

**Consumer culture is a homogeneous culture of global commodities**

**Name**

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## **Introduction**

Through the fluidity of communication and the ability to travel around the world, one is not just limited to what is particularly present in their country, or relative to their traditions or class. People are now capable of exploring and consuming internationally. The days of restrictions and sumptuary laws are gone (Kaplan, 2016). Through democratisation and globalisation of fashion, the culture of international commodities has reached which can be seen across different nations, consumed by people globally. Global fashion chain which involves most of the streets internationally, have been compared to the chains of fast food. According to some of the theorists, globalisation has caused international sameness where people of different cultures have disappeared. It has been noted that fashion has started to be like fast food: largely homogenous, entertaining, unintimidating, easy, disposable and fast (Granot et al, 2014). This essay is about critical analysis of the statement that consumer culture is a homogeneous culture of global commodities. With the help of this, the idea will be analysed that customer culture is homogenous culture of global commodities. The main target will be to identify if there is international homogeneity of consumption of such products. The examples are analysed in fashion to understand how various cultures absorb such international commodities into the culture and then give a new definition to them. The general recommended idea has been analysed, that fashion has been floated from west towards east, which has caused westernised dressing mode taking over the traditional fashions and pre-existing ethnic of countries.

## **Main Body**

Homogenised commodities do exist and they can be seen over the high streets present in the world, but the usage of such commodities is not homogenised necessarily, nor is it some current development. Fashion is not only a hierarchical system of west. It does not only define good taste and its imitation (Sassatelli, 2007). The major target is to do the amplification of the concept the procedure of cultural globalisation does not always mean the homogenisation of culture. It can be called as globalisation of culture, where culture globalisation does not always result into homogenisation and therefore cause destruction of some cultures. Barnard (2014) emphasised much over this concept, through arguing that as forces from different metropolises are getting into some



new areas they become more indigenised into one or the other way (Paterson, 2005). The theory 'hybridisation' of Pieterse (2004) has also been used for supporting this idea. According to his theory, cultural globalisation does not include only culture which infiltrate other, but it involves different processes that include hybridisation of culture where culture interpret and interact with one another for bringing about the form of hybrid culture.

Culture of customer is not a form of globalisation, as it is present for different centuries. For example, England in sixteenth century, the usage of objects was being introduced in front of Queen Elizabeth and to her ceremonial court for communicating her rule legitimacy. Because of more of the development of industrial revolution in eighteenth century, more of the people of Europe started participating in marketplace. Therefore there was an increment in the marketplace. This concluded into the explosion of customer choices (Featherstone, 2007). The lower class, the middle class and the gentry assumed and admitted the social importance of products. In the nineteenth century, the rise of department stores resulted into the institutionalisation of usage of products (Gurova, 2015).

Theory of McLuhanof, 'Global Village', which was first delivered into the 1960s, resonates in today's world and particularly in the ubiquitous and instantaneous dissemination of fashion with the help of different mediums. In opposed to the previous fashion weeks which used to be occur in some common capitals of fashion of the globe, now cities present in the entire world hold showcasing of fashion weeks and the designers are publicised on larger scale. This fashion communication is not some new idea; it was present in the past too.



## Marshall McLuhan



Figure 1: Theory of McLuhan

For example in the eighteenth century, among different English and Royal houses, circulation of small dolls in latest styles used to be done and therefore idea of new styles was started. With the emergence of newspaper and magazines in the nineteenth century, the fashion doll of eighteenth century turned into a fashion print in a popular magazine and then transformed into the fashion photograph (Krewani, 2015).



Figure 2: Small dolls in English and Royal Houses in 18<sup>th</sup> century



According to Buckingham (2013), through communication, the fashion dissemination occurs around the world, which let people present in the remotest area of globe to have acknowledgement of what is recent in the fashion. What actually happens is the glocalisation of such ideas that are being observed across the world. The absorption of trends around the globe is done; they are translated through the people present in the world, which provides a twist to the homogenous commodities. Films which were developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century showed that in future people will always dress uniformly, living without national borders and cultures and integrated into one universal system. Coming towards the 21<sup>st</sup> century, now it can be seen that this concept is not away from the truth with grand international brands mass developing fashion for meeting the requirements of mass consuming society. People around the world and mainly more number of people present in the west retain some of the elements of their culture and heritage. It can be observed at non-western fashion weeks that heritage of one person becomes the departure point for more number of designers. As according to Granot et al (2014), acquirement of distinctiveness in decoration and dress is the universal procedure of the development of identity. Modern, colonial, industrial and preindustrial societies are all engaged into a play between assertive, fashionable and customary kinds of clothing of body so that various systems of clothing are reforming, forming, changing at constant rate, dynamic and in competition with particular allegiance of culture.

