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FASHION AS A SOCIO-CULTURAL PHENOMENON

Social changes taking place in the modern world have led to a radical transformation in the relationship between individuals and the outcomes of their activities. Many people perceive «fashion» as the dominant expression of clothing style at a particular time, while others associate it with the exchange of one standard of external forms of culture for another. However, the scope of this concept is narrow.

The concept of fashion is not limited to outer clothing or external forms of culture. It is a socio-cultural phenomenon that influences all social groups, serving as a method of communication or an aesthetic category of lifestyle. This includes a wide range of phenomena and permeates the entire life path of an individual.

This article examines fashion as a socio-cultural phenomenon, comprehensively analyzes the concepts of fashion and culture, and describes their relationships and similarities. It is explained that fashion, like culture, is both a social process and a material experience.

Key words: fashion, fashion process, culture, socio-cultural phenomenon, functions of fashion, fashionable person.

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Сән әлеуметтік-мәдени феномен ретінде

Қазіргі таңда әлемде орын алып жатқан әлеуметтік өзгерістер адам мен оның қызметінің нәтижесі арасындағы қарым-қатынастың түбегейлі өзгеруіне алып келгені анық. Адамдардың басым бөлігі «Сән» ұғымын белгілі бір уақытта ғана киіну стилінің басым көрінісі ретінде қарастырса, кейбіреуі мәдениеттің сыртқы формаларының кейбір стандарттарының басқалармен алмасуымен байланыстырады. Алайда, бұл түсінік танымының шеңбері тар.

Сән ұғымы сыртқы киімдермен немесе мәдениеттің сыртқы түрлерімен шектелмейді. Ол барлық әлеуметтік топтарға әсер ететін әлеуметтік-мәдени феномен, ол адамның барлық өмір жолына еніп, кең ауқымды құбылыстарды қамтитын қарым-қатынас әдісі немесе өмір салтының эстетикалық категориясы.

Мақалада сән әлеуметтік-мәдени феномен ретінде қарастырылып, сән мен мәдениет ұғымдары жан-жақты талданып, олардың өзара байланысы мен ұқсастықтары сипатталған. Сәннің, мәдениет сияқты, әрі әлеуметтік процесс, әрі материалдық тәжірибе екендігі түсіндірілген.

Түйін сөздер: сән, сән процесі, мәдениет, әлеуметтік-мәдени феномен, сән функциялары, сәнқой адам

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Мода как социально-культурный феномен

Социальные изменения, происходящие в современном мире, привели к радикальному преобразованию отношений между человеком и результатом его деятельности. Большинство людей воспринимают «Моду» как доминирующее выражение стиля в одежде в определенное время, тогда как некоторые связывают его с обменом одних стандартов внешних форм культуры на другие. Однако сфера применения этого понятия узка.

Понятие моды не ограничивается верхней одеждой или внешними формами культуры. Это социально-культурный феномен, оказывающий влияние на все социальные группы, это способ коммуникации или эстетическая категория образа жизни, включающие в себя широкий спектр явлений и пронизывающие весь жизненный путь человека.

В данной статье мода рассматривается как социо-культурный феномен, всесторонне анализируются понятия моды и культуры, описываются их взаимосвязи и сходства. Объясняется, что мода, как и культура, является одновременно социальным процессом и материальным опытом.

Ключевые слова: мода, модный процесс, культура, социально-культурный феномен, функции моды, фешенебельный человек.

Introduction

Nowadays world cultural, civilizational changes which are connected with the transition of mankind from industrial society to postindustrial society, from modern culture to postmodern culture, cover all aspects of social life in different ways. The moral norms and behavioral standards of the relationship between people and government, individual and team, also personal orientation and measure of efficiency are changing significantly. The period of social development acceleration is accompanied by a «reevaluation of values» and a change in the cultural model. In this regard, the role of fashion as the most important modern mechanism for changing cultural models and standards of mass behavior is increasing.

