

ADOPTION AND CONSUMPTION OF FASHION

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The sociological understanding of fashion involves an analysis of consumers who adopt fashion and their consumption behavior because the consumers participate indirectly in the production of fashion. When fashion reaches the stages of adoption and consumption, it is converted into something more concrete and visible, that is clothing-fashion. Once clothing is manufactured, it is worn and consumed. Once fashion is produced, it has also to be consumed in order for the belief to continue and perpetuate. Without the act of reception and consumption, the cultural product of fashion is not complete. Production influences consumption, and consumption influences production. Therefore, they can be treated simultaneously in the analysis of fashion. Similarly, the consumption aspect of cultural products must be taken into consideration, and we need to question how the consumers of fashion integrate with the producers of fashion. Fashion-ology involves the study of the social context in which fashion is not only produced but also consumed, and the meaning intended and assigned to the acts and settings of production and consumption. Cultural products, such as fashion, paintings and food, must be evaluated and interpreted in terms of their audience. Back explains the transition from producer to consumer and their relationship as follows:

the lengthy path from producer to consumer is further continued by the intended audience. The consumer's arrangement of the final product, its composition, the occasion at which fashions are worn and displayed, become themselves creative occasions. Cultural creativity is continued in this way in the general public. This last step may be socially important in the use and development of fashions as the original production link. (1985: 3-4)

Thus, consumption cannot be considered in isolation. Fashion-ology consists of a sociology of fashion production as well as a sociology of fashion consumption because consumption and production are complementary, especially in today's diverse and complex fashion systems which include fashions emerging from youth culture. In this chapter, consumption will be reviewed from a historical perspective, and the connection between consumption as status and symbolic strategy, and the breakdown between consumption and production will be examined.

Consumption: A Historical Perspective

The model of modern-day consumption originated in pre-revolutionary court life, especially that of Louis XIV of France (1638-1715) who was known as 'the consumer king.' He indulged himself in lavish and opulent clothing and ornamentation. Handmade carpets, upholstery and curtains were changed every season at Versailles. Louis XIV is remembered for his sumptuous style of life rather than the important military, religious, or political events during his reign. There was the closed world of courtly consumption, and it was the court of Louis XIV that had made elegance and France synonymous (De Marly 1987). The purpose of such luxury was not to give

pleasure either to the king or to his courtiers. It was an expression of his political power. Mukerji explains how serious he was in making France the center of aesthetic culture:

For Louis XIV and his ministers, who took French claims to greatness more than seriously, having both the Great Tradition and trends in fashion located so firmly in Italy was unacceptable. If the French state was to become a center of European civilization, not just power, it had to take cultural leadership. So, Louis XIV followed classical precedent and had his achievements monumentalized through artworks, while Colbert manipulated fashion to make French goods desirable to elite consumers throughout Europe. Material beauty was more a matter of power and glory than an aesthetic issue to these men. (1997: 101)

The ceremonies of consumption, the feasts and fêtes, the balls and practices, were all part of a calculated system that had as its aim not individual gratification but enhancement of political authority. The consumer class was restricted to the courtly circle. The sixteenth-century aristocracy was nearly homogeneous in its consumer tastes because the ladies and gentlemen of the court acknowledged the king as the taste maker and the trendsetter. Williams explains the destructive spending behavior within the closed court culture:

Once admitted to the charmed circle of the court, however, a noble had to spend ruinously to stay there. He needed clothes embroidered with gold and silver threads and brilliant jewels to wear to the balls; a stable of horses and kennel of dogs for hunting; carriages with velvet upholstery and painted panels so that he could accompany the king on migrations to other palaces; houses and furnishings so that he could provide dances and dinners for the court; and dozens of valets and servants and stablehand, to all the rest possible. With rare exceptions, courtiers ran up stupendous debts. Although compelled by overwhelming pressure to perpetual imitation of the royal lifestyle, they had nothing like the king's income. (1982: 28-9)

Therefore, the history of France illustrates the nature and dilemmas of modern consumption. By the eighteenth century the way of life enjoyed by the French aristocracy and wealthy bourgeoisie had established itself as a prototype admired and imitated by upper classes throughout Europe.

