

The Relationship Between the Fashion Gatekeepers and the Influencers in Western Society

FFD613: Dissertation

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Introduction

Aim:

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the concept of the fashion influencer, meaning someone with a large following that has an impact on contemporary trends, in relation to the somewhat divisive standards they are expected to keep up with in order to stay relevant in the fashion industry, and whether or not it is them or the gatekeepers, those of a higher power, that really decides on what classifies fashion.

Objectives:

1. To understand the impact of the influencer on western society, not only in regards to fashion choices but the lifestyle of a viewer
2. To explore the psychology behind what makes an influencer so admired by so many and how they can be used as a marketing strategy
3. To attempt to decipher the boundaries between the fashion influencer and the fashion gatekeepers, who holds the power?

The work will explore the shift in change of fashion leaders and how they can impact a person beyond the way they dress. The work will also attempt to discover what it is about a person that makes them so desirable and how brands create a personal consumer connection to said person in return for a profit. Additionally, the work will explore how some influencers exploit their status in order to convey an ideal, sometimes encouraged by fashion brands to generate income. This investigation will be backed up by interviews, surveys and talks from industry specialists, as well as visits to exhibitions and museums.

Despite the value of the influencer economy amounting to nearly \$5 billion global advertisement spend in 2018 (Intel, 2019), a recent survey showed that only 50% of respondents aged over forty understood the term 'influencer' [see appendices]. This dissertation will explore if influencers have changed the course of fashion, specifically throughout the latter half of this decade, in western society and how they might continue to shape the future.

“It has become fashionable to declare the celebrity dead, at least when it comes to selling fashion and cosmetic lines.” (Strugatz, 2019.)

The investigation will begin by exploring the connection of power and wealth to fashion in contemporary society. The work will discuss the controversial ‘perfect’ image, in relation to standards set by numerous fashion and social media influencers, and why these social constructs shape everything in western society from fashion to lifestyle choices. This includes the shift in the role of an influencer and the introduction of ‘real-to-life’ stars. This chapter will also feature the renowned empire created by the Kardashian family, alongside the fashion flow theory and the modern zeitgeists of western society. Finally, the work will explore the strategic trend in marketing of working with micro-influencers.

The second chapter of this dissertation will attempt to understand the psychology behind why an individual perceived with ‘unattainable’ standards is so desirable to their audience. This will be explored in terms of the celebrity gaze theory and an artificial involvement by means of escapism from everyday life, even to the extent of cosmetic surgery to look like said person. The notion of celebrities being idols of consumption through product endorsement will be discussed in relation to Bernays’ power of persuasion theory (1928) and Marx’s commodity fetishism theory (1867), both in which investigate thought of personal connections with popular figures in order to make profit.

The final chapter of this dissertation will begin to uncover how much of the influencer’s content is real to life, and what is created to create publicity and sales. Constant use of sponsored content suggests inauthenticity to followers, regarding the theory of Simulacra and Simulation (Baudrillard, 1981) in which it is near impossible to decipher what is real and what is presented on screen, also known as hyper-reality. The concept of imposter syndrome will also be discussed in this chapter, as will the decrease in celebrity worth and the value of an image.

Overall, this dissertation will explore the notion of a social media fashion influencer and the impact they have on western society and the standards they must comply to in order to stay relevant.

Chapter One: The impact of fashion influencers

This chapter will explore how much the influencers of the time could have an effect on what classifies as fashion in western society. It could be argued that when fashion trends were first established, by royalty and wealthy courtesans between the seventeenth and eighteenth century (Anon, 2018), status was something that distinguished style. Although it can be argued that this is still true to a degree in modern day western society, there are now other contributing factors that defines someone as a fashion influencer.

