

Reflection of fashion in African Cultural Identities

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Absract

Over time, there has been rise in interest on African anthropology and a high percentage rate of change in fashion. With the paradigm shift in culture and society, it has glowed. This sparks a greater interest in the study of clothing variation with an eye toward its unity. The area of clothing, which is known for self-conscious, change has been a crucial instrument for identifying affiliation or classifying individuals and groups of cultures, and as such has had a considerable impact on the categorization of subcultures. The dressed body is considered to be both the subject of and the object of dress practice in this paper, which examines “reflection of fashion in African Cultural Identities” a variety of approaches and concepts for a perceptible trend as a focus on agency, practice, and performance. In clothing study, the process making and its consumption site are also clear. The human clothing has typically been considered to be something that represents something else rather than being something in and of itself, but recent initiatives to reengage materiality indicate that this perspective is shifting. Findings shows that some scholars look at the significance of apparel in the context of the complete economic circuit and the unequal connections between its participants, there hasn't been much research on the challenges surrounding clothing and its effect on African culture.

Keywords: African, Clothing, Culture, Fashion,

Introduction

The fashion industry has always been diverse, even before it actively acknowledged it. It has always been influenced by various cultures and practices, which in turn gave rise to trends (Alison & Daniel , 2015). But perceptions of trends were different than they are now. Before they were created and widely adopted, trends already existed. Today, we still draw inspiration from the past to create, remember, and inspire. We can now clearly perceive the profound impact that one specific culture—the African culture—has had on society in recent years. African culture is immensely diverse and abundant, ranging from North African culture through Central and South African culture to the descendants who immigrated to other countries, such as the African American culture (Architesh, 2016).

In recent years, a wealth of writing on clothing has emerged in both the scientific and popular spheres. Cross-disciplinary and artistic interactions with clothing can be seen in museum exhibitions where clothing is presented as art (Kylie & Karen , 2017). There will be a number of encyclopedias on clothing and fashion. Articles, monographs, and edited collections with regional or topical focuses are among the new abundance of scholarly work. The research of

costume, the journal of the costume society in the UK, and *Dress*, the journal of the costume society of America, are complemented by fashion theory, a new interdisciplinary publication. *Dress, Body, and Culture* is a brand-new book series being published by Berg. International conferences with a high visibility that cover topics like clothes and the imperialism of consumption and fashion present dress study. Fashion is a shared, taught, patterned, and important art form, just like culture. In fashion anthropology, we investigate how systems of appearance, dress, and fashion influence the production, performance, and transformation of human civilizations. By providing the study of clothes, which for a very long time only received fleeting attention, fresh vitality, anthropology contributes to this expanding field of inquiry. The people's culture makes sure that clothing and fashion accessories achieve specific purposes or objectives. The choice of fabric and design are also influenced by culture. Designers can, for instance, pick from a variety of locally abundant native materials and employ them. This will build a solid sense of local identity (Vinay , 2005).

Culture and Cultural Change

Culture is the entirety of a population's passed-down ways of living, including their arts, beliefs, and institutions. The way society is changing is referred to as "cultural change" by sociologists and in public policy. The outcome is the development of new social structures as well as new cultural traits, behavioral patterns, and social standards in the society. The substitution of contemporary technological equipment, such as electricity and other sophisticated tools, for fire and stone tools is an illustration of cultural shift.

Nothing in the cosmos can survive without change, and this includes culture, which is the universe's most important driving force. No culture ever stays the same. Global social and cultural transformations are currently taking place. Uwandu &Nwankwor (2006) contend that culture change must be distinguished from culture dynamism, which only refers to a culture's capacity to absorb and incorporate specific other cultural values. Culture itself develops and transforms. This happens gradually over time. Indeed, many of the changes in our society throughout the years have been attributed to western civilization. Intense Western efforts have been made to elevate women's standing throughout the world, but particularly in Africa, where it is abundantly clear that women are undervalued as compared to men. Our African constitutions, ways of administering justice, and political systems all reflect Western educational practices. Christie (2014) notes that a variety of factors, such as the following, contribute to cultural shift.

Invention: New cultural elements are produced through this process, frequently from pre-existing ones like the radio, computer, or microchip, or the telephone, all of which have had a significant influence on our way of life. Additionally, discovery refers to the process through which, typically through scientific investigation, we become aware of or improve our understanding of already existent elements present in the environment. Amazing discoveries

and the identification of a planet beyond Pluto are recent scientific advances. Diffusion is the process by which cultural characteristics of one culture are passed on to another. This might happen as a result of commerce and other economic interactions, migration, or armed conflict. Border regions where populations of neighboring cultures are more likely to interact are where cultural diffusion is more likely to occur and is more intensive.

