background, and much more. Religion is a belief and worship of the higher power, especially a personal god or gods. Religion, climate, and politics were three components that were involved in the fabrication, styling and color of the garments that people wore (Eicher, 1995). Moving forward to today's generation, the fashion industry is multi-faceted. Climate and religion are still some features in how we dress, but there are many more influences in what we choose to wear. Fashion is a representation of an individual and allows society to have an outlook on an individual's lifestyle and beliefs. Religion not only has an influence on fashion, but accessories and tattoos as well. The fashion industry and religion are diversified in their own way but are relevant to one another. Both fashion industry and religion are globally recognized. In fashion, there are numerous styles and looks that could be considered fashionable but they are completely different. Like fashion, there are several religions that are practiced differently, yet each religion is spiritual in its own. The primary goal of fashion is to make a statement based on what you wear and how you wear it. The ultimate goal is to have faith in God, no matter how or who one worship.

Fashion has a diversified platform that challenges religion/ modesty, race and social class. Fashion industry serves its purpose as unifying people from different walks of life. For some years, the fashion industry has lacked ethnicity and racial diversity, body size, and gender. All these issues including religion are now all diversified in the fashion industry. More Muslim

individuals are finding ways to break into the fashion industry. In New York Fashion Week, Somali-American model Halima Aden made her runway debut at Yeezy 5 in 2017 (Molvi, 2017). Aden walked the runway wearing her hijab. A hijab is a scarf that covers the head and neck, but leaves the face open. The hijab is commonly worn by women, but men sometimes wear the hijab for modesty. Females wear the hijab for several different reasons. Some reasons include fulfilling God's commandment for modesty, personal choice, and visibly expressing their Muslim identity. Aden was the first Miss Minnesota contestant to wear a hijab during the pageant (Molvi, 2017). This is a monumental moment for Muslim women all over the world because they are finally getting the respect and recognition they deserved after all these years. A few years back, Muslims received a lot of backlash and stereotypes because of 9/11. People made all kinds of harsh remarks and jokes to break them down. Aden is breaking all the barriers and broadcasting Muslim women all over the fashion industry. Brands such as DKNY, Mango, Dolce & Gabbana, and Uniqlo have all made collections customized to Muslim women. Sephora, a popular brand, showcased hijabis in cosmetics marketing for its Fall 2017 campaign. Given that Islam is not an ethnicity, the diversity of the Muslim population offers a double win for brands seeking to make visible their commitment to all forms of social diversity (CNN Style, 2018). The idea of religion has grown to manifest into the fashion industry, just for the simple fact that fashion has always been a tool for expression of identity. Fashion can be expressed through many ways whether it is politics, religion, society, culture, and power. The Met Gala is a huge platform where celebrities and people from all over come together to showcase and fundraise an event taking place in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute. The theme for the Met Gala in 2018 was

“Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination”. Celebrities like Rihanna, Solange, Janelle Monae, and Lily Collins referenced specific religious figures with their choice of outfit (The Conversation, 2018). The Met Gala exhibition focused mainly on Catholicism.

The diversity of religious beliefs can negatively impact the fashion industry. For example, Timberland is a well known company mainly known for their boots. Timberland is a third generation Jewish family business. The CEO of Timberland is Jeffrey Swartz. Swartz religious standards manage his decision making. Religion faces issues in the fashion industry such as lost revenue and brand image. For instance, Timberland has underperformed its rivals in recent years due to shifts in fashion (Lipton, 2010). Due to the fact that Swartz is Jewish, there are certain business decisions he might not agree with that other CEO or business owners would tolerate. This is a prime example of lost revenue because Swartz might miss out on certain opportunities because of his religious beliefs. Jean Paul Gaultier created a clothing line called “The Chosen People”. The innovation came from Judaism to create the line. The models for the clothing line wore yarmulkes and exaggerated curls (Universal Life Church, 2018). This is a notable example of brand image because Gaultier didn’t take into consideration how the religious community would react or the backlash that would come. Brand image can tarnish a business’s reputation because it’s all about the consumer perception and their feelings about that particular brand. Companies build brand image over time. Luckily enough, in Gaultier’s favor the misappropriated elements of his clothing brand didn’t affect him as much as it would to the average individual.

The diversity of religious beliefs in the fashion industry challenges consumers’ psychology and their consumer behavior. Every fashion designer has a target market that they

would like to attract. It's very rare that fashion designers' target market include the religious community. Fashion designers tend to shy away from religious community. Certain fashion statements can be problematic because of how the religion can be misinterpreted in the clothing. The fashion industry has to be mindful of how religion is being celebrated in clothing. Religious consumers might take a disliking into that particular name brand or celebrity due to the cultural appropriation and insensitivity. In particular, Lady Gaga has appropriated Muslim clothing for her own personal gain. In 2012, Gaga appeared at a London Fashion Week event with silk and fur covering her mouth like a niqab, decked with Arabian jewels frosting her forehead. For another event, she arrived on the runway in a full pink burqa that entirely cloaked her face (Kadhi, 2017). Muslim women would take offense to Lady Gaga wearing a niqab or burqa because she's not giving Muslim women the recognition for the attire; she's wearing a niqab for publicity. The reason Muslim women wear the niqab or burqa is for religious purposes, not to serve a look. Individuals have to be cautious because fashion statements can create dispute because of how serious religion is.

I strongly believe that religion should be accepted all through the fashion world because the fashion industry has this platform where individuals can self present and self promote who one is and what one stands for. The fashion industry is changing directions and shifting their ultimate goal to welcoming individuals from all backgrounds. The idea of diversifying the fashion industry shows authenticity by having individuals all come together to reach a common goal. This is well needed in the fashion industry because people get the chance to learn and grow

from their peers of different backgrounds. The fashion industry is one of the few platforms in society that has the skill of bringing individuals from different walks of life together as one.

Currently, fashion and religion affect one another. Nevertheless, one has to be conscious and aware because certain fashion statements might create controversy due to individuals' religious beliefs. Different religions and ethnicity are gracing the fashion industry by giving individuals inspiration showing one that anything in this world is possible. Religion becoming more diversified in the fashion industry is giving individuals from the younger generation someone to look up to who matches their religious beliefs.

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