In the times of Marie Antoinette and Louis XIV, the “first fashion icons”, (Anon, 2018) a person’s physical size was symbolic of their opulence. If they were physically larger, they could afford more food, therefore hinting to the viewers of their fortune. This ideology is also presented at Kensington Palace, as demonstrated in figure one [2019, see appendices]. If a person could afford to pay for luxurious materials in large quantities, with fine embroidery and layers upon layers of skirting, they were considered wealthy.



FIGURE ONE

Similarities on power were also explained at the Elizabethan Miniatures exhibition at The National Portrait Gallery [2019, see appendices]. If a person could afford a portrait alone, this would show their wealth, but opulence was also portrayed through their clothing selected especially, alongside jewellery and make-up. It was these figures of power that became desirable among their contemporaries, the

fashions they wore admired by all, thus beginning the discussion of what classifies as fashionable.

Social media in the twenty first century has shifted the perceptions of the 'perfect' body image to such an extent, where the plump figure was ridiculed and replaced by a size zero body, also known as 'heroin chic' in the 1990s (Givhan, 1996). Social media influencers still continue to promote and encourage the use of diet pills and weight loss teas, suspiciously being introduced as brands saw a rise in health trends, such as clean eating and getting the perfect gym body. A recent survey [2019, see appendices] carried out between 18-25 year olds deduced that out of fifteen people that have ever purchased a weight loss supplement; nearly two thirds confirm it was endorsed by a social media influencer.

The perceptions from social media platforms of what constitutes as a 'perfect' body often holds unrealistic expectations for followers, especially when enhanced through photo editing, which will be further explained in chapter three. With over 6% of all Instagram users being aged 13-17 and 30% between 18-24 (Statista, Oct 2019), to comply with these ideals can be potentially harmful, both mentally and physically, especially for those with bodies that are still changing. There have even been protests circling the internet to encourage influencers to make a change in the content they post, one signed by over 8,000 people (change.org, 2019).

It could be argued that the obsession over body image is encouraged by the gatekeepers of the fashion industry, those who hold the power, i.e. their sponsors, in order to increase sales in departments such as active-wear. This point is also demonstrated in Mintel's Quarterly *Digital Trends* report (2019) which states that social media influencers have a living dependent on amassing enough likes and views to make money from advertising. Therefore this questions the idea that the fashion influencers themselves are at the top of the trend enforcement ladder and are constantly publishing controlled content. The fashion influencers of today's society must stay up to date with the newest social media trends, in order to stay relevant in an industry still obsessed with image and brand above all (Bloom, 2018). The power of the influencer is explored by an anonymous reporter for FurlInsider:

“A new breed of fashion royalty - the social media “Influencers”. With millions of followers across platforms, they can move the needle on how, when and what consumers search and shop for. Brands are willing to pay huge sums of money to become brand ambassadors; impacting on young buyers can make or break trends” (2018).

The shift in the influencers of fashion began to shift midway through the twentieth century, when literal royalty evolved into fashion royalty. To be fashionable was to dress like the celebrities of the time, and it wasn't long until socialites joined the royals and starlets (Sardone, 2018). When television became more commercially available in the early 1950s, fashion influencers began to emerge from all industries, including music, politics and, most importantly film and popular culture (Corbus, 2008). As cinema became more prevalent in western culture, people began to look to Hollywood for style inspiration. These icons were real people, living in real time, therefore their style seemed more achievable. “The clothes become an extension of the main character”, explains Tungate, 2012. After *American Gigolo*, Armani's sales soared. One theory (Barron, 2015) examines this statement further:

“The worldwide popularity of celebrities indicates that nearly everyone enjoys temporary escapism associated with the fantasy of celebrities”.

Another theory also supports this proclamation, from the academic paper *Celebrity's Fashion and Beauty Lines Influence on Consumer's Choice*, (Corubs, 2008), where consumers feel they can relate to the celebrity style influencers and use them as a style guide and an escape from mainstream fashion. However the advancements of technology allow anyone to be seen as a style icon, and the biggest contemporary fashion and beauty influencers tend to be reality stars or YouTubers, ‘real’ people, as demonstrated in figure two. It could be argued that the appearingly more ‘normal’ people are more relatable, and even provide style tips and clothing hauls so their followers and viewers can look just like them.