Fashion as a necessary element of culture, an integral part of human life, can adequately reflect the current situation in the society, can act as an indicator of the socio-cultural reconstruction, and can serve as a language that «speaks» about its culture itself.

Relevance and objectives of the research

The culture of the 21st century is characterized by significant changes in everyday life and interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships are influenced not only by social situations, emotional and ideological orientations, and spiritual closeness, but also by phenomena such as fashion. Humans are social beings, and therefore, in many cases, physical appearance plays an important role in establishing connections and developing personal relationships. It is undeniable that this fact holds true today. Accordingly, the intense interest in the phenomenon of fashion is closely linked to its impact on shaping an individual's appearance and their socialization.

Additionally, fashion directly influences the economic and social development of society, making it a factor that requires comprehensive and in-depth analysis. Fashion, when used as an advertising tool, creates opportunities to stimulate the growth of product manufacturing and improve the structure of the consumer market.

From a social perspective, fashion can influence social mobility and effectively address social-psychological conflicts. Politically, fashion might even impact the decisions that shape our future. Since fashion is closely tied to the values reflected in people's daily lives, studying the daily expressions of values in fashion may be more effective for a deep understanding of culture and the advancement of cultural studies as a science, compared to abstract theories.

The core objectives of the research are to examine the social and cultural context in which fashion emerged and developed; to explore the multifaceted nature of fashion; to compare ideas from authors belonging to different historical periods; to consider the fashion as a complex system composed of multiple internal subsystems and elements.

Research methodology

The literature dedicated to the concept of fashion is highly diverse. First and foremost, there is a substantial collection of reference literature on fashion, including encyclopedias, reference books, and dictionaries.

As a universal and multifaceted phenomenon, fashion continuously attracts the attention of scholars from various fields of the humanities, including philosophers, sociologists, economists, cultural theorists, linguists, and psychologists. Among these scholars are H. Blumer, P. Bourdieu, T. Veblen, G. Simmel, W. Sombart, E. Sapir, S. Freud, E. Fromm, J. Huizinga, C. G. Jung, and others.

Representatives of semiotics view fashion as a system of signs that convey specific meanings. They focus particularly on the relationship between fashion (as a system of signs) and the recipients, those who perceive, interpret, and objectify the messages transmitted through fashion (Lotman, 1978). The semiotic analysis and deconstruction of fashion signs are carried out in Barthes's (2003) «The Fashion System», as well as in Baudrillard's (2000) famous works «The System of Objects» and «Symbolic Exchange and Death».

Since the study of the fashion phenomenon is interdisciplinary, the research draws on various humanities disciplines such as philosophy, history,

cultural studies, sociology, art history, and design theory and etc. The key methodological guidelines for researching the fashion phenomenon are found in the classic works of T. Veblen, É. Durkheim, W. Sombart, G. Simmel, I. Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, A. Smith, H. Spencer, G. Tarde, A. Shaftesbury, and others. To gain a deep and multifaceted theoretical understanding of the fashion phenomenon, fundamental works by prominent fashion theorists such as A. B. Gofman, R. Barthes, J. Baudrillard, and others were used.

The following methods were used to achieve the objectives of the research: cultural-historical method: enabled the examination of the social and cultural context in which fashion emerged and developed; structural-functional analysis: allowed for an adequate exploration of the multifaceted nature of fashion; comparative analysis: provided a way to compare ideas from authors belonging to different historical periods; systematic analysis: enabled the consideration of fashion as a complex system composed of multiple internal subsystems and elements.

Results and discussion

The scientific novelty of the research is as follows:

- a comparative analysis of the classical and postmodern paradigms of fashion studies was conducted.
- the social and cultural functions of fashion were analyzed and systematized within the general typology of cultural functions.
- it was demonstrated that in the postmodern era, fashion permeates all aspects of life and influences various domains such as economics, politics, art, and more, functioning as a marker of contemporary cultural identity.

