



Evolution Of Fashion: Ancient Clothes To Modern Fashion

Obeera J M¹, Arun Kumar M S² and Dr. Shweta Mariyappanavar³

¹MBA Fashion Business and Event Management

JD School of Design, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

²HoD Master's in Fashion Design

JD School of Design, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

³Associate Professor

JD School of Design, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Corresponding Author: Dr. Shweta Mariyappanavar

DOI - 10.5281/zenodo.13764899

ABSTRACT:

This research paper explores the evolution of fashion from its early origins to the present day. Initially, fashion was a basic necessity for protection and modesty, using natural materials like animal skins and plant fibres. As societies developed, clothing began to signify social status, as seen in ancient Egypt and Rome, where elaborate garments marked wealth and class. The 19th century saw the rise of haute couture in Paris, marking the beginning of the modern fashion industry with its emphasis on exclusivity and craftsmanship. The 20th century introduced rapid changes influenced by major historical events and cultural shifts. After World War I, fashion became more practical, with styles like the flapper dress of the 1920s and the New Look of the 1950s reflecting changing social norms. The latter part of the century saw the rise of streetwear and casual fashion, driven by urban culture and self-expression. In the 21st century, fashion has embraced retro revivals, sustainability, and minimalism. Trends from past decades, like high-waist jeans and chunky sneakers, have reappeared, demonstrating fashion's cyclical nature. Today, the industry focuses on sustainability and ethical practices, reflecting growing awareness of environmental and social issues. This historical journey shows how fashion both reflects and influences changes in society, demonstrating how events in history have shaped clothing styles over time. From the ornate fashions of the Baroque period to the simpler Victorian styles, each era has added to the story of fashion. Advances in materials and methods, like the development of synthetic fabrics and mass production, have changed how clothes are made and sold. By looking at important moments in fashion history, we can understand how society and new technologies have affected clothing. The way history and fashion interact shows how fashion adapts to and mirrors human experiences. In the end, this historical perspective emphasizes fashion's lasting importance and its role in expressing and shaping cultural identity.

Keywords: Fashion History, Medieval Clothes, Baroque Fashion, Victorian Clothes, Edwardian Style, 20th Century Fashion, 21st Century Fashion, Fashion Revolutions.

INTRODUCTION:

Fashion is a multifaceted phenomenon that has continuously evolved over centuries, serving as a reflection of societal transformations, cultural dynamics, and individual expression. This research paper delves into the rich history of fashion, examining key historical periods, influential designers, and the socio-economic factors that have shaped clothing styles over time. From its humble beginnings as a basic necessity for protection and modesty to its current status as a global industry driven by creativity and innovation, fashion offers a unique lens through which to understand human development and societal change.

The origins of fashion trace back to early human societies, where clothing was primarily made from natural materials such as animal skins and plant fibers. In ancient civilizations like Egypt and Rome, garments began to transcend their practical functions, evolving into symbols of status and wealth. Specific styles and materials signified social hierarchy, with elaborate clothing and adornments denoting elite status. This period laid the groundwork for fashion as a form of social expression and identity. The modern fashion industry began to take shape in the 19th century with the advent of haute couture. The rise of fashion houses in Paris marked the beginning of a new era where trends

were set and followed across Europe and beyond. This period saw the establishment of a formalized fashion system that emphasized exclusivity and craftsmanship, leading to the development of a global fashion industry that continues to influence styles today.

The 20th century brought about rapid and transformative changes in fashion, driven by significant historical events and cultural shifts. The aftermath of World War I ushered in a shift towards more practical and streamlined clothing, reflecting the changing needs and attitudes of the time. The 1920s introduced the flapper style, characterized by androgynous silhouettes and a break from traditional norms. The Great Depression of the 1930s led to a more conservative and utilitarian approach to fashion, while the post-war 1950s saw a return to femininity with Christian Dior's iconic "New Look." As the latter half of the 20th century unfolded, fashion continued to evolve, embracing new cultural and social dynamics. The 1960s and 1970s were marked by bohemian styles and a countercultural movement that challenged traditional norms. The 1980s, in contrast, were characterized by extravagance and bold colors, reflecting a period of economic prosperity and media influence. The rise of streetwear in the 1990s marked a significant shift towards casual,

everyday fashion, driven by urban culture and a desire for self-expression. In the 21st century, fashion has undergone a further transformation, embracing retro revivals, sustainability, and minimalism. Contemporary fashion reflects a cyclical nature, with past trends being reinterpreted and reintegrated into modern wardrobes. The focus on sustainability and ethical practices highlights a growing awareness of environmental and social issues within the industry. Fashion today continues to serve as both an art form and a means of self-expression, with new technologies and social media playing a crucial role in shaping trends and influencing consumer preferences.

