

Inclusivity in the fashion industry
Research paper
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The fashion industry has had an ongoing struggle with exclusivity and setting unrealistic beauty standards for millions of people and especially the young generations. However, in recent years this unrealistic standard of beauty has expanded and changed for the better. The concept of inclusivity has caused this awakening of the fashion industry to embrace diversity and accept it in all its forms. This research paper focuses on exploring the importance of inclusivity and the initiatives taken towards it in the fashion industry, analyzing the factors driving this change, its impact it has had on society, and what the future of it could mean.

Over the years, the fashion industry has been called out for its lack of diversity and representation, representing an idealized image of beauty that is unattainable for most people. This tailored definition of beauty excluded all types of people and not just based on their body parts but people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, body sizes, and abilities but also set hurtful stereotypes and caused many individuals to have low self-esteem and body image issues.

However, the fashion industry is changing and expanding. In the past few years, there has been a high demand for more inclusiveness and representation in fashion. Consumers are demanding for brands that celebrate diversity and challenge beauty standards that have struck around for years. This growing urging demand has forced the industry to take notice and make changes because it's the only way they can stay relevant.

Inclusivity in the fashion industry includes much more than race and body size. Brands are now recognizing the importance of showcasing models and unique individuals who reflect the

diversity of their customer base. By doing so, they encourage inclusivity but also improve their reputation and what they stand for, as consumers lean more to supporting brands that align with their values.

In addition to consumer demanding change, the rise of social media and all the new online platforms has played a pivotal role in promoting inclusivity in the fashion industry. Social media has given a voice and platform to minority communities, allowing them to challenge the traditional standards and demand representation. Influencers and activists have utilized their platforms to advocate for inclusivity and hold brands accountable for their lack of diversity. This change and shift in the outlook of what beauty is has been revolutionary and forced brands to rethink their strategies and take initiatives in the right direction.

As inclusivity becomes a major and basic value in the fashion industry, it is essential to examine the impact it has had on society. By embracing diversity and inclusivity, the industry has the power to change and challenge societal perceptions, take away the stereotypes, and empower individuals to embrace their unique identities. Fashion brands have made it their mission to put out fashion campaigns and runway shows that inspire and create a sense of belonging among individuals who have always been discriminated against or not shown any representation.

The fashion industry mostly considers and makes clothes for average women to skinny women. For instance; the average body size in the United Kingdom is size 16 for women and size 30 for men. This means that only the people within that size range are able to access the clothes in fashion. Growing up in my country there would be separate stores where plus size clothing would be sold. This always made me question why that was a thing and even though I wasn't aware of the significance of inclusivity and diversity it simply seemed unfair.

A brand that has mastered the art of representation and is an example of what more companies and cosmetic lines should follow in its footsteps is “Fenty beauty” by Rihanna. Rihanna was one of the first emerging brands that was able to completely challenge the beauty industry and redefine what beauty standards meant for everyone. With its wide range of products catering to all different skin tones, Fenty Beauty’s clear mission was her commitment to inclusivity. has become a catalyst for change in the beauty industry. We will further discuss how Fenty Beauty has successfully represented inclusivity, examining the impact it has had on the industry and how it empowers people all around the world to embrace their unique beauty.

Fenty Beauty, first launched by singer Rihanna in 2017. It made an immediate and fast impact on the beauty industry, because Rihanna was very well known and beloved. The way the brand was announced and how it came about to the people is introducing a groundbreaking foundation range that includes a large selection of shades to cater to individuals with all different skin tones and undertones. This wasn’t a normal occurrence in the beauty industry, a brand coming out with an initial shade range of 50 different shades was innovative and as equally needed.

Fenty Beauty acknowledged the lack of diversity within the beauty community and ensured that any individual who was interested in her cosmetics line could find a suitable match to match their skin tone.

This commitment to inclusivity was a significant change from the traditional beauty industry norms of offering limited shade ranges that excluded people with darker or lighter skin tones.

Fenty Beauty's emphasis on a wide range of shades sent a powerful message. Fenty Beauty only put out foundation shades but they also introduced a diverse range of products, including highlighters, lipsticks, and eyeshadows, that catered to different skin tones and occasions, the muted and classy or the bright and colorful. By offering a collection that celebrated diversity,

Fenty Beauty challenged the toxic idea that beauty products should only be targeted towards a specific group of people.