This courtly style of consumption no longer exists but the life of consumers is more vigorous than ever. There is an incessant desire to purchase and consume, and those pleasures and feelings are available to ordinary people. Thus one homogeneous consumer style derived from a single source of authority shifted to a diversity of styles based on a multiplicity of authorities.

Consumer Revolution

Goods were obtained mainly through barter and self-production, so that the activity of consumption was closely linked with that of production. The consumption pattern then changed with the advent of mass consumption which came with mass production. A clear division was established between the activities of production and those of consumption. With industrial revolution came the consumer revolution which represented a change in tastes, preferences and buying habits. Williams explains how the consumers changed with the industrial revolution:

The industrial changes made possible large-scale production. The illusion of riches could be enjoyed in dress, especially in 'the democratization of the "silk dress," that ancient symbol of opulence, thus procuring the illusion of similarity in clothing - a great comfort for the feminine half of the human race.' ... Technological advances had also transformed the feather industry: cheap and persuasive facsimiles of the rarest varieties, or even of totally imaginary ones, could be purchased by any shopgirl. Rabbit pelts could be turned into exotic furs like 'Mongolian chinchilla.' (1982: 97)

In the 1860s, the dress of peasant and also of working-class women was noticeably darker and cruder than the complicated trains, trailing skirts, laces and ribbons of wealthier women, but by the 1890s everyone wore shorter, simpler, more colorful clothes. Mass consumption means that similar merchandise reaches to all regions and all classes, and by the beginning of the twentieth century this uniform market was expanding in France and other parts of Europe. The consequences of this consumer revolution were numerous and diverse. First and foremost, people's value systems transformed. With mass production, fashion, which had been the epitome of luxury, was democratized, and consumption behavior began to change.

McCracken (1988) makes a comparison between patina and novelty to explain how and why fashion, which values newness, became acceptable. With the consumer revolution and the emergence of a consumer society, patina became less valued while novelty became highly valued and desirable. Patina used to serve as a kind of visual proof of status, and it suffered an eclipse in the eighteenth century (McCracken 1988: 32). There was a wide range of choices, and consumers were driven by new tastes and preferences. Society at large valued things that were new, which had more status than things that were old. Thus, fashion, whose essence is change, came to be highly important and meaningful. Furthermore, the rate of fashion change accelerated in the eighteenth century, and partly due to industrial development, what had once taken a year to change now took only a season. Marketers began to take advantage of the social as well as commercial dynamics of fashion and worked to increase its pitch. New techniques to create new styles and discredit old ones were constantly being developed. When a new fashion appeared, anyone with the necessary taste and resources could take possession of the latest innovation and use it for status purposes. This meant that first-generation wealth was now indistinguishable from the wealth of fifth-generation gentry (McCracken 1988: 40). As McKendrick remarks: 'Novelty became an irresistible drug for people in modern society' (1982: 10).

Like Blumer (1969a), who argued that fashion comes out of collective selection and that it is the consumers' taste that dictates fashion, McKendrick (1982) says that a change in productive means and ends cannot have occurred without a commensurate change in consumers' tastes and preferences. The English consumers welcomed the cheap calico and muslins imported from India in the 1690s (Mukerji 1983) because consumer tastes were changing, and that led to a new scale of domestic production and foreign imports. Due to eighteenth-century innovation and the commercialization of fashion, which made fashionable items more accessible, consumer demand changed. Industrial innovations included a more rapid obsolescence of style, the speedier diffusion of fashion knowledge, the appearance of marketing techniques such as the fashion doll and the fashion plate, the new and more active participation of previously excluded social groups, and new ideas about consumption and its contribution to the public good (McKendrick 1982).