The evolution of fashion from ancient civilizations to the present day underscores its significance as a tool for self-expression, social identity, and artistic creativity. By tracing the history of fashion, we gain valuable insights into how human creativity and societal changes have shaped the way we dress and perceive ourselves, revealing the profound impact of clothing on individual and collective identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Girard, A. (2024) History and Evolution of Fashion and Design in Different Regions and Periods in France. Historical events, such as the Tokugawa shogunate's policy of isolationism and the decline of samurai influence on fashion, contributed to the evolution of

design aesthetics and the democratization of clothing styles among different social classes. The study of the history and evolution of fashion and design in different regions and periods is crucial for understanding the complex interplay between cultural, social, and economic factors that have shaped human societies. There is a pressing need for interdisciplinary research that bridges the gap between historical scholarship, cultural studies, and fashion theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of global fashion history. This theory is central to the study of fashion and design as it provides a framework for analyzing the interconnectedness of fashion production, consumption, and meaning-making processes across diverse contexts. Further research could explore the history and evolution of fashion in regions such as Africa, the Middle East, and Oceania to address biases in existing scholarship and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of global fashion history.

Aishwarya. S. (2018) A Review of the history, theories, and early forms of fashion and clothing. As civilization evolved clothing was set as a standard for classism (regionality) and social status. The development of new materials for use as covering or ornament has played a major role in the history of clothing. The impulse towards dress was derived from body ornamentation. Historical evidence

proves the fact that the earliest method of clothing was changing one's physical structure. Decorating the body with inks and puncturing nerves to create a dark tone on the skin was a practice ever since the Neolithic times. Protection theory (or Climate theory) which is that human beings invented clothes in order to accommodate themselves to climates they encountered. Adornment (or decoration theory) which is that human beings started to wear clothes in order to express their desires to show how beautiful they are by clothing themselves. It can be compared that today's tattooing, body painting and piercing on ear lobes, brow lines and lips are a result of the fashion cycle, just like the saying 'what goes around, comes down'. This advanced civilization should have been the result of pain, tolerance, death and sacrifice along with experimentation and curiosity that has led to everything matter around us comfortably.

Yuksel (2012) An outlook of the fashion industry through fashion history. We talk of good design only when the proportions are right. The ideal of beauty has been changed throughout fashion history including proportions of a female shape For example, 17th-century corsets formed into cinched waistlines in the 50s. Proportion on the female body has been changed not only vertically but also horizontally. Empire cut of the 1800s; torso comes down until hip line in the

'20s repeated dress style in the 80's fashion cycle. We can emphasize the empire cut dress, which is a 20's vintage look dress designed by John Galliano. Everything has become a subject for Fashion design, and major changes and developments in the world affect Fashion accordingly. Kaunakes is a great example of how far we can go back to look for inspiration when historical sources become available.

Choudhary (2020) Evolution of historical clothing giving a true essence to the fashion era of 21st century. The agenda of this topic is to explain the Indian sustainable fashion techniques which are a diverse yet distinct demonstration of our rich cultural heritage which are followed from the very beginning on the land of wonders. That's why it is one of the greatest treasures of the country which is Celebrated all over the world. Indian surface works are one among the gorgeous gifts the rich Indian culture has got to offer. The fashion industry has undergone sweeping changes which bring a lot of things together in one box which is reuse, recycle, evaluation and redesigning under the banner of sustainable fashion. The Indian approach towards sustainable fashion has given our craftsmen a chance to put forward their skills and earn their livelihood. This also helped in promoting Indian culture and crafts that inculcated only in our country. From the king's dynasty till our leaders, this land

has always promoted sustainable fashion and therefore the plus point about its years and years passed but its richness, elegance, and artistic elements have remained identical and preserved by its people and promoters. Our designers and craftsmen are an inspiration for other designers as they showcase the way to design without losing your roots; they're the developers of this redefining age of fashion.