From the fifteenth century, Europeans moved across the world and therefore the colonisation era started. Along with the colonisation, for the desire of commodities the dissemination and adoption of garments also came into being. For instance, the catholic missionaries present in India and China would adapt to clothing to the traditional dresses of people they were actually attempting to affect. This technique of taking on the clothes of other society for acquiring respect was the factor which was required to be used widely by other nationalists' movements. Until the eighteenth century, in India, more of the people of Portuguese and English settlers got the clothes of the land (Grossberg, 2014). The clothes of Europe did not seem appropriate on the tropical climate of India and therefore, they adapted. The Indian at that particular time period adopted the garments of Europe. In the movement of nationalist, the major role is played by the clothing. Clothing has resulted into different revolutions as seen in the history.



During the freedom struggle of India, different laws were passed like British were not allowed to wear Indian Clothes while being in public, and number of Indians reverted to wear the garb, they reject it because of colonisers, therefore developing a powerful political statement. The colonisation of India and some of the other countries through British resulted into the exposure of such cultures to the sartorial aesthetic of English and most of the people adopted their dressing style. The colonised were not the only ones who adopted the colonisers dress, but the colonisers also adopted the clothing through colonies (Mirrlees, 2013).

Two of the major instances of Traditional wear of India (there are many other ones too) as adopted through British and which are still the main part of the lexicon fashion, redeveloped time and again are Jodhpurs and Nehru Jacket. The first Prime Minister of India is responsible for the popularity of Nehru Jacket. Khadi was originally the developer of Jawaharlal Nehru in the design of elite of Hindu service. Jodhpur trouser is the second kind of clothing, which belongs to the ancient Indian trousers' style termed as Churidar. They were altered and adopted through polo players of Britain, as kinds of breeches and Savile Row tailor developed this British version in London. The designers present around the world have re developed both of these garments. They can be seen much incorporated into fashion of both men and women. These items are still prevalent and they can also be seen across the world, on the runways of best designers of world and mass-developed and being sold on high streets (Solomon et al, 2012). Objects perform circulation in various regimes of time and space, getting meaning and new value in exchange process, or in local wearing context. A common instance of it can be seen in the Dutch artist's work; Roy Villevoeye made a visit towards the people of Asmat present in New Guinea in year 1992. At that time, people were known of clothes of West and the possession of such dresses was not a novelty (Mander, 2014).

However, unlike the western culture which is conspicuous consumed, the people of Asmat did not own much money for the replacement of T-shirts when such shirts got torn and old. Instead they started making clothes on their own, each getting fit to the people in their own manner. The symbolisation of t-shirt was not done in accordance with the wearer who is closer to the western world. These t-shirts own different strategic holes and rips. The t-shirt was transformed into a new one and was treated being like a material than being treated traditionally. It is also a perception that these rips are substitute of scarification which was originally performed by Asmat onto their skin.



Therefore, the international commodity was taken by the people of Asmat, the t-shirts which are synonym of homogeneity in fashion and provided a new meaning to it. Many of the factors have been stated about the people of Asmat and their appropriation of t-shirt (Ferraro and Brody, 2015).

Mass customer products, though being alien for the specific culture, can be altered into unexpected forms for taking on local cultural means (Kaplan, 2016). Through globalisation, commodities goes from the production place to the consumption place (and are dumped back to the production places) and are proper, and sometimes they are misappropriate in various manners than they were actually meant to be at source. Another instance of glocalisation of global communities can be seen through the research of Hansen. In Bemba, which is one of the dialects of Zambian, the used clothing can be called as ‘salaula’ which implies that the selection through a pile (Krewani, 2015).



Figure 3: Salaula by Zambian

Another form of it, which is utilised in Tanzania is ‘kafa ulaya’ which implies ‘died in Europe’. It is most interesting factor and the one which owns the complicated cycle of second hand products that are exported to the countries that are less developed, probably the ones in which they are made. This is a very good exercise as this charity is a kind of recycling (Appadurai, 2011).





