PERCEPTION OF DRESS

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ABSTRACT

Research in the area of Dress & Color perception in relation to media for social classes will be observed and examined from many different levels. How it is being implemented in the fashion industry and its effects on society will also be determined. The goal of this research is how society uses dress in the media and the art of expressing it through garments as well as how this affects social classes. My interest in how this will affect the future, whether it is more harmful to how people interact and its divide of haves and have not could either shrink through dress perception or increase it. I will explore not only the effects social media has on the fashion industry but as well as on its consumers while conducting field research with hopes of exploiting the psychological effects social media causes. With social media constantly pushing society at a blistering rate, it has changed people's views on how we should dress which has given us as individuals many different options. While technology for some is very important, others fail to realize that as we let technology become more involved in our lives it gives off social class perception in the way we dress.

Keywords: Perception, Color, Media, Trend, Clothing, And Social Classes

INTRODUCTION

Often times when we dress we neglect to realize where that very own symbiosis of the outfit derived from. This creation of pulling symmetry and color blocking may feel like it came directly from your intuitions but in the long run these decisions took hold long before you even woke up to pick out your next day's wear. As society has grown, especially in America, generations of different clothing styles and inventions have allowed society to value wardrobe as a method in deciding who you were, where you came from, and what it is you do. Allowing dress to push through and give people a freedom of expression through what they wear, no longer creates limits for perceived work uniforms or restrictions on when to wear things. This applies as well to cultural attires such as the African Dashiki. This Dashiki was traditionally worn as a work tunic made of cotton for comfortability and coolness in the warm African climates. The dashiki ethnically worn dates back to as early as the 12th century however in today's society the dashiki is worn as a fashion trend worn by celebrities such as Zendaya, Rihanna and even Beyonce (Durosomo, 2017). These freedoms have been pushed forward even more through media, specifically social media. As technology has intertwined itself with this society, media has allowed communication of dress to become bigger in certain cultures and spun into its very own language. This language has managed to create different sectors of our community; Contrary to commonly held beliefs, men have often been shown to be more self-conscious than females with regards to their personal dress sense and the way in which they are viewed in public (Solomon and Schopler, 1982). These subcultures have cultivated itself from the factor that dress has become more than just clothing to each gender but rather a staple within each individual. Dress is a personal language that you wear and speak without words.

Your dress can even be the feeling of your mood depending on its colors and patterns. Dress has never played a more pivotal role in society and like it or not, your clothing presentation communicates volumes about you as a person. The question is not whether you care about fashion; it's more about what you're communicating intentionally or unconsciously through your fashion choices. Just as the actor in the right costume moves and speaks differently, so does the everyday person (St.Louis, 2017). This research topic has become increasingly important and has helped fashion designers and big business using design to further help pushing a paradox in society's way of life. These moves have helped cultivate a new way in the body language being read and how the market is constantly shifting through fashion, blending itself into the media. Using its advantageous power in that it is cyclically unstoppable and in reality an opening gate into consumers thought process at any age. As this is being used to formulate opinions on what should become daily wear, it also has allowed societal classes to really interact more than ever. The level of interpersonal communication and product usage has become surprisingly easy to be aware of. Designers now have the opportunity to easily analyze how their products are being used and the impacts it serves to the everyday consumer through the means of social media. However, with more opening there also arises the chance of division in which there is a constant wave of trying to keep up with society and can then create standards made through temporary opinions which alter history. Dress has constantly evolved and society has used this evolution not only to show class, but as a way to communicate feelings and emotions in accordance to creating visual art that many people still adore and have been inspired by. Dress has become the new language for individuals as we have grown into a society that uses technology and media to express ourselves rather than through oral communication. Whether you are male or female, your

fashion choices can affect both your self image and the impression that you convey to others. These two factors in turn play a large role on the way in which people behave towards you. They can influence everything from the outcome of a sports match (Hill and Barton, 2005) to an interviewer's impression of your ability to perform effectively in a job position (Forsythe, 2006).[23] Let's take this specific example of a job interview into consideration. The moment you step into the office of the interviewee, you are being judged and receiving a mental evaluation based on how you are dressed. This evaluation and first impression can ultimately set the tone for the rest of the conversation.