Ertekin (2019), Linda Welters and Abby Lillethun, *Fashion History: A Global View* (2018). The following sections summarize how the authors address these problems and provide an overview of the contents of the book. Craik (2009), who coined the term 'the fashion impulse,' addressed that fashion systems operate globally and non-Western dress has its fashion system. Welters and Lillethun argue that changing dress practices and folk dress should also be included in the history of fashion. The rise of such cultural and critical studies has helped to show the need for a global and inclusive view of fashion history. They argue that change in fashion is not only restricted to tailored clothing. They argue that fashion history should be understood as a global phenomenon and focus on four issues to expand the history of fashion. Especially at a time when the fashion industry is blamed for concerns about diversity, becoming more inclusive and addressing the problem of exclusion in

fashion history is both important and relevant.

PREHISTORIC PERIOD:

Before the evolution of fashion the ranges of clothing were small. People used leaves and animal fur to cover themselves. During this period single skins were worn as capes around the shoulder, two skins fastened together at the shoulder made a simple garment. Fitted clothes such as trousers and parka were also made from animal skin. Needles made out of animal bone were found in many sites in Europe and Asia. This provides evidence of seven leather and fur garments from at least 30,000 years before. Ten thousands of years ago early humans learned how to weave clothes using plant fibres. People began to weave fabric during the Neolithic Era, a period that began around 8000 BC. The evidence of early weaving comes from flax fibres found in Switzerland. In some cultures people made clothes without weaving. Ancient Egyptians wove their fabrics from flax. The invention of these periods include draping using animal skin, washing of garments, detergent, dyes, bleaching, tanning hides, shoes, the needle, the awl, domestication of livestock, cultivation of crops, spinning, hand weaving and woven plant fibre cloth. Some humans believed that blood marks received during hunting was the basic tradition for the men to paint their bodies. They

added beauty and identification to one self. (S.Aishwarya, 2019).

MEDIEVAL PERIOD:

In the medieval period, clothing was a significant indicator of social status and wealth. The most common fabrics were wool and linen, accessible to various classes but with wool being predominant due to its versatility and warmth. Silk was luxurious and reserved for the wealthy and the Church. Hemp and cotton were also used, albeit less commonly due to regional limitations. Dyes from natural sources provided a spectrum of colours, though vibrant hues were costly and thus seen mainly among the affluent. Woad, yielding a blue dye without a mordant, was widely used across social strata. Leather and fur served practical and status-oriented purposes, with fur becoming fashionable from the 10th century onward. Undergarments were relatively consistent across classes, typically consisting of shirts, stockings, and for men, underpants or breeches. Head coverings, including hats, veils, and hoods, were ubiquitous and varied in style based on occupation and social standing. Sumptuary laws attempted to regulate attire to reinforce social distinctions, but enforcement was inconsistent. Despite efforts to curb excessive spending, wealthy individuals often circumvented penalties, maintaining their ability to display

affluence through their clothing choices, (Snell Melissa, 2024).

BAROQUE FASHION:

Baroque fashion from the 17th and early 18th centuries showcased a luxurious and rich aesthetic with intricate detailing, lavish fabrics like silk and velvet, structured silhouettes, and corsets for women. The garments were adorned with elaborate embroidery, lace, and embellishments, while men's fashion included embellished jackets and trousers. Accessories such as hats, gloves, and jewellery were essential to complete the opulent look, reflecting the era's grandeur and drama through excess and self-expression, inspiring modern designers to incorporate luxury into their designs. The Transformation fashion concept draws inspiration from the practical dresses of the Baroque era, combining historical elegance with modern adaptability. Designers combine classic silhouettes, intricate details and luxurious fabrics to create versatile clothing that can be transformed into different occasions. With removable decorations and a changeable design, they perfectly combine the charm of the past with modern functionality. These designs explored the glamorous world of baroque-inspired practical clothing and showed how designers are bridging the gap between historical aesthetics and the needs of today's fashionable man. (Rodania Rashad, 2023)