Therefore, economic transformation and technological changes lowered the cost of existing consumer goods which made them readily available to all social classes. Steam engines made transportation more possible. The invention of printing and photography also had significant influence on mass consumption. Modern human beings have perpetual desire, and fashion seems to feed on it. As Williams says:

The elitist consumer never finds a resting place, never attains an equilibrium, but must keep buying and discarding, picking up and dropping items, perpetually on the move to keep one jump ahead of the common herd. He therefore shares the fate of the mass consumer, who ... finds that illusions of wealth are always disappearing as once-unusual objects are sold in every department store and therefore lose their capacity to convey the aura of wealth. (1982: 139)

Miller (1981) examines the influence of the department store Bon Marché on the culture of nineteenth-century France and the important role it played in the consumer revolution. It provided not only a place to find and purchase goods but was organized to inflame people's material desires and feelings. The contribution of the department store to changing tastes and preferences, changing purchase behavior, a changing relationship between buyer and seller, and changing marketing techniques was immeasurable. It worked to shape and transfer cultural meaning of goods and also served as an important site for the conjunction of culture and consumption. The department store must be seen not only as a reflection of changing consumer patterns but also as a decisive agent which actively contributed to the culture in which consumption took place. The goods of the department store gave material expression to the values of the bourgeoisie and these objects, which had to be fashionable, made these values concrete and gave them a 'reality all their own' (Miller 1981: 180). Therefore, the department store materialized the values, attitudes and aspirations of the bourgeoisie. It infused goods with cultural meaning. Material symbols helped to reorganize the cultural meaning. Miller (1981) demonstrates how the large department stores became harbingers of the modern retailing world of today.

Consuming Fashion as Symbolic Strategy

Holbrook and Dixon (1985: 110) define fashion as public consumption through which people communicate to others the image they wish to project. This definition contains three primarily descriptive components: 1) public consumption, 2) communication to others, and 3) image.

First, by focusing on public consumption as the definition of fashion, the role of conspicuous usage that is open to inspection by others is stressed. Fashion behavior entails some display of one's preference hierarchy, some outward manifestation of inward evaluative judgments. In order for consumption to serve symbolically, it must be visible to others, which relates to Veblen's concept of conspicuous consumption. Material objects intentionally adopted for this purpose must be observable or noticeable. Fashion involves overt consumption behavior that makes one's tastes or values accessible to the awareness of others.

Second, communications with others through consumption became a signal to others as to which norms are shared and agreed upon agreement among a number of individuals. There has to be a consensus among people in society that a particular item of clothing is fashion. We do not call consumer behavior 'fashionable' if only one person does it. As noted in the previous chapters, fashion production as well consumption is a collective activity.

Third, image can be treated as a consumption system which involves complementarity. The nature of consumption patterns as symbol systems underlies the view of fashion as an attempt to communicate one's image. Image is a picture that one wishes to project to win approval, respect or prestige by appearing stylish, sophisticated or chic, and it functions within an interpersonal network system. Like any system, fashion involves not only added effects but also interactions among its parts. Thus one cannot treat fashion as the sum of isolated elements, but instead must consider the interrelations among its component parts. This approach is based on a structural-functionalist analysis. These components consist of complementary products so that fashion pertains not just to one product considered by itself, but rather to a number of products fitting together consistently to form a mutually reinforcing representation of the image one wishes to convey.

The cultural meaning of consumer goods is shifting. Meaning is constantly flowing to and from its several locations in the social world, aided by the collective and individual efforts of designers, producers, advertisers, and consumers. Contemporary culture has been associated with an increasingly materialistic or fetishistic attitude, and the symbolic dimension of consumption is increasingly becoming important. The value of fashion is the symbolic meaning, and fashionable merchandise must fill needs of the imagination and must be appealing to consumers. Fashion is the non-material dimension of modern culture. Fashion develops and is produced and reproduced continuously which results in a continuous public appetite for change; the producer offers novelties knowing that the consumer will probably accept them. Williams remarks:

When they assume concrete form and masquerade as objective fact, dreams lose their liberating possibilities as alternatives to daylight reality. What is involved here is not a casual level of fantasy, a kind of mild and transient wishful thinking, but a far more thoroughgoing substitution of subjective images for external reality ... Imaginative desires and material ones, between dreams and commerce, between events of collective consciousness and of economic fact. (1982: 65)

While the audience of artworks consume art by watching them, the audience of fashion consumes fashion by wearing the clothes - unless they are displayed in a museum setting. This is the stage that is most crucial in the ideology of fashion because fashion as a belief is represented as a material object.