This is paramount with so much being based off what you wear or how the colors of that outfit give off the mood, feeling and your true personality which can imply who you have become. The overall person has so much more decision-making than they fail to realize. It has become a physiological decision and how you stand out, self identify and individualize have increasingly developed more in the age of media. Self-identification progression has coincided with a person's dress; researching how both combine to effect psychological, social and consumer thoughts will be a point of emphasis.

Literature Review

Self expression through dress has been happening for centuries. We as people have manipulated many forms of clothing. We have cut down, shrunk, expanded and even patched together many different sources together in an attempt to create a new one. Something that many people neglect is that everyone expresses themselves through color. From the moment we pick out our clothes in the morning, to the shade of lipstick or scarf we put on, even to the time we put on our pajamas at night, color factors into how we convey emotion, identity, and meaning (Shutterstock,

2017). Color being so important, subconsciously makes things that much more difficult for people in society to quantify how to use color, it and why it is chosen. The average consumer believes color is something that companies randomly choose and implement into their designs and this couldn't be further from the truth. Companies take years at a time to get ahead of color trends, never become very far off. Color is a constantly shifting target, but getting your color branding just right takes a lot more than chaotic experimentation. It takes a lot of work. Years of work, in fact (Shutterstock, 2017). These companies have taken huge amounts of study and research into what could possibly be the next big colors of the upcoming seasons. Every year, Pantone releases two reports — spring and fall — based largely on the color trends fashion designers will be using in their upcoming collections (Wegert, 2016). By using Pantone, a lot of the fashion industry are given the chance to utilize this research to enhance its designs. It does not however remain as the only way fashion chooses colors. Many companies still continue to use customer opinion and surveyors to gain results on what could possibly be the next big hue. Brands such as Ralph Lauren practice this all the time. Lauren, who will create a rugged look for their next season, features color palettes in which he uses that can literally determine the story being told. If he were to choose lighter hues, the ability to sell a more rugged approach to that years line would become more difficult. This is an example on how perception highly affects dress. Colors broadly align with specific traits (e.g., brown with ruggedness, purple with sophistication, and red with excitement). Nearly every academic study on colors and branding will tell you that it's far more important for your brand's colors to support the personality you want to portray instead of trying to align with stereotypical color associations (Ciotti, 2016). In marketing, there is a term referred to as brand personality. This is the overall characteristics

attached to a brand which offers customers a feeling by shopping with the brand and increase its equity. Brands have to constantly use colors to sell the story of their product or perception of what they are selling. This only becomes easier through purposeful color usage but are driven through technology and social media.

People are not only shopping in large stores such as Macy's or Nordstrom these days. The development of social media marketing and automation has made it so you can get your clothing and accessories in front of the right people, at the right time (postcon, 2017). Social media has helped companies leverage the direct to consumer purchasing and gave buyers unlimited power for brands to control the narrative at a higher speed. In doing this, brands have been able to cultivate what image they are seen in, what are they selling and how it can be purchased. Although this increases the product value by diminishing the time cost it has for customers, this power for brands has easily made it harder in getting away from the pack in the fashion industry. Trends on social media and its acceptance in society influence its viewers to purchase similar if not the identical item. This has caused fast fashion stores such as Forever21 and H&M to quickly adapt and accommodate for these new fads in fashion. Those provide trending fashion easily have more access to what the consumer wants and how to affect the purchasing. With all this leverage and technology, fashion designers have adapted to the almost-insatiable shopping appetite of their consumers by creating a strong presence on social media, even revealing collections in real-life time as opposed to the six-month lag time through possible features such as live streaming accessible through platforms like Instagram and Facebook (Claire, 2017) . As social media becomes more of an influence on everyday society the fashion industry will continue to find more ways to cultivate its ability to market and sell its products in more

