

## Conference Paper

# Modern Sociocultural Practices in the Field of Fashion Consumption: The Main Youth Trends

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### Abstract

This article presents the results of research conducted by in Yekaterinburg in 2018–2019. Data collection methods include a questionnaire survey (504 respondents), an in-depth interview (21 informants), and a semi-formalized interview (20 informants). The study involved young people from 16 to 30 years and experts in fashion — stylists, designers, buyers, and consultants of stores of various segments. The aim of the study was to identify new trends in the field of fashion consumption among young people. According to the results of the study, «the digital turn» has the greatest impact on modern practices in the field of fashion consumption among youth. Modern digital fashion media, such as blogs, are crowding out established elements of fashion structure such as fashion magazines. The greatest authority in the field of fashion consumption for young people is not fashion experts, but bloggers, celebrities and successful people around them. According to the data, most young people do not have enough money to dress in the same brands as trendsetters. Consuming fashionable goods, young people replace broadcast trending things with cheaper analogues: mass brands and the market segment fakes of luxury things. Online shopping is becoming popular for young people. Most rarely, young people can afford premium and luxury brands. The quality of clothing is not an important characteristic for youth's fashion. The most important condition for the purchase of a thing is trendy and pretentious of clothing. In general, it is important for young people to follow fashion and learn new trends. The majority of young people believe that following fashion will make them more successful.

**Keywords:** fashion, youth, consumption, digital turn, blog.

## 1. Introduction

Fashion is a social phenomenon. The fashion sphere has undergone changes in the last decade. The emergence of new fashion media, such as fashion blogs have played a crucial role in the consumption of fashion goods in our time. Currently, sociocultural practices in the field of fashion consumption have changed. It should be noted the emergence of new trends. especially for young people who are still one of the most involved age groups in fashion.

In the past, many researchers left the prerogative to follow fashion only to the elites. However, some scholars today note that the traditional upper class has lost

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its fashionable primacy. The modern trendsetters do not necessarily have an economic advantage in society, but they have influence in the fashion industry through the social media, demonstrating their lifestyle and their consumption practices [7].

Modern researchers in the field of fashion, such as Tutton, Rocamora, noted the increasing influence of fashion blogs on the consumer behavior of young people in the fashion industry.

Monica Tutton calls this change in fashion «the digital turn»: «The rise of fashion blogs and digital fashion media in the past decade has brought into question long-established hierarchies, economic structures and patterns of cultural influence» [9, 10].

Despite the presence of a large number of different sources of information about fashion, such as fashion magazines, fashion shows, television programs with the participation of fashion experts, fashion blogs on social networks have taken a stable place in the fashion structure. Many young people are involved in blogging by viewing various pages on social networks, some young people can even manage their own blogs.

Agnes Rocamora writes about the importance of this phenomenon in the process of human self-identification, especially this is important for women: «Like mirrors, and thanks to the transfer of images onto computers new technologies have enabled, digital screens allow one to look at oneself. With personal fashion blogs in particular, the logic of self-projection onto a reflective surface in which a woman can look at and evaluate herself, and thereby confirm her identity, is reproduced» [6].

Also, some researchers note that blogs are a particularly valuable resource for young people in their formation and acceptance of social identities. Young people model their personality through fashion blogs [2].

At the same time, fashion is becoming increasingly fast in modern times. Researchers call this phenomenon "fast fashion", by analogy with "fast food." Apparel markets are becoming more diverse and rapidly changing.

Flexibility and quick response to the situation are becoming the most important in the modern market, thus, the number of manufactured clothes increases [1].

Modern fashion manifests itself in active form. Fashion is not only exposed to itself from the outside, it has an impact on many phenomena of society. Modern fashion is even involved in politics. «Contemporary fashion is deeply imbedded in current global politics. Fashion has always provided rich visual, material, symbolic and narrative spaces within which to articulate negotiate and perform political issues and there is ample historical research that examines the many links between fashion and politics» [3]. Fashion is involved in modern global political and social events such as migration,

decolonization, and globalization, etc.: «Fashion designers are making use of the runway as a site of resistance, and design clothes that communicate defiance against a global political climate characterized by the rise of far right, authoritarian and populist political movements» [8].

Thus, it should be noted that in the last decade, fashion has undergone great changes. «The digital turn» had a great impact on all participants in the fashion industry, both its creators and its consumers. Not only the elite, but also people from other classes can now be trendsetters. Modern fashion media open up new opportunities for youth in the field of fashion consumption.