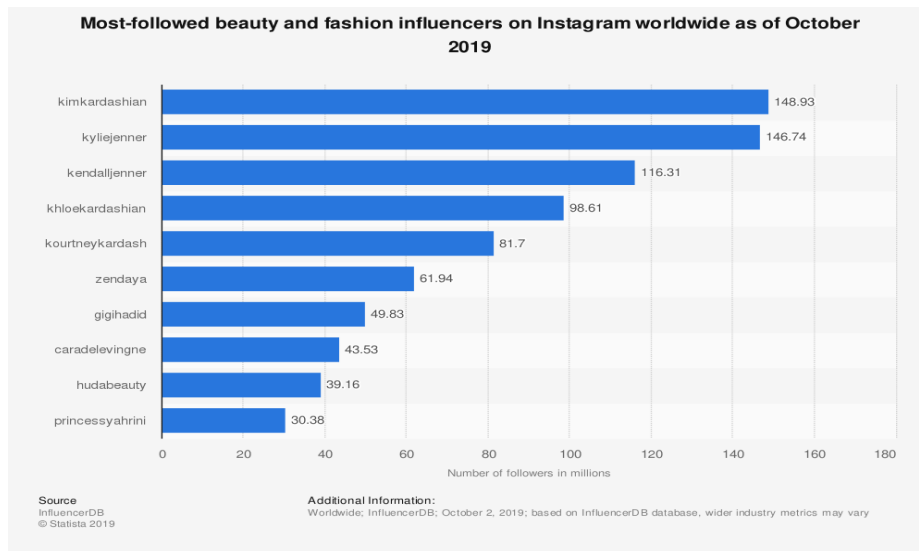


FIGURE TWO

A recent survey [2019, see appendices] asked thirty four people aged 18-24 who they take their fashion inspiration from, with twenty eight of these people being social media influencers. In comparison, a group of women aged over forty were asked the same question [2019, see appendices], with the majority of answers being presenters on television, members of the royal family, or just looking at store displays for style inspiration.

It could be said that the Kardashian/Jenner family are the perfect example of the contemporary fashion movements. When a new trend emerges, another product or make-over is added to their collection. One report by The New York Times (2019) looks at the cash flow of the Kardashian family, who have collectively transformed social media by “being famous for not being famous”. The majority of their labels, from fashion and beauty to childrenswear and athleisure, are sold exclusively online with a minimal marketing budget, due to their already renowned fame. The article continues to evidence the Kardashians’ influence on western society, with KKW (Kim Kardashian West) Beauty making over \$14 million in the first five minutes of its’ launch, and each Kardashian/Jenner sister being offered up to \$1 million for just one Instagram post. Kylie Jenner even lost Snapchat \$1.3 billion in value after tweeting that no one uses it anymore, “she is using social media to define a new level of influencer power” (ibid).

In regards to the fashion flow theory (Stephens Frings, 2008), the introduction of the fashion influencer has potentially shifted the notion of fashion gatekeeping, as did the fashion bloggers in the previous decade. It could be argued that an upward flow is now in order in which the influencers impact the designers, as opposed to the opposite: trickle down flow. To contradict this point, it can be difficult to distinguish how far the influencers are actually influencing, and to what extent they are being controlled by the fashion gatekeepers. This will be discussed further in the final chapter of this dissertation. However, the impact of social media on the fashion industry is key for influencers to thrive, as explore by Claire (2017):

“The rise of social media has diversified the power of fashion. Editors and buyers still hold a powerful influence but it now includes the voice of the average customer”.