Fashion has always played an important role in society, and today its influence continues to grow. First and foremost, fashion can be defined as a socio-cultural phenomenon that integrates culture, the individual, and the economy, functioning as a social system of production, consumption, and the institutionalization of innovation. Fashion is both an idea and an ideal. However, it also finds material and visual expression in forms coded through color, shape, texture, and branding, and must be constructed and disseminated within cultural contexts that connect local and global systems. Fashion is not merely a social process limited to clothing and accessories; it can be seen as an expressive and emotional force

that drives innovation and individuality, energizing both aspects of economic production and personal consumption.

A crucial and relevant aspect of contemporary culture is to consider the logic of fashion and its role and place in our daily experience. Overall, fashion holds significant meaning for culture because it offers aesthetic forms in areas such as clothing, philosophy, religion, music, and customs. Through these forms, people can either blend into various social contexts or express their individual differences.

Fashion is also an integral part of our economy, as it plays a vital role in stimulating innovations, mobilizing design and aesthetic industries, and driving creative economic production. Fashion symbols provide insights into global economic systems and policies, and directly relate to our economy. They also offer a broad material framework for exploring issues such as consumerism, labor exploitation, beauty, and ethics in a wide sense.

Fashion, as a significant social-cultural phenomenon, emerged during the transition from pre-industrial to industrial societies, playing a crucial role in economic, cultural, and political spheres. Early classical theories of fashion established several key concepts: 1) dual nature of fashion: fashion is characterized by its dual aspects of imitation and the pursuit of distinction; 2) sign and prestige function: fashion serves both as a signifier and a marker of status; 3) relationship between fashion and economy: there is a connection between fashion and economic processes.

These ideas have been further developed and adapted by later scholars to align with contemporary realities. Currently, four main perspectives can be identified in the study of fashion:

- Imitation: explored by G. Tarde (1892) and G. Simmel (1901).
- Demonstrative behavior: analyzed by T. Veblen (2001) and W. Sombart (2005).
- Collective behavior: understood through the lens of G. Blumer (2008).
- Semiotic approach: examined by R. Barthes (2003) and J. Baudrillard (2000).

In an industrial society, alongside economic inequality, there is also political equality and high social mobility. As a result, an individual's status is defined not by belonging to a particular class or group but by personal achievements and individual reputation. Fashion vividly reflects the essence of modern worldviews, representing the pursuit of new sensations, openness to change, and acting as

a mechanism for transforming material and spiritual values.

Accordingly, fashion can be described by the following social characteristics:

- Cyclical – fashion follows periodic changes and adheres to tradition;
- Irrational – fashion appeals to emotions;
- Imitative – fashion involves the process of emulating elites;
- Demonstrative – fashion showcases belonging to higher social strata;
- Dynamic – fashion and its elements change rapidly in response to various phenomena;
- Interpenetrative – fashion reflects the interplay between trends of social equality and individual distinction;
- Omnipresent – fashion’s influence is not restricted to any single field;
- Normative – fashion is closely linked to social norms;
- Symbolic – fashion functions as a set of symbols representing an individual’s position in society;
- Diffuse – fashion spreads across different social classes, demographic groups, professional associations, and other categories.

The evolution of fashion as an internal form of culture is necessarily linked to certain stages of human societal development. Despite the high dynamism of fashion, its paradox lies not only in its constant change but also in its inherent stability. The essence of fashion lies not merely in its visible trends and styles but in the continuity and permanence that underpin its evolution. Fragmentation (the division into various styles and trends) is not a mere characteristic but rather a form of stability. The variability and adaptability of individual elements within any system contribute to its overall stability. Therefore, the greater the diversity of fashion’s components, the more stable it is, implying a longer lifespan. In other words, fashion’s capacity to persist over time is supported by its ability to evolve while maintaining core elements of continuity.