One of the main features of modern fashion can be called proactivity. Fashion becomes not just a reflection of society, but affects society itself. Youth is a group of society that is strongly influenced by fashion. Therefore, through youth, we can most obviously see new trends in consumption practices in the fashion field.

## 2. Methodology and Methods

Fashion is a diverse and multifunctional sociocultural phenomenon. In our study, we consider the phenomenon of fashion from the perspective of the imitation concept, the demonstrative consumption theory, the postmodernism theory and the symbolic interactionism theory.

The empirical base of the study was the materials of sociological studies conducted by the author in Yekaterinburg in 2018–2019. Questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews were the methods of data collection. The survey involved 504 youth representatives. 21 informants were interviewed using the in-depth interview technique. Participants are schoolchildren, students and working youth of Yekaterinburg aged 16 to 30 years.

20 informants were interviewed using a semi-formalized interview technique. The informants were experts in fashion — stylists, designers, buyers, consultants of stores of various segments were interviewed.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The results of the research have revealed several new trends referring to the youth sociocultural practices in the fashion consumption field.

As already mentioned above, in the modern world there are many sources of information about fashion for young people: fashion magazines, fashion blogs and fashion shows and etc. The abundance of sources about fashion leads to the fact that young people do not need to intentionally look for these sources. They are usually in the passive assimilation of fashion norms. Even if they are not specifically interested in fashion, most young people are roughly oriented towards modern trends. Moreover, young people deny fashion sources such as fashion magazines or fashion shows. Only 12% of respondents have a favorite fashion house or a favorite designer, 15% read fashion magazines, and 31% of those surveyed look at fashion blogs on the Internet.

Fashion magazines or fashion shows is not interesting and not relevant for modern youth. For young people, this is associated with such stereotypical images of fashion as “pink fur coats”: «Fashionable clothes on the catwalks are an abundance of feathers, sequins, cardboard things» (Female, 25 years old).

At the same time, the study has shown that the number of intentional blog calls is two times higher than the number of magazine calls. Thus, the results of study have confirmed the statement on the so-called «the digital turn» [9]. The main source of knowledge about fashion trends is blogs on social networks.

The study has recorded a loss of interest in magazines as a source of fashion information among young people. Only 15% of respondents notes that they read magazines. The informants explained that reading magazines for them is not a modern practice. They can receive the necessary information at any time on the Internet.. “As for me, now it’s faster to watch something on the Internet than in a magazine. If, suppose, one of the stylists gives a link to an article published in a magazine, I can read it by reference, and I won’t buy the magazine specifically” (Female, 25 years old). It is very close to the modern ideology of «fast fashion».

Blogs can be called a modern replacement for magazines for young people. Unlike reading magazines, reading blogs is a free, more mobile and faster action, which undoubtedly attracts young people. Moreover, most magazines have their own blogs on social networks in which they duplicate information from paper publications.

Blogs are popular among young people. Every third respondent said that he\ she reads any blogs about fashion. Young people read both blogs on fashion and style, as well as blogs of public figures: “As for me, a reliable source is a certain stylist’s blog that I have subscribed to on the Internet” (Female, 25 years old.); “I just go to Instagram in the “relevant”, flipping through the tape. I see the people I follow them. Suppose, the wife of one singer, I subscribed to her. Once I saw her these shorts, and realized that it was fashionable. Well, other people, too, if you look in the “current” on Instagram, also

in these shorts. And it seems that this is now in trend, it is fashionable now” (Female, 18 years old).

«The digital turn» directly affected the consumption sphere: online shopping gains popularity among young people. 48% of respondents have ever ordered clothes for themselves on the Internet. Moreover, the youngest among them more often turn to such practice. The study has recorded the largest number of buyers of online stores among teenagers. What then can serve as a guideline in sociocultural practices in the field of fashion consumption for young people today? As in the past, the reference population has a great influence, especially successful ones. However, today there are much more role models: young people can use the Internet to see how people from all over the world dress and imitate their style. Or they can see how celebrities dress in everyday life through social networks.

That is, in their practices in the field of fashionable clothes consumption young people are guided by their “expanded” possibilities, consisting of both friends and strangers.

If some clothes are often seen in public, they conclude that the thing is fashionable and tend to buy this thing. At the same time, if a thing occurs too often, it begins to reject. The clothes worn by someone popular takes on especially great value: «Once, my sister gave me a sweater, and then I saw it in an interview with a popular blogger on YouTube. And it was fun. It made me happy. Cool, I have the same sweater!» (Male, 21 years old).