On the other hand, the impact of social media *can* be perceived in a positive light. The Zeitgeist is a German concept meaning “spirit of the times” (Hegel, 1807), a circumstance that influences culture, as mentioned previously in the relationship to the health movement and rise in athleisure. The Zeitgeist of 2019 has seen an introduction in eco-influencers all over the world, for example Greta Thunberg, the Swedish sixteen-year-old activist helping to fight climate change. Now with over 7.5 million Instagram followers and being named one of the most influential people of 2019 by *Time* magazine (González, 2019), her impact has been vast. Other influencers using their power to convey activism include Willow Smith, the face of the ‘Futurecraft LOOP’ fully recyclable trainers (KultureHub, 2019), and Jaden Smith, helping to set up Just Water, a company that sells drinking water in bottles made mostly from paper and plant-based plastic (Finn, 2019).

Although a popular celebrity can gain more coverage for a brand, it is the micro-influencers that have become more desirable to the fashion gatekeepers. This term relates to the social media influencers that have between 5,000 and 100,000 followers. As Chabot (2018) demonstrates, those with a more specified audience outperform in engagement rates and are more easily able to create fresh and authentic content. This article also includes a survey that validates this, with 64% of marketers preferring to work with micro-influencers as opposed to celebrity figures. In regards to these results, when speaking with Norwegian social media

fashion influencer Sara Flaaen [2019, see appendices] with over six thousand followers, she explained how she relates her sponsored posts to her own style. She enjoys interacting with her followers and works with brands that promote similar values, therefore making her posts more natural.

This type of reaction indicates to why western society is looking towards the social media influencers for fashion and lifestyle advice or inspiration. But why is it that such high standards are pushed forward? What is it that makes them so desirable? The second chapter of this dissertation will discuss this further.

Chapter Two: Idols of consumption

The second chapter of this dissertation will investigate the psychology behind why a person, product or lifestyle that is conveyed as ‘unattainable’ in western culture becomes desirable among the masses, and something to sculpt a look and even an identity upon. The adjective of unattainable here relating to the literal or physical cost of an object, person or experience, in which a consumer could never achieve.

As explored previously, The Celebrity is often used as an extension of a character that is relatable, often encapsulating a specific cultural moment that resonates with the viewer, making their whole persona more desirable - “a living narrative” (Cashmore, 2014). By aiming to dress like such a person invites the notion that they are similarly on their level, they have reached an ‘unattainable’ aesthetic, often helped with knock-off designer items or lookalikes. This is also enhanced with celebrity designed clothing lines, and their more affordable beauty and perfume ranges, in which their power is heightened and the consumer can become more at one with them. Furthermore, the notion of celebrity endorsement is enforced by Leo Lowenthal, where celebrities are “idols of consumption” (1961) that have been turned into a brand with a product line, and their audience are the consumers. This also nods at the concept of liquid capitalism, wherein western culture has built a society that allows people to easily adapt and reinvent themselves (Redmond, 2013).

Redmond also explores the theory of the celebrity gaze in which the images we perceive of a celebrity require a voyeuristic look, built of desire and longing. We either feel consumed by the person in question, captivated by their presence, or we *become* the desirable being, embodying the appearance we wish we could give (2013). The mystical elements that surround the concept of a celebrity are also examined by Amanda Palmer of *Lauren*:

“Their fashion can be out of context, theatrical, dramatic, exciting or eccentric. Readers can dream, as if high-status people offer some kind of ‘magic’” (Lantz, 2016).

Certain celebrities hold a persona so fascinating that viewers feel unable to resist. The introduction of paparazzi in western culture in the early twenty first century meant that the privacy celebrities once had was stripped away, allowing the audience to become so engrossed and obsessed with their everyday life that they knew every last detail about them. This allowed a bond in which the viewers felt they knew the celebrity on a personal basis; that they can connect and resonate with them, as explained by Nigel Thrift (2008):

“The glamorous celebrity is neither person nor thing but something in between, an unobtainable reality, an imaginary friend, and an accessory”.