Figure 4: Kafa Ulaya in Tanzania

Salaula is a good example of consumption. What is done by Africans with such clothes is also a kind of recycling. Asmat people are also liked by them, the destruction of these second hand garments is done and are changed in order to suit the cultural and individual style. Therefore, removal of homogenous commodities is done through the original one by providing them a new meaning, one which is basically indigenous and depicts the culture which is more suitable to them (Holt, 2002). Paul Poiret is considered to be a source of the advent of fashion designer. Western fashion has always seen to make more innovation in other cultures. The designers look over the clothing items and exotic fabrics in order to incorporate the designs, therefore making a shift into the boundaries. In the year 1908, Paul Poiret provided liberty to women through the corset and observed the cultural clothing with the objective of inspiration. This resulted into the usage of oriental creations such as knickerbockers that were being implemented into the designs. This style has got much attention in the fashion and it can be seen globally today. This suitability of concepts particular to more ethnic aesthetic is observed in the designers work present around the world. There is an interpretation of international ideas, crafts and cultures; John Galliano is an instance of the designer who got much affected through crafts, costume history present around the globe (De Mooij, 2010).

According to Arnould and Thompson (2005) Galliano looks at the world being a grab bag consisting possibilities, filled up with different styles that can be randomly used. He does what is actually done in fashion, determining that what the fashion is actually: an ephemeral, opportunistic



and eclectic source. In this globalisation age, endless accessibility and communication, he enhanced the eclecticism into the sampling style. Galliano loves different strategies like refinement and crafts and apply them in a unique manner. He does not find much interest in authentic past. Galliano depicts the fashion in a very classical way, the manner in which it really was a carnival of different concepts (Bowlby, 2009).

Postmodernism in fashion can be seen, through eclecticism to the deconstruction, to parody, to bricolage and to pastiche. Designers are always utilising the effect of postmodernism. Looking over the future of fashion constantly, but drawing through the past. In the 1980s, the effect of designers of East came into the ground. A small invasion of Japan appeared over the Paris fashion scene. When Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo gave their first show in Paris in the year 1981, it resulted into the revolution of fashion. They transformed into the first non-western designers to be involved into the official world of fashion. The Japanese fashion got successful in the 1980s; it enhanced the tension in between the global demand for non-western dresses (Hayward, 2004).

It has been analysed by Fiske (2010), the designers of West were successful because of the reason that they broke all of the ideas of beauty and they got a new assumption to how fashion would be observed. For them, the major key was textile and they showed respect and continued respecting the major approaches of textiles. These designers showed much of the deconstruction in the designs. A popular instance of this is the cape/sweater having holes in it, which caused a protest against the machine made knitwear and perfection of sleek in year 1982. The fact that sweater did not own fixed form stems through the development method of garments of Japan, was called as Kimono.





Figure 5: Kimono

The new aspects of fashion, brought through the designers of Japan depicted ultramodern garments which had been developed dependent on principles and techniques of old Japanese but utilising advanced methods of technology. The stronger rise of these designers of Japan altered the norms of fashion. Today, when deconstruction in the fashion is observed, it is utilised more as being aesthetic. Designers have understood this observation as decorative which is opposed to the main part of production of clothes. These designs of Japan aesthetic has affected the designs of west and in the last twenty years, it has been depicted that how much Issey Miyake, Comme des Garçons, and Yohji Yamamoto has affected a new designers' generation such as Hussein Chalayan and Martin Margiela, Viktor & Rolf. With the help of this instance, it can be seen that there is no central culture that propagates the homogeneity of these commodities, but there is a potential of different cultures trickling up and down through different dimensions (Mansfield, 2003).

## Conclusion

All of the instances which have been discussed in the essay, starting the sixteenth century to the twenty first century depicted that how fashion is suitable for different cultures internationally. Through laws that barred objects and clothes, there is now a globalised world where everyone is a part of culture. The concepts of hybridisation and glocalisation are present. Despite of the



overarching homogeneity of global commodities which are being used internationally, people still keep the local identities and cultures. People own the capability to choose and pick freely and they use such elements which are brought through various cultures that get a different aesthetic as compared to the present one. The explosion of customer choices has been increased and consumers have become more conscious about fashion. The lower class, the middle class and the gentry assumed and admitted the social importance of products. People belonging to all classes have understood the significance of products. They focus on adopting the latest trends. It has been found that consumer culture is a homogenous culture of global commodities. People now search for global commodities for fulfilling their desires. Designers are always utilising the effect of postmodernism. Looking over the future of fashion constantly, but drawing through the past. Now cities present in the entire world hold showcasing of fashion weeks and the designers are publicised on larger scale. Different garments that have been adapted and adopted internationally are the ones that are functional and practical and can be translated easily into the aesthetic of cultures. Globalization should be accepted as along with it, there comes dispersion of concept across different borders and it results into a healthy form of exchange.

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