According to the research, in order to understand that clothes are fashionable, the opinion of experts is not particularly important for young people. They are not interested in the opinion of fashion professionals, but they are interested in people’s opinion for whom fashion is not a professional field: bloggers, celebrity and successful people around them. Generally, young people do not have enough money to buy exactly the same clothes as those people whom they seek to imitate.

The study has recorded that the segments in which youth buys clothes reflect the structure of their income quite realistically. Only 15% of respondents said that they dress in segments of a higher level — premium class and luxury.

Among the segments, the leading are mass brands (84%), outlets (stock centers) (38%) and market complexes (21%). The market segment, despite the development of well-known mass and premium brands and the democratization of their economic policies, is still quite popular. However, this is often not approved by society: “I would say a lot of people dress in the market. We have the Tagansky Ryad, the same thing in shops is half the price. It is profitable and cheap, and the same quality. But for some of them it’s ‘dumb’, when they ask questions “where did you buy this thing?” it’s a shame to say that

I bought it on the market. Because now there are such young people that they make fun of them” (Female, store consultant, 23 years old).

The study has shown a new trend: along with mass brands, it becomes popular for young people to buy clothes in stock centers, markets, and second-hand stores. Thus, young people do not refuse to buy branded clothes and follow fashion, but because of the high cost, they replace branded clothes with cheaper analogues.

At the same time, the practice of buying second-hand among young people becomes not only a way to buy clothes cheaper, but also one of the fashionable practices.

In general, the quality of clothing for young people is not a prerequisite. Firstly, price and showy is important for young people. The study has also showed that young people are quite loyal to fake clothes: 47.2% of respondents expressed a positive attitude towards them, 21.9% — neutral. In the purchase of fakes of luxury brands, they do not see anything that could cause condemnation.

It seems to be relevant to study the real preferences of young people, that is, the question of where they would like to dress if they were not limited by means. This indicator characterizes the youth consumer behavior in the fashionable clothes field the interviewed young people would like to dress in the premium segments (64.6%), luxury (50.7%) and mass brands (20.1%). We believe that young people are more likely to choose the premium segment because they do not strive for luxury: it is important for them to be more democratic and free. For the same reason, a significant part of the respondents chose the mass segment as a segment in which they dress and would like to dress.

In general, it is important for young people to follow fashion and learn new trends. 40% of young people believe that following fashion will make them more successful.

The experts participating in the study especially noted the importance of following fashion for young people: “It is important for young people to somehow integrate into this environment, to feel comfortable, because if you are dressed differently, it’s not so fashionable, then you get out of the common rut” (Female, store consultant, 24 years old); “Everyone wants it, especially in Russia. For example, I’ll rent a worse apartment, but I’ll buy branded clothes for myself” (Male, store consultant, 23 y. o.).

Secondly, there is a certain group of young people for whom fashion tracking is not “fashionable”. The study has recorded a desire for self-sufficiency, denial of standards and self-orientation among youth. As for them, fashionable is what suits them. Every tenth respondent in the question, “Who is your icon style?” answers as follows: “I focus on myself, on comfort, on convenience. If a thing is stylish, it is not always convenient. But I focus on convenience, mainly» (Female, 23 years old). This trend prevails among

students. Probably, it is often difficult for youth to formulate a clear opinion about a fashion phenomenon. Young people do not deny fashion and they are actively involved in it, but are not inclined to openly demonstrate an interest in fashion. Modern youth actively uses all the products of the fashion industry and demonstrate varying degrees of involvement in fashion consumption practices.

## 4. Conclusions

In the last decade, the fashion industry has changed. Our research has elucidated that the advent of «the digital turn», the acceleration of the fashion cycle, and the advent of «fast fashion» and other circumstances have influenced on fashion consumption, especially among youth.

The study has shown that the blogging is becoming an extremely popular practice among young people. Young people in fashion consumption are guided by blogs of stylists, celebrities or ordinary youth who are successful or stand out in style. Using social networks, young people can orient themselves towards appearance of people from all over the world, which creates more space for imitation, not limited only to those people who surround them.

Fashion standards are broadcast through all social networks; therefore, the majority of young people are roughly oriented towards modern trends. Modern youth do not use such sources of fashion as magazines or fashion shows. It is not interesting and not relevant practice for modern youth.

«The digital turn» directly affects the consumption sphere: online shopping gains popularity among young people. Half of respondents have ever ordered clothes for themselves on the Internet.

Young people do not have enough money to buy exactly the same clothes as those people whom they seek to imitate. Therefore, most of them buy things in mass brands, in markets or fake luxury items.

Fashion is an important part of the life of young people. Fashion consumption for young people means being modern, being recognized by peer group and increasing their chances of social success.

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