This strong feeling of connection to celebrity figures has been further enhanced through the increase in popularity of social media, with the use of live videos and vlogs (video logs) to show viewers the daily life of such a person. Redmond (2013) explains how YouTubers can be perceived as more ‘real’ and relatable than film stars as they are put into a normal setting. As opposed to a character in a fictional world, the reader can insert themselves into their environment. Therefore, it can be argued that such exposure to these individuals of a higher status helps viewers to rethink themselves, how they look, act and shop, as well as influencing the lifestyle choices they make. This “artificial involvement” in the life of someone that viewers have never met, as explained by Cashmore (2014), helps them to make sense of their own reality.

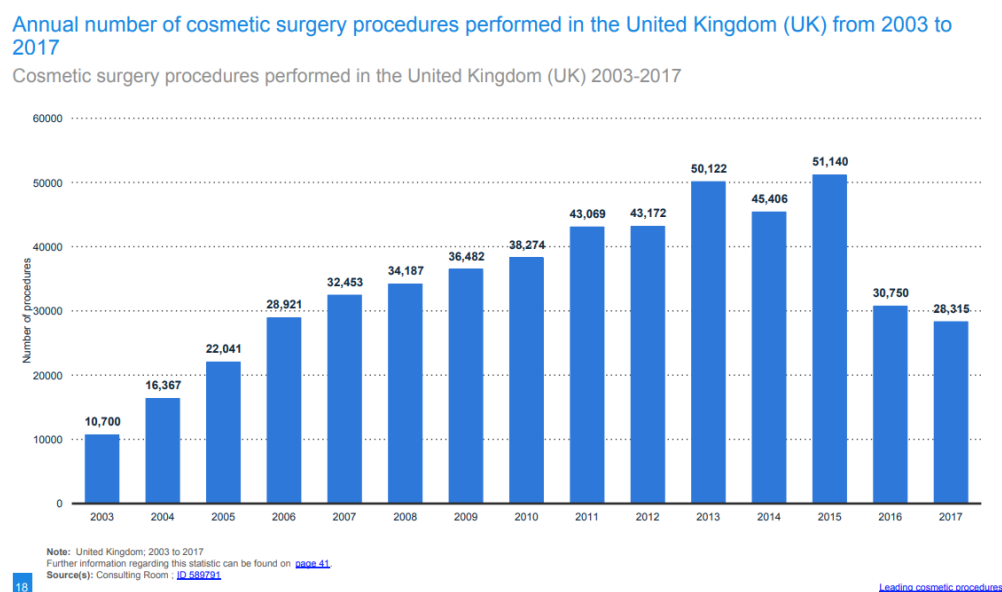


FIGURE THREE

By having such figures in which to sculpt a personal identity upon, the desire to be 'perfect' is ever increasing. Alongside the rate in which social media is growing, it can be argued that viewers of western society not only desire the look of an icon, but the lifestyle as a whole. Figure three (Statista, 2017) demonstrates that since the trend of cosmetic surgery used for vanity in 2003, the number of procedures increased yearly, to over 50,000 in the UK in 2013 alone. In addition, there has been a 50% increase in lip augmentations from 2000-2016, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, with women of all ages either asking for either a 'natural' appearance, or the 'Kylie Jenner look' (Goldfine, 2019).

Looking to popular culture for inspiration is not only in relation to contemporary fashion, as explained in Mintel's Quarterly *Digital Trends* report (2019):

"People have always attempted to emulate celebrities they see in the traditional media in the fashion stakes, and it's unsurprising that this translates to social media, with clothing and accessories topping the list of most-influenced categories."

A recent survey [2019, see appendices] also clarifies this statement. When twenty women over the age of forty were asked where they looked to for fashion inspiration as a young adult, the majority answered with pop stars of the time, or to the magazines.