In addition to its amazing products range, Fenty Beauty's marketing and advertising campaigns played a crucial role in promoting inclusivity. The brand featured models of various ethnicities, skin tones, and body types, showcasing a diverse range of beauty which has never been done by any other brand. The campaign with models of all different skin tones and undertones made for a breathtaking, groundbreaking launch that was discussed and praised for months to come. By doing so, Rihanna shattered beauty norms with Fenty Beauty and empowered individuals to embrace their unique features, regardless of what they look or where they come from.

Furthermore, Fenty Beauty's went over and beyond beyond its product range and those genius marketing campaigns. The brand actively connected with its customer base, seeking feedback and listening to their needs. This open conversation and communication allowed Fenty Beauty to continuously improve and expand on what they bring to the beauty industry based on their consumer needs to better cater to them. Involving your customers in the product development process is another genius initiative Fenty Beauty accomplished because it shows how dedicated the brand is to satisfy the customers and make the changes if necessary. The huge success of Fenty Beauty has had a profound and lasting impact on the beauty industry. It's observable that other brands have taken notice following the launch of Fenty beauty and started to prioritize inclusivity in their product range and marketing strategies. The influence of Fenty Beauty can be seen in the expansion of availability of wider shade ranges and the new campaigns that emphasize on diversity and challenge beauty norms when brands didn't necessarily incorporate that before

In conclusion, Fenty Beauty by Rihanna has played a pivotal role in representing inclusivity in the beauty industry. Through its wide shade range, diverse products range, inclusive marketing campaigns, and customer to business approach, Fenty Beauty has become a catalyst for change, redefining beauty standards and empowering minority groups to embrace their uniqueness. As Fenty Beauty continues to pave the way for inclusivity, it's truly an inspiration for the industry to embrace diversity and take away traditional beauty norms.

Another huge issue that the fashion industry has been facing and struggling with for years is the lack of diversity in models' body types and the unrealistic, unhealthy beauty standard for women's bodies.

The fashion industry mostly takes into consideration and makes clothes for skinny women to medium sized women which is not what the majority of the population are. For instance; the average body size in the United Kingdom is size 16 for women and size 30 for men. This means that only the people within that size range are able to access the clothes that are fashionable and with difficulty. Growing up in my country there would be separate stores where plus size clothing would be sold. This always made me ponder why someone would do such a thing and

even though I wasn't consciously aware of the significance of inclusivity and diversity it simply seemed unfair.

Fashion is something every individual considers in their lives because each person has their own style and a certain way they view dressing up/down . Besides, all people love to dress well because dressing influences our self-esteem (Lewis, 2019). However, when a person is not in the average size range category, they are referred to as “plus-size” or petite. These groups of people are usually left feeling left out while shopping or exploring new fashion to venture into. This issue leads to much bigger issues ,for example body shaming women who are not within what society has deemed to be “beautiful” or “the norm” and that escalates to women having serious body image issues .Through my research paper, I would like to mention simple solutions and recommendations from my point of view for individuals who are excluded and feel left out by the fashion industry and their lack of inclusion. Firstly, the fashion industry has to develop more clothing lines for women from size zero to forty, it shouldn't take you to a different website/ process when you choose to shop for plus-size/ petite because these are reasons that further cause consumers to feel left out and I believe that the little details are crucial when it comes to things like that. It should feel like all women are welcomed and celebrated and that they can all come to this one happy place, feel like they belong and have a pleasant experience . This would ensure that all women are included, besides this would give women the reassurance that if they choose to visit these stores or shopping online that they'll find clothing suitable to them, because when they don't it causes this sense of discrimination.

Size inclusivity remains an issue in the fashion industry because the categories of people who are left out and body shamed cannot speak for themselves because they aren't insiders of the industry but in the past few years more and more models have noticed the lack of diversity and started speaking about how there should be more body sizes and shapes included on the runway, photoshoots and campaigns . Recently, the Chromat clothing collection introduced the Becca McCharen-Tran design which includes clothing sizes for all sizes for women (Thompsons et al, 2020). Chromate also introduced clothing lines that would fit all women and men across different body sizes, abilities and body shapes in addition to including different ethnicities. This is the first time a clothing brand designs a collection with a particular cloth that would suit the needs of all women. This event was all over the news because in the history of America, fashionable clothes are mostly designed for average size women or what society has made "average" but this event would launch new clothes that include all body sizes. Fashion models in the Chromat designer company report that they felt the forthcoming plus-size clothes would make them more comfortable because their audience would expand to all people with different shapes. That was also a smart business move because they would get more exposure and their target market would expand, the important thing however, is to ensure consistency in the fashion industry.