According to Bourdieu (1984), if there is a principle of organization to all forms of social life, it is the logic of distinction. In any differentiated society, individuals, groups, and social classes cannot escape this logic, and it brings them together while separating them from one another. The boundaries that we create are symbolic. Cultural consumption plays a central role in the process. Therefore, analyzing the different relations that people have with cultural objects helps us understand domination and subordination. Fashion can be used as a conceptual tool to understand the nature of symbolic activity.

Consumption and Social Status

In a society where there is a strong system of social stratification, objects tend to reflect given social hierarchies. In such society, sumptuary laws may be passed which forbid the use of particular goods by those who are deemed to be below a certain station in life (Braudel 1981; Mukerji 1983; Sennett 1976). The process of signification between material object and social position in this situation strives to remain rigid and controlled. However, when this breaks down, goods can change from being relatively static symbols to being more directly constitutive of social status. Under these conditions, emulation or imitation is increasingly significant and meaningful as a strategy by means of which people lower in a given social hierarchy attempt to realize their aspirations towards higher status, modifying their behavior, their dress and the kind of goods they purchase. Emulation in turn stimulates the desire to retain differentials, which often becomes based upon access to knowledge about goods and their prestige connotations. As a result, fashion emerges as the means for continuing those forms of social differentiation previously regulated by sumptuary rulings. In other words, demand for goods may flourish in the context of ambiguity in social hierarchy. Miller explains:

What makes an object fashionable is its ability to signify the present; it is thus always doomed to become unfashionable with the movement of time. Fashion usually operates within a system of emulation and differentiation in knowledge, such that it uses the dynamic force of object change as a means of reinforcing the stability of the social system within which it is operating. (1987: 126)

There are two major classic studies that exemplify the significance of fashion consumption and the process of consumption: those of Simmel and Veblen. Simmel's analysis 1957([1904]) argues that fashion plays a major part in many people's attempts to live out the contradictory pulls of this perceived duality. Typically, Simmel does not present, a trend towards isolation and a trend towards integration as alternatives, but as necessarily contradictory elements of the same actions. Fashion demands an individual conception of conventional style, thereby allowing the preservation of a private world, a self-conception which is saved from exposure by the expediency of convention. In obeying the dictates of style, it is the social being which takes responsibility for choice, yet there is simultaneously an arena for personal strategy. Fashion then provides a surface which is partly expressive, but which also in part protects individuals from having to expose their taste in public. This study provides a clear exemplification of the concept of consumption activity as a means of living through necessary contradictions.

One can find the systemic implications of subordinate imitation. When low-standing individuals began to borrow high-standing status markers, high-standing individuals were forced to move on to new status markers. Every status marker could be imitated by lower social groups, and as a result, upper classes were forced to adopt new innovations in all product categories, including clothing. No sooner had the high-standing group moved to a new innovation than this, too, was appropriated by subordinate groups, and movement was required again. The fashion innovations they had adopted out of fancy, they now had to adopt out of necessity. With no patina strategy to protect them from fraudulent status claims, the only way of achieving such protection was to continually invent new fashions (McCracken 1988: 40).

On the other hand, Veblen's classic study of conspicuous consumption and status symbols created an analytical framework that has been the staple of sociological studies of consumer behavior. The basic premise of Veblen's discussion is similar to that of Simmel's, but it was Veblen who put the term 'conspicuous consumption' into general circulation. People acquire goods to compete with others. Fashion and clothing are used as symbols of social position and status. His theory explains the functions of fashion, which are clearly different from the functions of clothing - modesty and protection.

Veblen expressed the modes of pecuniary taste under three headings, conspicuous consumption, conspicuous waste and conspicuous leisure, and the three are all interrelated and are dependent on each other. Conspicuous consumption is for the purpose of impressing others and society at large, and the mere demonstration of purchasing power is the simplest device of fashion. Conspicuous waste is similar to conspicuous consumption. One can demonstrate one's superior wealth by giving away or destroying one's possessions. Conspicuous leisure is visible evidence that one is leading a life so far removed from all menial necessities that clothes can be

worn which make any kind of physical labor difficult if not impossible. Dress of this kind, so long as it is manifestly sumptuous, marks the wearer as a member or a dependent of the leisure class: for instance, a sumptuous hat which gives no protection to the head, the great ruff around the neck of the early seventeenth century and long trailing sleeves which incapacitated arm and hand movements (Veblen 1957[1899]).

Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption or competitive emulation is partly applicable today. We copy those of higher status with whom we are competing. People might also choose to copy someone they admire without considering his or her status. Such reverential emulation has the same result as the competitive, but the motivating factor is quite different. Being fashionable has to be something that is envied and desired; otherwise, the consumer would not adopt fashion nor wish to be fashionable. Indeed, fashion works as an expression of conspicuous consumption. Among more recent studies of consumption, Bourdieu (1984) offers a very similar analysis. He discusses the nature of cultural practices in industrial society, and he reduces almost all consumption to the play of social differentiation.

The trickle-down theory of fashion has several strengths. It places fashion diffusion in a social context and allows us to see how the movement of fashion articulates with the social system in which it takes place. However, Blumer (1969a) suggests that fashion must be seen as a process of 'collective selection' in which the trickle-down theory plays no significant part. Clothing does not take its prestige from the elite. Instead, 'potential fashionableness' (Blumer 1969a: 281) is determined by factors independent of the elite's control. Blumer argues that Simmel's theory, while suitable for European fashions in the past, cannot account for the fashion of modern society (1969a: 278).

Material goods transmit different messages about their owners, and it is the historian's job to decode these messages. Status seeking is only one aspect of 'the presentation of self' (Goffman 1959). Material culture provides the understanding of the symbolic properties that are attached to objects that humans manufacture. Material culture can carry status messages. Social scientists have sought to demonstrate how individuals and communities use inanimate objects to claim, to legitimate, and to compete for status meaning.

Consumers in Modern and Postmodern Times

Fashion information used to come mainly from one source: Paris. Consumers throughout the world who were fashion conscious emulated the French style, which epitomized and legitimated the most aesthetic appearance. Historically, fashionable clothing was consumed by those of high social standing and those with substantial fortune who could afford to indulge themselves in both a luxurious lifestyle and extravagant clothing. In the days when consumers were less fashion-conscious, designers and manufacturers tried to influence or even manipulate the public, though the public could, and often did, refuse to accept their suggested style changes. Today, the industry as a whole cannot impose fashion change, and no one individual designer can impose a radical change in style. It is not only the rich or upper classes who are consumers of fashion. Fashion is not confined to those who consider themselves socially or financially superior to the masses. Williams explains: 'French society lost a clearly defined group at its summit to establish a model of consumption, just as that group had lost one supreme individual to direct its taste. The social terrain was leveling out. Instead of looking upward to imitate a prestigious group people were more inclined to look at each other. Idolatry diminished; rivalry increased' (1982: 56).

Social scientists agree that Western societies have changed in the past decades, and people's patterns of consumptions are changing. As Millerson indicates, consumer behavior has been going through a major transition for the past decades: 'The mass market from the 1950s, 1960s and even the 1970s has disappeared, replaced by a phenomenon futurists and demographers call "demassification"; many different market segments, some moving over the speed limit, some at the speed limit, others chugging along as they always have, and still others struggling to stay on the highway' (1985: 99). Fashionable consumers impatiently wait to see what the fashion will be for the next season. Rogers (1983) classifies consumers into five different types based on how soon they adopt fashionable items: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards.