VICTORIAN ERA:

During the Victorian period from 1837 to 1901, fashion underwent significant evolution, reflecting the societal changes and technological advancements of the era. Initially characterized by slim torsos and bell-shaped skirts supported by heavy petticoats, Victorian fashion emphasized modesty and elegance. The introduction of crinolines in 1856 revolutionized women's attire, replacing cumbersome petticoats with hoop skirts that allowed for greater mobility while maintaining a full silhouette. As the century progressed, fashion shifted towards more structured designs, including bustles that accentuated the rear of the dress in an S-shape, complemented by draped fabrics and trains for added drama. Sleeve styles evolved from tight fitted to larger, flaring at the elbow, reflecting changing tastes and social norms. The late Victorian period saw a move towards simpler, more natural styles influenced by the Aesthetic Movement, favouring flowing lines, pastel colours, and delicate floral patterns. Evening and formal wear became increasingly elaborate, featuring luxurious fabrics, intricate embellishments, and low-cut necklines to signify wealth and social status. Accessories such as hats, gloves, and jewellery played a crucial role in completing the Victorian look, with hats decorated elaborately with ribbons,

bows, and feathers, reflecting the era's penchant for ornate detailing and fashionable elegance, (Lockett, 2023).

EDWARDIAN ERA:

The period from 1900 to 1910, known as the Edwardian era, was characterized by its opulence, class distinctions, and adherence to strict social norms under the rule of King Edward VII of Britain. Fashion during this time remained formal and extravagant, with women wearing corseted dresses made from luxurious fabrics like silk and chiffon, often adorned with intricate lace and high collars. Skirts evolved from fitted at the waist to a more relaxed silhouette by the decade's end. French designer Paul Poiret introduced looser, corset-free dresses. Women's attire also included large hats decorated elaborately, complemented by hairstyles like the pompadour. Men typically wore three-piece suits with high-collared shirts and ties, along with derby or bowler hats. Formal attire varied for morning, daytime, and evening, reflecting societal expectations. Sports and leisure activities introduced specific attire such as wool suits with straw boaters. Working-class men wore practical clothing for manual labour, often durable and protective. Children's clothing mirrored adult styles, with girls in knee-length dresses and boys in shorts and long socks. The era saw the rise of mass-produced fabrics, which

facilitated the ready-to-wear fashion market and introduced softer materials and pastel colours, contrasting with the bold fabrics of the late 19th century. The Edwardian era's fashion epitomized elegance, with the Belle Époque known for its sophisticated shades and luxurious designs, appealing to both upper and middle classes alike, (Doreen Becker, 2016).

FASHION IN 20TH CENTURY:

In the 20th century, fashion evolved significantly, shaped by social, political, and technological changes. After World War I (1919-1928), fashion transitioned from military-inspired designs to modern, streamlined styles influenced by Cubism and Constructivism. Young designers, liberated from pre-war traditions, introduced innovative approaches, and advancements in artificial fabrics and mass production made ready-to-wear clothing more accessible. Women's fashion moved towards a more androgynous look, reflecting their increased roles in the workforce. Post-World War II, fashion continued to adapt. The 1950s retained some military influences but began incorporating more feminine details and colour experimentation. The 1960s saw a rise in youth counterculture with eclectic styles, vibrant colours, and synthetic fabrics. Practical garments like pantyhose and the integration of sporty elements into everyday wear became

prominent. As the century progressed, youth culture and sportswear increasingly influenced fashion. Designers such as Luis Dell 'Olio and Donna Karan popularized comfortable, practical styles that merged sportswear with high fashion. Street fashion and the commercialization of countercultural styles also emerged. Children's fashion underwent significant transformation, evolving from individual designer works to a well-established industry with specialized stores and mass production, particularly in response to the baby boom. The 1970s marked a breakthrough in women's business attire, with tailored suits incorporating traditionally masculine elements like shirts and ties, reflecting the growing presence of women in high-paying roles. Despite these advancements, achieving balance between volume and line in women's fashion remained a challenge, often addressed through creative approaches such as surrealist influences. Overall, 20th-century fashion was marked by a dynamic interplay of historical events, technological progress, and changing social roles, leading to a diverse evolution from military utility to personal expression, (Kertakova, Jordeva et al.,2019).