Environment dictates cultural changes resides or functions. In essence, individuals must adapt to their surroundings. As a result, we must alter the way that we respond in our society to particular circumstances. Suarez (2013) defined acculturation as the process through which members of one cultural group take on the values and behaviours of another

Role of Clothing in African Culture

As individuals transitioned from one state to another, clothing was worn to signify a person's status, a specific rite, or the passage of time (Rachael & Robert, 2010). Clothing can be a reflection of a person's or a group's beliefs. Religious organizations frequently embrace a particular aesthetic (Micaela, 2011). People from several cultures have had beliefs in luck and magic. These values are reflected in their attire (Christopher, 2002). While married ladies wore full body wraps and cloaks that were highly cherished by the owner, young girls or maidens began with merely a skirt or apron. Each tribe takes great pride in the national costume they don for rituals and significant occasions. There are many different dress styles, and the fabric used in the creation of the garment is crucial. The status of individuals or groups within the community as well as the state of society as a whole are frequently reflected in the fabric (Christopher, 2002). People establish their sense of identity and place in society through their attire. Scholars and professionals in the field of fashion and dress are still interested in the links between clothing and both personal and social identities (Rachael & Robert, 2010).

In other cases, foreign cultures, such as colonial influences or western popular dress codes, have supplanted or altered traditional robe (Rachael & Robert, 2010) s. Due to a dearth of written records and genuine historical data, it is particularly difficult to trace the evolution of clothing in Africa. Much is put together from multiple sources, including word of mouth and the passing down of traditional robes to living tribal members (oral history), theater (masquerades), as well as from works of art and antiques that depict clothing in sculptural form. Dashikis, an eye-catching, distinctive garment that covers the upper body, are among the most popular African trends (Rachael & Robert, 2010). It is a vibrant top-covering outfit that is mostly worn in West Africa. In East Africa, it is also referred to as a kitenge and is a typical piece of apparel in Tanzania and Kenya. It comes in both formal and casual forms and ranges from straightforward draped garments to fully tailored suits (Christopher, 2002).

Boubou: A boubou is a type of Dashiki that is often worn with a wide robe that completely encloses the outfit and a pair of matching pants. Kente, Yoruba: Contemporary Traditional African Clothing (Rachael & Robert, 2010).

The Western Culture

The history of social standards and ethical ideals is known as Western culture, often referred to as Western civilization, Occidental culture, or Western society. French, Spanish, and British cultures are all subcategories of the general, amorphous term Western culture. Western culture is prevalent in Europe and most of the Western Hemisphere.

The term "Westernism" is derived from the verb "westernize," which describes the process of introducing to other nations ideas or ways of life that are typical of Western Europe and North America (Charles, 2010). The knowledge, beliefs, morality, and manner of life of the Western world are thus implied by the term "western culture."

Africans have largely embraced westernization. There are both positive and bad effects of Westernization on African culture.

Africans have been shown to have embraced westernization, and this has significantly influenced our culture, including their sense of style in terms of how we dress (Shirley and Elizabeth, 2018).

The Western culture does not frown upon the indecent apparel that is currently on the rise in developing Countries like Nigeria and is practically becoming a norm in the way many Nigerians dress, despite the fact that many individuals will say that dressed decently is a choice (Shirley & Elizabeth, 2018). Although not all Nigerians have adopted the immoral form of Western clothes, I can assert that Western clothing has been seamlessly incorporated into our sense of style. However, Nigerians have always been receptive to whatever seems to be in style (Shirley & Elizabeth, 2018).

The impact of recent fast fashion trends

Fashion improves quality of life since it not only enables you to dress stylishly, but also offers you the chance to think independently, supports the maintenance of positive self-esteem, and provides enjoyment (Charles, 2010). Being fashionable has made people stronger, but only to a certain extent. Fast fashion has many advantages, including lower costs and rapid pleasure for customers, increased profitability for businesses, and the democratization of fashionable clothing (Micaela, 2011).

As the merits are numerous so there are some demerits which includes promotion of "disposable" mentality, contributes to pollution, Microplastics break down in the wastewater as a result of consumers washing their fast fashion clothing in the washing machine (Shirley & Elizabeth, 2018). Synthetic fibers enter the atmosphere as the machine drains extra water. They

enter marine habitats through runoff and have negative effects on organisms when consumed. Others are cheap clothing necessitates cheap labour (Micaela, 2011). The market for used clothing is being destroyed by fast fashion and encourages a consumerist way of life and unhealthy working conditions (Shirley & Elizabeth, 2018).