Before understanding the impact of lack of inclusivity in the fashion industry for plus-size people, it is important to understand why the issue exists. Firstly, lack of inclusivity in the fashion industry is present because designers usually design clothes for models that are size 0 to 4. Therefore, the audience interprets that the clothes are meant for small or average sized people. Therefore most stores are designed to body shame plus size women and men, even though it wasn't said directly it is still body shaming. Secondly, plus size people rarely speak out on their needs. For instance, the American fashion industry is driven by the wants of the customers rather

than the needs of the customer. Therefore, when one plus size person goes out shopping, they are likely to feel left out and because they can't find their sizes. Lastly, the world entertains the idea that plus size people cannot wear designer clothes, thus they are rarely considered.

A brand that has come under fire is YSL. Yves Saint Laurent has always used unhealthily thin models for his campaigns and on the runway and not only do they simply look too skinny they seem dangerously malnourished, I'll include pictures for some of the models who have participated in that show. A big scandal was his campaign in the spring of 2015 where the theme was dark, rock and roll chic with the inspiration of youth and rebellion in mind. When that campaign came out.

Lack of inclusivity affects customers' self-esteem and confidence (Peters, 2017). Most of the plus size women do not feel included in the trending clothes because they cannot get the clothes that fit them. Sometimes, the fashion industry and certain clothing lines earn less revenue than it should because of lack of inclusion. If all people are included there could be better sales and higher revenue.

The industry should make it their mission to go out of their way with every collection and any release to make sure it's diverse and inclusive as much as they possibly can. Other brands and companies should take notes from Savage x fenty by Rihanna in their inclusion skills for all body shapes, complexions and races. This company has reached a new level of inclusivity and representation and set a new standard for other brands launching any new collection. Rihanna made national news when she came out with savage x fenty and fenty beauty (her beauty/ makeup line). Rihanna's collections are the definition of diversity and diversity done right. In her

last collection not only did she include women of all races, shapes and sizes she also included diverse male models.

A final but great example of a brand that has caused backlash and almost went bankrupt because the lack of inclusivity and diversity amongst its models, is Victoria's Secret. Victoria's Secret has always been ridiculed for setting unrealistic beauty standards for women and young girls.

Showcasing only extremely thin models on runways and campaigns has led to millions of people around the world to develop body image issues and eating disorders.

The scandal started when Ed Razek, the Chief Marketing Officer of Victoria's Secret's, made controversial comments in a 2018 interview, claiming that the brand had no plans to include transgender or plus-size models in their shows because they did not fit the "fantasy" image they were trying to put out there. These comments sparked outrage and led to criticism of Victoria's Secret's outdated approach.

In response to the backlash, the brand faced declining sales and a significant loss of market share. Many consumers, especially younger generations, began demanding greater representation and inclusivity in the fashion industry. They called for brands to embrace diversity and showcase models of different sizes, ethnicities, and backgrounds.

As a result, Victoria's Secret has been forced by the world to reevaluate its whole brand image and do the right thing. In 2019, the brand announced that its annual fashion show was canceled, claiming that it no longer resonated with consumers. In addition, Victoria's Secret hired its first transgender model and made efforts to include more diverse models in its campaigns.

While these changes are steps in the right direction, many argue that they are not enough to make up for the years of exclusion and damage caused by the brand's toxic representation. The scandal

surrounding Victoria's Secret is an example and a powerful reminder to the fashion industry of the importance of inclusivity and the need to challenge those toxic beauty standards.

In conclusion, the fashion industry is going through a transformative change towards inclusivity, which is delightful to witness. After exploring the changes and the impact it has had on society, and the future possibilities and lasting impact inclusivity can cause, we can gain a deeper understanding of how inclusivity is able to reshape the fashion industry and redefine traditional beauty standards.

Resources:

Lewis, R. (2019). Modest body politics: The commercial and ideological intersect of fat, black, and Muslim in the modest fashion market and media. *Fashion Theory*, 23(2), 243-273.

Peters, L. D. (2017). "Fashion Plus": Pose and the Plus-Size Body in Vogue, 1986–1988. *Fashion Theory*, 21(2), 175-199.

Thompson, M. L., & McKinney, E. C. (2020, December). Is the Body Positive Movement Too Narrow?: Extra Large Insights Into Plus Size Men and Clothing Offerings. In *International Textile and Apparel Association Annual Conference Proceedings* (Vol. 77, No. 1). Iowa State University Digital Press.