From a sociological perspective, the fashion phenomenon operates according to various aspects of social status and external appearance that pertain to different segments of the population. The renowned sociologist Georg Simmel, in his famous work published more than a century ago, highlighted that fashion is not only about clothing styles but also serves as a fundamental process in structuring modern human psychological development and contemporary life. Simmel (1996) argues that fashion

should be considered as an overall phenomenon of modern societies, distinct from any single aspect of social life. He writes: «Fashion is one of the many forms of life that strive to combine social equality with individual differentiation and change» (Simmel, Fashion. In Selected works., 1996). Indeed, fashion represents a social frontier where individual interests and collective interests clash, and it intersects with the stability and conservatism of social customs, manifesting new and innovative aesthetic and behavioral forms.

Historically, fashion was a domain specific to the elite and nobility. However, today, fashion has become accessible to the general public, meaning that anyone can engage with it. Furthermore, contemporary fashion trends are increasingly dominated by youth culture. The definition of fashion, which is considered to be ever-changing, continues to evolve.

In recent years, we have witnessed the social revolution of fashion trends. Social media now plays a significant role in building and promoting the fashion industry worldwide. Fashion websites showcase clothing and accessories on a massive scale, while social networks allow marketers to enhance and expand content with topics, models, and more. Fashion ideas and concepts are no longer exclusive to high society but are now individualized and considered mainstream, with fashion serving as a means of self-expression and identity.

Currently, various bold and innovative ideas are emerging in the fashion industry, challenging traditional concepts of fashion and status. Modern fashion is becoming increasingly daring and audacious, showcasing a generation that is unafraid to make bold statements in their attire. Today’s fashion trends offer individuals the opportunity to express their personal styles, uniting people worldwide in a shared cultural experience.

Another positive contemporary trend is the rise of fashion designers who are creating their own unique fashion items and striving to enter the global market. Many of these designers draw inspiration from their own experiences and backgrounds, adding personal touches to their creations. Through their work, they not only highlight their own distinct styles but also contribute to the renewal of cultural heritage.

Building a theoretical model of fashion involves identifying its distinguishing features and similarities with other cultural phenomena: cultural patterns, tastes, style, clothing, and costumes. Compared to fashion, cultural patterns are more stable, while tastes

are more individualistic. The relationship between fashion and style is twofold: fashion conforms to established forms of self-definition through style, and at the same time, fashion creates its own unique styles, especially in clothing. Clothing represents an individual's basic need for self-protection, while costumes reflect social interaction needs. Fashion, in turn, represents the need for innovation. Fashion standards, objects, meanings, and the behavior of fashion participants are crucial elements in the theoretical model of fashion (Goffman, 2004).

A key aspect of fashion characteristics is its functional purpose. According to A.B. Goffman (2004), fashion can be identified by the following functions:

- Regulation of mind and behavior: Fashion acts as a means of managing one's behavior and self-presentation.

- Indicator of social status and prestige: Fashion serves as a marker of social status and prestige.

- Indicator of aesthetic values: Fashion reflects and communicates aesthetic values.

These functions can be understood as the ways in which fashion influences individuals, those around them, and society as a whole.

In contemporary culture, fashion plays a crucial role as a complex, multifunctional formation in collective social life. Fashion operates with specific technologies and processes that fulfill several functions: 1) integration and group formation: fashion helps in standardizing cultural models and integrating individuals into groups. It plays a role in structuring group identities and differentiating social statuses within those groups; 2) standardization and regulation: by introducing new standards into lifestyle, fashion assigns individuals specific behavioral models, thereby fulfilling a regulatory function; 3) identification and socialization: fashion serves as a significant marker for introducing individuals to social and cultural experiences, aiding in self-identification and social integration; 4) symbolic representation: fashion contributes to the symbolic translation of fashion models, supporting the communicative function; 5) aesthetic ideals: fashion helps in shaping and maintaining aesthetic ideals, serving an aesthetic function; 6) psychological relief: fashion can act as a means of psychological release or comfort, fulfilling a compensatory function.

These aspects collectively suggest that fashion permeates all areas of society, influencing and reflecting economic, communicative, aesthetic, and psychological dimensions.