21ST CENTURY:

In the 21st century, fashion has increasingly embraced a retro revival, reflecting a blend of past and present styles. This trend is evident in the

resurgence of high-waist jeans, which, originally popular in the 1940s, have become a modern staple. Chunky sneakers, once a hallmark of the 1980s, are now prominent again, thanks to designers like Gucci and Balenciaga. Similarly, scrunchies, popular in the '80s and '90s, have remerged as fashionable accessories, aligning with sustainable fashion practices. Bike shorts, a trend from the same eras, are being worn by celebrities like Kim Kardashian, often paired with oversized sweaters. Flared pants, a staple of the '70s, and ripped denim, reminiscent of the '80s, have also made comebacks. Neon clothing, which had faded from the fashion scene, has returned with vibrant hues across various garments. Tiny sunglasses, echoing styles from past decades, are now sported by fashion icons such as Rihanna and Deepika Padukone. This retro revival extends beyond individual items to the broader concept of retro branding, where brands reintroduce or update past products to appeal to contemporary consumers. This resurgence is particularly significant among younger generations, who use retro fashion as a means of self-expression and connection to earlier cultural moments. The 21st century's fashion landscape illustrates a cyclical nature, where past trends are reinterpreted and reintegrated into modern wardrobes, highlighting the timeless appeal of vintage styles, (Krishna & Kumar, 2022).

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, fashion's history is a fascinating journey from simple beginnings to a complex global industry. Starting with basic clothing for protection in prehistoric times, fashion evolved to reflect social status and wealth in ancient civilizations and medieval periods. The Renaissance and Baroque periods introduced opulence and complexity to fashion, while the 19th and 20th centuries brought dramatic shifts influenced by historical events, technological advancements, and cultural movements. In the 21st century, the resurgence of past trends alongside a strong emphasis on sustainability and ethical practices illustrates fashion's cyclical nature and its responsiveness to contemporary values. This ongoing evolution highlights fashion's role as both an art form and a mirror of societal changes, emphasizing how clothing serves as a means of self-expression and a reflection of broader cultural and environmental awareness. In future fashion will likely involve integration of technology, which will redefine traditional practices that will help the consumers to engage with fashion in new ways. In the end fashion's dynamic evolution shows how deeply it impacts our identity, culture and society. It highlights how Fashion remains important and has the power to influence our world today.

REFERENCE:

1. Aishwariya, S., (2018), A Review on The History, Theories and Early Forms of Fashion and Clothing. International Journal of Engineering Sciences & Research Technology,7(7): 270-275.
2. Chaitanya Choudhary (2020). Evolution Of Historical Clothing Giving A True Essence To Fashion Era Of the 21st Century. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra4825>.
3. Doreen Becker "1900s Edwardian Era/La Belle Epoque" December 2016.
4. Girard, A. (2024). History and Evolution of Fashion and Design in Different Regions and Periods in France. International Journal of Fashion and Design, 3(1), 49 – 59.
5. Kertakova, Jordeva et al (2019). Fashion during the 20th century post-war periods. Tekstilna industrija. 67. 10.5937/tekstind1903029K.
6. Krishna, A. and Kumar, R. (2022) "The 21st century and retro style." <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2212089.pdf>
7. Rachel Lockett, "Victorian Era Fashion: Clothing Trends and More ", History Cooperative, June 1, 2023, <https://historycooperative.org/victorian-era-fashion/> .Accessed May 5, 2024.
8. Rodania Rashad "Transformation Fashion Style used in innovating contemporary Baroque styled fashion" September 2023.
9. Snell, Melissa. "Medieval Clothing and Fabrics in the Middle Ages." ThoughtCo, Jun. 25, 2024, [thoughtco.com/medieval-clothing-and-fabrics-1788613](https://www.thoughtco.com/medieval-clothing-and-fabrics-1788613).
10. Sukriye Yuksel (2012). An Outlook of the Fashion Industry Through Fashion History. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275541977_An_Outlook_of_the_Fashion_Industry_Through_Fashion_History/citations .
11. Zeynep Ozdamar Ertekin (2019). Linda Welters and Abby Lillethun, Fashion History: A Global View (2018). <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336638245> .