streamlined and efficient ways. Fashion companies continue to implement new forms of power in controlling their image in perception to consumers. The industry is moving fast to reclaim their power. Google is launching a new program which allows brands themselves to control what consumers see first in search results especially around the time of prominent events like Fashion Week (Fateh, 2017). Technology has become a huge tool in the industry and the way it controls the voice of the brands selling to consumers will constantly be influx. Consumers overtime grow smarter and brands try to remain in control of their marketing and influences on the consumer through color, advertisements and direct to marketing and selling used on various social media networks.

How does society perceive color in everyday dress?

Color could be considered a visual language. It can influence thinking and affect how humans act. Red can lead to anger & green can help create calm. Colors can cause happy feelings, as well as sad ones. Some colors even cause a feeling of hunger. (James, 2017). The use of colors in our dress has become more than just a simple selection of color preference. It really has become a language that everyday people choose from and speak through. By doing this it allows society to express themselves in more than just what they wear but the colors they are wearing can help to connect and unite similar individuals. This creation of a new language has been growing for years and is still prevalent in the present day. "The name for the show reflects the way that we connect and it speaks to color playing a big part in our civil existence" (James, 2017). Color selection has started to become studied upon further for it's meaning in everyday wear and how they affect people. The colors we choose to surround ourselves affect us more than we think and this has created more layers in how as a society we act around others in social settings. We

associate colors with so many different things - they have meanings beyond simple visual stimulation. Some studies even suggest that we *feel* colors more than we see them (Zephyr, 2017). Although the colors we see can alter your rods and cones located in the human retina, it can also physically alter the mental state of your emotions as your reactance to the given color.

Does culture affect perception in dress or is there a standard in which society attains their ideals of dress?

Culture perception of dress has been in effect in essence since the 1940s and one way of this accomplishment was through color and identifying masculine or feminine identifiers in those given colors. Proving clothing color serves as a potent cue for gender categorization, especially in infancy (Shakin, Shakin, & Sternglanz, 1985), this can be crucial because gender cues in jaw lines, brows, and hair length, among other characteristics, are not yet discernable (Brown & Perrett, 1993). With these factors, society has used colors to identify gender, this allowed society to eventually to push towards how to determine male or female dress and what is appropriate (Zeev & Dennehy, T.C. 2014). Earlier times would prove clothing was not just decided by gender. In ancient Rome, most of the designs of a cloth garment took place on the loom, which meant everyone wore what were essentially long rectangles of draped fabric. Those long rectangles eventually developed a hole for the wearer's head and stitched sides, becoming a tunic(Bain,2015). In these cases, history has proven society is growing and creating standards which dress has been formed over time. European culture would ultimately start this standard between genders; sexual characteristics became more important in European clothes, partly on

account of the men's incredible shrinking tunics (Bain, 2015). These developments would continue even further in ideally pushing how society should dress and how there was no strict code on deciding form or color. This is proven by trade publication Earnshaw's Infants' Department as they declared that "pink, being a more decisive and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, being more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl."(Bain, 2015). This statement would change in the US by the 1940s as it was decided blue was more masculine for boys and pink would be more feminine for girls. Within the years in which these two color analysis were given, the concepts of the colors shifted. This is why colors can be so dynamic. The color orange, which is named after the english fruit, portrays feelings such as enthusiasm and even balance (Douma, 2008). In today's age orange is highly implemented in fashion. With characteristics such as energy, one can assume the color orange to be found in matching items such as perhaps a bathing suit. However, the color orange has had high sales in work based attire like puffer vest and heavy layering gear. Although these garments are typically synonymous with aggressive and laborious impressions, by implementing the color orange into the gear, it shifts the perception of both the color and the garment of choice. Perhaps these are some of the reasons for the change in color stereotypes found for newborn children. In a study conducted in 1976 by Rikard Kuller, six men and six women were placed in two two rooms with very different surroundings. One room was colorful and complex whereas the second room was very monotone and grey. Electroencephalograms which recorded brain activity and pulse rates were recorded throughout the duration of the stay in these rooms. The results found more increased heart rates in the gray room than in the colorful room. Surprisingly enough, men were found to have higher stress levels than women in either of the two rooms. This not only gave Kuller results on the various roles