A Shift from Class Fashion to Consumer Fashion

In postmodern cultures, consumption is conceptualized as a form of role playing, as consumers seek to project conceptions of identity that are continually evolving. Social class is less evident and important in one's self-image and identity in contemporary society than before. Style differentiation no longer distinguishes social classes. There is a great deal of interclass and intra-class mobility. Social identity that used to be based on the economic and political spheres is now based on something outside. Crane remarks (2000: 11): 'the consumption of cultural goods, such as fashionable clothing, performs an increasingly important role in the construction of personal identity, while the satisfaction of material needs and the emulation of superior classes are secondary.' One's style of dress conveys an initial and continuing impression-making image. The variety of lifestyles available in contemporary society liberates the individual from tradition and enables him or her to make choices that create a meaningful self-identity (Giddens 1991). According to Crane:

Clothing itself is less important than the frames that are used to sell it, which can be used in turn to sell licensed products. Consumers are no longer perceived as 'cultural dopes' or 'fashion victims' who imitate fashion leaders but as people selecting styles on the basis of their perceptions of their own identities and lifestyles. Fashion is presented as a choice rather than a mandate. The consumer is expected to 'construct' an individualized appearance from a variety of options. An amalgam of materials drawn from many different sources, clothing styles have different meanings for different social groups. (2000: 15)

As the structure of society has begun to change, and with the advent of technology, fashion information has spread from various sources through the multiple media at an amazingly fast pace. Instead of looking for the fashionable items of the season in Paris, consumers look elsewhere, and sometimes youth cultures create their own styles with their own definitions of fashions. I would call this another type of fashion system. The sources of fashion are becoming diverse, and a growing number of younger designers worldwide are emerging out of street culture and designing distinct street fashion. Nonetheless, there are still gatekeepers who make such designs fashion. Even street fashion must go through the process of admission to earn public recognition.

Breaking Production and Consumption Boundaries

An object is manufactured before it is purchased, and we therefore have a tendency to see consumption activities as the result of, or as a process secondary to, the development of manufacturing and other forms of production. However, in postmodern culture, the boundary is starting to collapse. For Becker (1982), there is no distinction between production and consumption in art worlds. The audiences are undistinguished from the artists. Everyone participates in producing and distributing their works. Becker discusses the socially constructed nature of art, and how it is valued. His approach incorporates the intention of demystifying art. He is against the mythology of artistic reputation. His approach comes from the phenomenological foundations of symbolic interactionism, a theoretical framework used in Fashion-ology. Becker starts with the assumption that, as in all social fields, it is in the regularized interactions among creators and their supporting personnel that social meanings arise. All become participants in the creative process, and production and reception merge. We learn a great deal from Becker about how artists live and work within the constraints of institutions which Fashion-ology seeks to identify.

The distinction between popular and high culture often appears in studying culture and the arts, and this may extend to the classification of high fashion and popular fashion. DiMaggio (1992) showed in his study that at the beginning of the twentieth century in the US, a high culture model was established in the visual by a distinct organizational system. He analyzed how differences in various categories were cultivated and institutionalized over time in order to maintain the distinctions. However, Crane (2000) argues that the high/low distinction is becoming arbitrary, and thus, we have to define cultures in terms of the environments in which they are created, produced and disseminated rather than in terms of content.

As consumers become increasingly fashionable and fashion conscious in modern and postmodern societies, they themselves become producers. Fashion was originally defined as dressing up, but the concept of dressing down began to emerge in democratic societies as class boundaries became less rigid. Street fashion first began as anti-fashion, but ironically it was acknowledged as fashion. This is the trickle-up theory of fashion.

As fashion defines the legitimate taste of clothing, people strive to find what that is, and this legitimate taste, according to [Bourdieu \(1984\)](#), is class-based, differing from one social class to another. However, in modern society, fashionable styles are provided in different forms for people in different social classes so that fashionable items can reach almost every level of consumer.

The punk fashion exemplifies the boundary disappearance between production and consumption of fashion. Punk first manifested itself among groups of unemployed young people and students in London in 1976. Punk culture seems to have developed as a reaction to unemployment and the general pessimism of youth. Punk was an anarchic, nihilistic style which deliberately set out to shock society. Punk clothing was almost entirely black and consciously menacing; it was often homemade or bought from secondhand thrift shops. Garments were frequently slashed and worn in disheveled layers. Both males and females shaved their heads, mutilated themselves and wore dirty and torn clothes. They used make-up and hair products to produce outrageous punk styles. Mendes and de la Haye describe styles that shaped punk identity as follows:

Clothes for both sexes included tight black trousers teamed with mohair sweaters, leather jackets customized with paint, chains and metal studs. For female punks, miniskirts, black fishnet tights and stiletto-heeled shoes, and for both sexes bondage trousers joined with straps from knee to knee. Jackets and T-shirts often featured obscene or disturbing words or images. Garments were festooned with chains, zips, safety-pins and razor blades. Hair was dyed in different colors, and shaved and gelled to create Mohican spikes, makeup ... blacken eyelids and lips. Multiple earrings were popular, some also pierced their cheeks and noses. It also challenged both masculine stereotypes and long-held ideals of feminine beauty. (1999: 222)

Punks violated any conventions and norms that society forced upon them, and their challenging message attracted a large audience. It gave a sense of belonging to youngsters who were in search of an identity. As Hebdige explains:

Amongst kids, this desire for coherence is particularly acute. Subculture provides a way of handling the experience of ambiguity and contradictions, the painful questions of identity. Each subculture provides its members with style, an imaginary coherence, a clear-cut ready-made identity which coalesces around certain chosen objects (a safety pin, a pair of winkle-pickers, a two-tone mohair suit). Together, these chosen objects form a whole? a recognisable aesthetic which in turn stands for a whole set of values and attitudes. (1979: 23)

If a style is acknowledged by large numbers of people, it can become fashion. Punk fashion was conspicuous, but it was not an expression of conspicuous waste or leisure. Yet, it became fashion. Those styles began to be commercialized, and were filtered into mass-market fashion and even high fashion. They had a tremendous effect on British fashion, and designers, such as Zandra Rhodes, Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren, incorporated punk styles in their collections. Although punk fashion, which helped establish London's reputation for innovative youth style, was primarily associated with Britain, similar developments have taken shape in other parts of Europe, Japan and New York ([Mendes and de la Haye 1999](#): 220). For instance, young Japanese designers are taking ideas from the streets of Tokyo and are extremely popular among teenagers who are trying to achieve a group identity. These designers constitute a new fashion system which is gradually being institutionalized as small independent and marginal labels known as the Indies fashion brands in order to separate themselves from the mainstream world-famous Japanese designers, such as Issey Miyake and Yohji Yamamoto. However, even street fashion needs to be diffused and to be legitimated as fashion.

Social Visibility of Fashion

In dealing with fashion consumption, we have to consider the group mentality of those who adopt and wear fashion. Mass fashion diffusion and consumption can be explained as a

process of collective behavior among large numbers of people. They believe that whatever they are wearing is fashion. According to [Lang and Lang \(1961: 323\)](#), the fashion process is an elementary form of collective behavior, whose compelling power lies in the implicit judgment of an anonymous multitude. Individuals perceive societal clothing norms on television, in magazines, in movies, and on the streets of cities and evaluate their own fashion adoption in the light of these perceptions.

Fashion can be analyzed as a process of collective selection of a few styles from numerous competing alternatives. Innovative consumers may experiment with many possible alternatives, but the ultimate test in the fashion process is the competition between alternative styles for positions of 'fashionability.' Consumers try to discover the items of clothing which are defined as fashionable.

The increasing social visibility of a new style is the key to collective behavior in fashion. Mass fashion marketing and mass communication of information on new styles tend to homogenize and standardize consumer tastes, because the styles manufactured and promoted often resemble one another, even when many different manufacturers and retailers are involved in the fashion business. When a style is defined as fashionable, the apparel industries make copies of that style. The media and fashion advertisements or editorials in particular also confer social status and prestige on new fashions, building their social desirability and encouraging consumers to accept them. There is a tremendous amount of social visibility and a constant urge to be different from others, but not too different, only slightly different.

Conclusion

In modern and postmodern societies, consumption and production are complementary and, therefore, production does not take place within a completely separate sphere in relation to the broader social context of consumption. The relationship between production and consumption in the particular culture industry called fashion have been explored. Both empirical research and theoretical understanding are equally important and related through the ways in which products are circulated and given particular meanings through the range of production-consumption relationships. The meaning-making processes and practices do not simply arise out of one autonomous sphere of production but also out of consumption. Distinctions and differences between fashion and anti-fashion, high fashion and mass fashion, men and women, and rich and poor, among many other social categories, are breaking down.