Fashion's harmful impact on young minds includes: low self-esteem which develops when they begin to believe that those around them are superior to them in terms of ability, intelligence, and effectiveness, claims essay aid. Extreme competition, guilt and addiction, work pressure, a negative body image, mental illness, and copying others are just a few examples (Micaela, 2011).

Fashion's Reflection of Social Change

The relationship between the industry and society can be seen in how fashion reflects social change. A considerable adjustment in society norms and ideals is required for social change. It is possible to see how fashion changes over time in response to the social and political environment (Stephen, 2016). The emergence of social media has triggered a veritable growth in streetwear (Shirley & Elizabeth, 2018). Social media platforms have, in fact, given people a forum to express themselves more fully. However, personality has always been a part of fashion. And as people create history, reflecting on their dynamic identities also entails considering the past. Clothing serves as a window into specific historical periods. Fashion undoubtedly reflects societal developments (Micaela, 2011). A window through which to examine how cultural values are changing. Fashion, art, movies, and other forms of human expression are significant protagonists in influencing society's behavior," as stated by Metsavaht. Therefore, attempting to comprehend fashion entails attempting to understand modern thought. Continue reading to discover how our progress is reflected in today's fashion! A considerable adjustment in society norms and ideals is required for social change. Throughout history, it is easy to observe how fashion varies based on the social and political climate. Fashion shows and brand collections serve as a representation of what is happening in the real world away from the catwalks (Annamma, John. Sherry, Alladi, Jeff & Ricky , 2015).

Due to the positive effects that African designers' creativity has had on African Culture and Beauty on the international fashion scene, Figure 1 depicts the significant increase in non-selected models of African descent who walk the runways for the biggest fashion companies. There are obviously other factors involved in fashion besides the work of designers. It is a sophisticated photograph that captures the spirit of the era in which it was made. It represents many different topics, such as politics, beauty standards, technological progress, and street fashion (Annamma et al, 2012). The relationship between society and fashion is reciprocal. The result is that one has an instant impact on the other and vice versa. The fashion business is currently living in a new era. Minorities and the environment are being highlighted as society rearranges its ideals. Transparency, diversity, eco-awareness, and representativeness are demands from the public. As a result, the fashion industry began to embrace these pillars and reconsider its production methods. The marketplace is absolutely altering. The fashion industry

is reflecting these socioeconomic changes. Thanks to their inventive and environmentally friendly practices, new enterprises are prospering. In addition to the wellbeing of the environment, they are concerned about the working conditions of their employees and giving fair compensation.

The way we behave in our culture is reflected in what we wear (Christopher, 2002). If we are making progress on social issues, the fashion industry will soon include them. It's imperative to bring them to your attention and carry on the conversation as a result. But this is only the beginning. Even with all of these improvements, the road ahead is still quite lengthy and challenging.

Beliefs, customs, and social behavior are continually evolving in every community (Barbara, 2018). Given the diversity of gender identities today, cultural and societal change is not only necessary but also unavoidable. Figure 1 shows how a new type of cultural transformation based on the destruction of gender norms has evolved in African fashion (Rachael & Robert, 2010). Male and female sex are traditionally distinguished visibly in Africa through clothes. Any clothes exchange between sexes was frowned upon until a decade ago, and anyone who dared to enter the other sex's closet did so knowingly, putting themselves under societal observation. In other words, there was no blending of men's and women's fashion, and there was no possibility for individual expression. Simply put, clothing served as a tool for social categorization (Joanne, 2015).



Figure 1: Impact of African beauty and culture on the world of fashion (Ngozi & Lindani, 2019).

Conclusion

Every culture undergoes change throughout time. Fashion is not stagnant within any society. The bulk of civilizations, on the other hand, are inherently conservative in the sense that they despise change. Some cultures resist more than others by passing legislation to safeguard and

preserve long-standing cultural norms while erecting obstacles to foreign concepts and objects. African culture should serve as a way to monitor, adopt, and disseminate changes in social, technological, and fashion trends. Due to misperceptions or Western brainwashing, there is an urgent need for cultural restoration in Africa in order to prevent cultural extinction. People without a culture are people without an identity, so this is really vital.

Recommendation

1. it is recommended that people follow a fashion trend in terms of clothes if it fits with the local culture.
2. That African designer must handle the connections that come with textiles, themes, and clothing that are largely linked to enduring, regional cultures.
3. That social media, which has also greatly contributed to bringing attention to African fashion, will have a lasting effect and inspire upcoming generations of designers.

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