color plays on emotions but he was also able to discover how men could not reach the same level of relaxation as woman based on the brain activities collected (N. Khouw).

Fashion & Media: Are they tools to express social standards and perceptions in dress?

Society is built up of classes which include but are not limited to race, gender and economy. As we continue to see these divides in society, these classifications in fashion and media become means by which one can differentiate or stand together in a class. This has only increased in the years over time as social media has increased in popularity after the development and increased sales of smartphones and tablets skyrocketed. There are various types of "social apps", where millions of people can create their own profile and communicate with each other (Smith, 2014). This has proven that over time as media has grown into society's everyday lives, it has become a new bearer of societal acceptance. With a 24 hour cycle of social media and fashion blending into oneself this has helped create social opinions that play a significant role in our lives, but are we changing ourselves too much in order to maintain an 'accepted' identity instead of simply being ourselves? This is the danger of the social 'façade' (Fearon, 2016). With the dangers of a social façade continuing to develop for current users in technology, this has only increased the fashion industry and media to further strengthen its hold on cultivating what they truly hold the standard bearers in dress and color by virtue of being the social acceptance in these society classes. Fashion brands have become symbolic meanings to many in society and their values are derived from these perception and social acceptance. With this factor it becomes increasingly distinctive to have many societal classes align themselves with certain brands. As these brands lend there value and history in their clothing, it creates another form of perception for the

consumer lending itself the legitimacy by wearing and giving off the message the said wearer intended to have. Using this, the fashion industry has pushed into psychology and used media as methods to pushing its message and acceptance by many in daily lives. A business man in a suit, or a woman in a beautiful dress, these images while classic become more powerful when aligned with certain brands and the value they hold on society.

Methodology

The observational technique and small sample interviews were used in the methodology in places such as areas and boroughs along with general places such as the train and school. These findings concluded that Fashion psychology is the "study and treatment of how color, image, style and beauty affects human behavior, while addressing cultural norms and cultural sensitivities (Miller, 2018). Using this observational tactic was helpful and eye opening because dress defines a lot of our current social status. First impressions of people come from their inner motivations on why they dress the way they do. While field observation was the key strategic tool in the research, secondary literature and articles as well were used to find key research data. These observations would consist of daily rides on the MTA with notes being taken and color palettes noted. This would help reveal what wardrobes were worn throughout seasonal changes to help determine how these are used by varying degrees to different social classes. The interview consisted of two parts, the first being a pre-screened process of seeing if the participants were fashion knowledgeable to a degree. This determined if they had any fashion idols and or if they followed any blogs or fashion websites they thoroughly enjoyed visiting. The latter part of the interview was a series of short open ended questions to reveal the participants

thoughts of perception of how they viewed someone's outfit they encountered on their travels. Were there certain colors that affected their views in there own dress or someone they see? What role did social media have on them when choosing their daily outfits? Did they feel they subconsciously choose what they wore or was it strictly personal conscious decision-making? Is there a belief that dress associated them to certain social classes and perceptions or does the individual in you decide that at first ? Did what you wear have no actual opinion of the person you meet? Another part of data that was collected from the participants in this step was demographic based questions, which included age, ethnicity and origins. Participants were observed through my daily travel and selected who best possibly could fit the criteria. The participants were given a number to contain anonymity in the collection of the answers they would give.

