Aspects of Fashion, Psychology, Luxury

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overview

• Introduction
• Some history
• Fashion theories
• Repeated exposure & change
• Summing up – psychology reclaims fashion
Theories

Fashion theories: social groups & differentiation & Theory of conspicuous consumption

• ‘Trickle Down Theory’; ‘bubble up’
• Theory of fashion spread; Shared consciousness and ‘Collective selection’
• psychodynamic ‘theory of shifting erogenous zones’
• repeated exposure
Related issues psychologically

• The self & Group identity, self esteem
• personality
• attitudes
• Symbolic interaction
• Factors relevant to consumption
• Impression management
• Psychological factors in change
Fashion, change, Luxury

- Is it all relative?
- Is it sinful and materialistic?
- Sumptuary laws
- Social order
- Genderisation and class
Royalty, aristocracy
Class, power & wealth
Georg Simmel

- 1858-1918, a sociologist and philosopher
- Georg Simmel, attempted to explain the rapid diffusion and changes in what was fashionable
- Ideas embedded in society of the time and previous history- none the less very insightful, and essentially psychological
Two contradictory ‘drives’

• To imitate & belong
• Two contradictory desires to *individuate* and be *distinct*
• One class imitates/aspires to the other (above) this leads to change
• Within the group fashions satisfy the need for social adaptation, and belonging
“Agreeable mixture of approval and envy”

• Psychological factors of the self in adornment, clothing, possessions

• “every property is an extension of personality....we possess more”
‘Conspicuous consumption’

• Veblen, 1899
• Private property (having) and individualism (being) (Dehier, 1992)
• Conspicuous waste (potlatch, ceremonial distribution of property/ gifts to reaffirm social status; Kwakiutl People)
• Conspicuous leisure
• Being ‘up to date’
Status and the superfluous

- Psychological purpose
- The handbag ‘craze’
- The more ‘useless’ or unnecessary = the more an expression of status
- Explains ‘extremes’ in shoes etc
- fake goods?
Modern approaches

• Trickle Down
• Bubble UP
• Bubble up & then Trickle down
• Individual Innovators (King 1963), like ‘Heroes’ in other words essentially about personality
Trickle down
Bubble up

• Trickle-up -styles seen in the streets and is the newest of the fashion movement theories. In this theory the innovation is initiated from the streets and adopted from Lower class income-groups. The innovation eventually flows to Upper class-income groups; thus the movement is traveling from the bottom up (Theories of Fashion, 2010)
Spread & diffusion

• Sproles, 1979

• Diffusion theory refers to the way a particular fashion innovation or new creative trend is adopted by a group

• This is important psychologically, especially when looking at groups & networks
Collective selection

• Blumer, 1968
• ‘continuing pattern of change in which certain social forms enjoy temporary acceptance and respectability ‘
• Blumer’s four features :
• historical continuity; terminal points of fashion trends; modernity (Zeitgeist), and collective taste.
Theory of shifting erogenous zones

• Freudian inspired approach/ psychodynamic
• Fluegel / Laver/ 1930’s
• Different areas of the body become erotically charged, either by being displayed or being hidden
• All about women & sexual attraction
• Women as exhibitionists
Rubbish Theory

• Thompson, 1979; Morgado, 2003- **The transient and the durable**

• what was fashionable and desirable becomes defunct but re-emerges as a classic or a trend.

• The ‘come and go’ of fashion, e.g. Hawaiian Shirts

• Luxury goods ‘durable’ and often classic
Sub-cultural leadership

• Essentially bubble up & spread
• Related to psychological factors in ‘minority’ groups- ethnic, gay, age group
• Concept of ‘minority influence’ and how this works psychologically
Psychology of change

- Fashion is about change
- Classics transcend change through durability
- Psychological factors: social norms, groups, attitude, liking, acceptance
- **Social norms** - the rules and regulations to be found within any social group (Sherif, 1935)
Minority influence.
( Moscovici, 1985)

• Psychologically different process from majority influence

• 1. Innovation Vs Status quo (keeping things the same)

• 2. Compliance Vs conversion.

• 3. Imitation Vs originality.
Theory of repeated exposure

• Zajonc, 1965

• repeated contact/exposure to a new stimulus leads to an increasing positive evaluation of that stimulus, assuming the initial classification is **positive, neutral or only mildly negative**.

• Applicable to fashion in general BUT also low uptake trends, or cohort differences
Media effects

• Media psychology (e.g. Giles, 2009)
• Media, in particular (moving) images influence people’s attitudes, desires and actual behaviours
• Cultivation Theory (Signorelli & Morgan, 1990; Gerbner & Gross, 1976)
• Symbolic environment and representation of reality; ‘para-social relationships’
HipHop/ Rap music videos

• E.g. Schemer. Matthes, Wirt & Texter, 2008
• music videos frequently depict brands/products affecting attitudes through evaluative conditioning.
• a high potential for positive and negative conditioning effects. ( Auty & Lewis, 2004 )
• Trends and fashions through HipHop/ Rap
Social norms and acceptability

• Society changes, people move groups, what is deemed acceptable wear or is an aspiration changes.
• Attitudes can change and result in behaviour and norm change.
• Example: fetish wear; under wear as outer wear. what was once deemed unacceptable has moved from ‘unacceptable’ to high fashion, high street etc
Personality & fashion up take

- Social risk
- Creativity
- Gate keepers & social comparison process
- Fashion up take
- Leaders versus laggards
Leaders

• More animated, low on conformity and conceptualise their clothing as a visible sign of self

• Also linked to ‘involvement’, risk taking, and more inclined to exaggerate

• Theory of uniqueness would suggest these people find high similarity to others uncomfortable
Leaders cont.

• From the social comparison point of view less risk averse and high on individualism

• Theory of social reciprocity- they provide information and inspiration. By doing so they get something out of it- status, feeling ‘special’

• Leaders keen on fashion media and often involved in it. Read fashion media in a particular way
5 factors in apparel involvement

- Concern with appearance (anxiety), experimentation (social risk & sensation seeking), awareness (salience & attention), personal security enhancement (self), individuality (self, ideals, group)
Consumers needs & desires

• People want to feel good about themselves
• People take action to fulfil a need - real or perceived needs
• Motivation a psychological state of ‘tension’
• Belonging, groups and status
• Buying ‘well being’
• En-clothed cognition
Conclusion

- ‘Slaves to fashion’
- Even being ‘outside’ fashion is a statement
- Psychology reclaims fashion
- Growth in consumer psychology and media psychology
- Relevance e.g. retail, creativity & personality, advertising
Some references

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• Kaiser (1985) *The social psychology of fashion* New York; Macmillan
• Rubenstein (2001) *Dress codes: meanings and messages in American Culture* USA: Westview
• Soloman (1985) *The psychology of Fashion* USA; Lexington