Conclusion

Fashion is a collection of accepted practices, tastes, and values within a specific time period and context. It represents a significant socio-cultural concept that can impact various groups within society. In a broader sense, fashion is defined as the external manifestations of a culture accepted and shared during a particular time period. Society defines and establishes the cultural framework for individuals, who then choose fashion items, products, or behavioral styles based on their development level. These choices can be deliberate or made automatically without much thought.

Fashion facilitates the transition from one tradition to another, influencing social changes through its capacity to adapt and evolve. It challenges the rigidity and steadfastness of established customs, promoting a shift in attitudes toward their significance. By preparing individuals for forthcoming changes, fashion helps mitigate discomfort during the adoption of new traditions. Fashion plays a role in minimizing social discomfort during these transitions by offering a less abrupt adaptation to new norms. It provides a buffer for the limitations imposed by traditional customs and lifestyles, assisting individuals in navigating significant social changes more smoothly. Through its transitional nature, fashion helps ease the process of major societal shifts, aiding in the reduction of resistance to change.

Contemporary fashion can be described as a dynamic form of standardized public behavior that arises from the influence of prevailing moods, rapidly changing tastes, hobbies, and other factors. In practice, fashion standards are implemented through various means such as media, social networks, well-known magazines, artistic productions, runway shows, and other public events. Fashion often originates from individuals belonging to higher social classes or prominent figures. When celebrities, singers, or leaders in any field introduce new styles or trends, these quickly become popular among the general public. This process of imitation not only affects the status of influencers but also the followers who adopt these styles.

In contemporary society, the analysis and understanding of one's social position are marked by a focus on multiculturalism and tolerance policies. This emphasis is particularly relevant in the context of globalization, which has intensified the process of cultural interaction and exchange. These trends influence various worldviews and impact

the functions of social institutions, with cultural institutions undergoing significant transformations. In modern social and cultural restructuring, fashion plays a unique role, serving as a reflection of the essence of social, cultural, and economic processes. Fashion's significance is highlighted by its connection to current issues such as mass production and consumption, generating sociological interest. Fashion is increasingly recognized as a crucial component in understanding and analyzing the changes in cultural and economic landscapes. It encapsulates the quintessence of contemporary social and economic processes, offering insights into the broader dynamics of global cultural interaction and societal evolution.

Most sociologists associate the emergence of the fashion phenomenon with the era following the industrial production of clothing and the subsequent simplification of the production of luxury and fashion items. This period is linked to the rise of capitalist relations, which created new opportunities for the lower classes to emulate the upper classes (Rockamore, 2023).

Fashion's various manifestations help to describe a person's existence in the world, their lifestyle, and worldview. Contemporary fashion aligns with the globalizing process and postmodern culture. The universal fashion discourse created by globalization is comparable to the postmodern poly-stylism produced by multiculturalism and individualistic

aesthetics. However, it is important to remember that both trends are driven by the economic interests of global companies. As a result, while designers in the creative industry could ideally produce unique designs, fashion and art have become marketing issues. In the economy, fashion acts as a catalyst for mass production and a means to expand sales. The behavior of consumers often aligns with the marketing strategies that use fashion advertising, media tools, and are closely connected to the entire power system. Fashion permeates every aspect of modern life, and thus, it can be considered to fit well with the post-democratic order and the evolution of thought in the multicultural postmodern society of the 21st century.

In other words, the distinctiveness of fashion lies in its representation of status symbols in the contemporary world through mass consumption patterns. Today, fashion processes are characterized by the disappearance of previous rigidity and segmentation, with a noticeable increase in the stability of process cycles. Additionally, fashion is increasingly connected with media industries, shows, film businesses, and visual culture.

Therefore, based on the characteristics, functions, and structure of fashion, we can conclude that fashion operates as a public behavior and consumption model that reflects social status and prestige. It embodies dynamic changes in cultural models of consumption and societal values.

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