Participants

There were a total of 10 participants in the interview process. Eight of these participants originally resided from NYC the two other from California and North Carolina. The age ranges were from 21-35. This target for the participants allowed my to attain a diverse enough audience population helped me to determine any vast differences among younger adults in contrast to those in early adulthood. 100% percent of the participants were employed and had been in nyc for a minimum of approximately over two years.The participants indicated all that they have at least one form of social media, are interested in fashion to a degree, follow blogs and lastly have a fashion idol. 60% percent of the participants stated they care about their appearance and perception to others and where they stand in the fashion community. The remaining 40% percent

stated they dress more for personal satisfaction and less of what one perceives. By having a fair amount in population of those cautious of their dress as well as those who are not so much, we are able to have gage a degree of self-conscious levels.

Findings

Participants were found really concerned about their daily wear and how they would perceived to the outside world. Many felt that it really helped them and how they would approach another person or even how positive or negative the day could go. Some issues that came from the interview was the never ending process to keeping up with peers, social media and its constant advertisements lending itself to creating more pressure on individuals to look the part. As predicted, this pressure on individuals caused by social media can affect the way consumers think, act and even wear. One participant stated they felt that their workplace had put them in a designated area due to the type of clothing that was worn by them in the workplace.

Below are some responses found from our participants. Their identity is kept confidential.

" I really feel like a different person when I put on a new pair of sneakers or a brand new outfit and head out the door, I feel like I can take on the world and that all eyes would be on me. Not being from New York just feels like I have to be even more on point with my dress.(Participant #4)

"You realize that you're in competition with who? Yourself ? The attention you crave from the eyes on you at work or on my train ride or that bar I stop by on the weekends? Sometimes i'm

just shopping wondering will this get me the looks I want , will I be what I'm portraying". Is it even worth the effort to stress about it? (Participant #5)

"Subconsciously I choose what I wear for the reactions of others, I only realized this after I was more excited about the fact that someone appreciated what I was wearing was brand new then me actually liking it from the beginning. I realized social media plays a part in this with the mixing of music , art and fashion all in my hand".(Participant #6)

These participants indicated that not only did how they dress affect them and those around them, but also how they would shop even leading up to that moment when they leave their homes as well as the feeling. The psychological effect of feeling someone's approval through how you dress, or what the possible social interactions they could receive from what they wore.

"I love web surfing for deals and I enjoy keeping up with trends , who really wants to look like an antique or not in the know, being fashionable is huge to me. It's literally the first thing someone will see".(Participant 2).

"Kanye West really got me into fashion with his Louis Vuitton collection, I really feel he is a huge trendsetter and I use social media to stay up to trend. I do feel what we wear now is more than we are looked as, we barely speak to each other so our eyes make the decisions for us on where we stand in the group". (Participant 8)

"When you think about it would you have stopped me if you didn't think I was fashionable? That there alone answers your questions on perception. It's so subconscious in our opinions that we already pick where someone belongs with there dress, I love fashion for this tool to individualize us and make us different. That's what social media is for ".(Participant 1)

Social class isn't decided in what I dress in , but there is a perception of if I'm clean, or where I could be from on what I wear to my job or on an everyday basis. Media helps propel this idea but I feel since im from California there isn't much thought into clothing or the perception they have on people. I really feel new Yorkers are always in competition it be for a train seat or the first in a movie line and being best dressed is just another form of this".(Participant 7)

Participants here clearly valued media and many of the powers that it uses to cultivate imagery for them and who they can become. Also a big theme was the fact that the feeling of clothing gave them and the language it spoke for them around people. They spoke on how their environment had an impact on how they would approach their dress and subconscious theories on fashion. No matter who you are you are viewing visually you make decisions on them through a prior thought process of a value system in your mind.

"This is the first time I ever felt the need to think if what I dress in is perceived in a certain way, I usually dress for myself and let everything else play itself out. I'm not huge on social media I feel it has psychological effect of the disease wanting "more". Social class theory will always be

more about clothing and dress but I feel in quick viewings it can base someone's decision off what I wear".(Participant 3)

"I'd hope media didn't help choose my outfit but if it did , I wouldn't be surprised at all, even though I usually try to keep up. I also want my perception be more than what I wear". (Participant 9)

"Just sometimes I do look at someone's shoes and be like hmm, does that make me self conscious maybe but it is important to me on how you dress. I do believe in fashion there is dress perception in societal classes, how can we have so many options yet not make beliefs and decisions about one another through the dress we have". (Participant 10)

Results And Discussions

Many of these participants examined could identify with the concept that you are perceived not only by your creed or ethnicity but how you dress as it is usually the first thing seen by many in this day and age. As Kaiser stated, in the clothing and human behavior literature, terms such as person perception, social perception, and impression formation are often used to describe the cognitive processes used in making judgments of others based upon their appearance (Kaiser, 1985, p. 220). As with Kaiser stating participants really proved that when making decisions on their own dress, it was with some that thoughts of how they would be perceived socially and what reactions would come from there dress choices. With participants proving that there is a factor of prior thoughts and history creating these perceptions. An inescapable part of all perception is categorization. It is impossible to look at an object without identifying the object as "something". Therefore, instead of treating all objects as different, they are grouped into categories (Rosch, 1973). Participants would voice these opinions on how they would have a thought or an opinion on someone's dress and the color of what was worn before even knowing the person or actually being in the presence for then a moment. Information gathered is really in line with the effect of stereotyping on evaluations of individuals is complex and involves more than simple categorization (Jussim, Coleman, & Lerch, 1987; Taylor & Falcone, 1982). However, as previously noted, categorization processes may distort or bias the perception of individuals. Since visual characteristics can be manipulated through the use of clothing, the part clothing plays in the stereotyping process warrants additional research. This supported what most participants had previously said in the questioning. Although some believed people perceived them beyond their clothing, it was still first visual factor involved when either being introduced

or being seen, and with this it played huge into the factors on some of their decision making. Miller states indeed that individuals do differ in the extent to which they use physical appearance cues in forming impressions of others (Miller, et al., 1982). Its in align with the participants in that most feel there dress is important and really displays who they are from the beginning of social interactions in various locations.

Limitations

One of the many limiting factors in this research was a very limited diverse pool of participants to interview and attain data from. The participants while all living in new york , there was not of enough of a pinpointed factor. This led to many responses being very open and leading to the data being skewed as living in new York has a factor in there responses. The interview points as well were very difficult as observing on the train and small interviews led to many participants politely passing. Another contributing factor could possibly be the answers were affected by the participant's usage of social media. Their exposure to the topic may have been more limited than others. These contributing factors helped in limiting the collection of more data for the research necessary. Four months might have not been enough time to collect enough data and research the patterns and information that was collected to gather a better response to the abstract.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Suggestions for this future study would be a longer period of time to gain more data. possibly opening the range of participants to really get a more balanced response. A further geographical response from newer participants is needed as the limited amount of people gathered were all in

the same geographical range. By changing the amount of individuals participating the the experiment, we could get a larger diversity pool helping us to possibly determine the effects of social media on dress among other people among different regions. Intertwining the participants at different times of the year while seasons change could reveal how the perception of what they wear is connected to the fashion industry trends changing. Another way to improve this research for a future study would be to ask participants of the social class they belonged to as well as the social class they feel others view them to be in. This could help determine how fashion facades could be a dominant factor in what individuals choose to wear. The goal in this research as ultimately to finding out if social perception is affected by the dress of these participants and figure outfit if this perception and social acceptance change over time with knowledge and age. More time would also give the researcher a chance to reach out to companies and see how participants influence decisions on a business aspect and why society feels the precognitive perceptions of people by their dress in all walks of life.

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