According to Edward Bernays (1928), by understanding a group mind, it would be possible to manipulate individual's behaviour without them realising it, thus explaining the role of Public Relations. This 'power of persuasion' is used frequently throughout social media advertising, encouraging consumers to purchase products simply due to it being endorsed or supposedly used by a person they idolise. "By linking products to emotions, this often results in irrational behaviour, purchasing power" (Held, 2009). Furthermore, this relates to the concept of commodity fetishism (Marx, 1867), where the perception of social relationships are concealed as personal, but are in fact economical, between money and commodities.

Cashmore (2014) argues that such celebrity obsession can be related to Narcissism, in which individuals become obsessed and absorbed with their reflection, like the

Greek mythological character Narcissus - one dimension of this culture. The other being those who depend on conformation for similar feelings of personal satisfaction. Instagram are currently working towards removing the visibility of likes on others' profiles. As stated by fashion blogger and stylist Alex Stedman of The Frugality [2019, see appendices], worth can be determined by likes. Without them, brands will have to work harder to find influencers that will help to convey their identity, not just a popular figure, and if the comments will become more important.

Referring back to the question which heads this chapter of why someone understood as 'unattainable' is so desirable, it can be understood that western culture uses the celebrity as an escape from everyday life, relating and mirroring them in order to reflect upon how one is presented to the rest of the world. This concept is also explored by Sean Redmond (2013):

"Cultural relativism has led to a state in which ordinary people can no longer make critical sense of their lives, too busy are they with consuming empty celebrity signifiers".

But who is to say we can make sense of the celebrity life either? How can we know what is real to life and what is created for the camera? The next chapter of this dissertation will discuss this.

Chapter Three: The relationship between the fashion gatekeepers and the influencers

The final chapter of this dissertation intends to decipher the boundaries in which social media influencers exploit their status to convey an ideal. Although so much of these individuals' lives are shared online, it can be difficult to distinguish what is true to life and what is staged for personal exposure and gain, and controlled by a higher authority.

Referring back to the first chapter, it could be argued that some social media fashion influencers set unrealistic expectations for their followers and viewers to aspire to that could, in extreme circumstances, result in different mental illnesses. However, it is not only the physical look of these internet personalities that is often fortified for social media, but also their wealth, and status. A number of social media influencers are paid to feature certain products or services, i.e. clothes sent from a brand or an author's new book, stating how much they recommend such product to their susceptible audiences. It can be impossible to determine the products that influencers actually use themselves and the items that they have been paid to promote. Social media platforms can distort reality (Siegle, 2019) and as William Shakespeare once wrote: "*All the world's a stage*" (1599), kept in line by the gatekeepers of fashion.

With a rise in social media influencers over the last few years, fashion brands are battling to be bolder. With social platforms being increasingly saturated by sponsored content, consumers are becoming sceptical of influencers coming off as 'inauthentic' (Business of Fashion, 2019). Upon extending this statement, it can be thought that it is almost impossible to tell what someone is really like behind a camera, to know what they're going through that is not presented online, unless knowing them personally. One example given is from the documentary *FYRE: The Greatest Party that Never Happened* (2019):

"I was going through the hardest experience of my life, and yet if you had seen it [my Instagram feed], you'd have been like 'oh what a great life he leads'" - Mark Weinstein, Music Festival Consultant.

This feeling of not living up to a standard that is expected, or even presented, is known as Imposter Syndrome (Clance and Imes, 1978). The conception of not belonging is felt by many in the fashion industry, as explained by Alex Stedman of The Frugality [2019, see appendices]: “Women constantly feel pressure by the amount of ads on social media telling us we need to have everything. It is emotionally draining.”

Simulacra and Simulation is a philosophical theory from 1981 by Jean Baudrillard where the relationships between reality, symbols and society are blurred, specifically in culture and media. This concept of hyper-reality explains where someone or something can be modified so much beyond recognition, thus creating a simulated reality in this instance where a person’s original ethics have been eradicated to create publicity, i.e. converting to the vegan zeitgeist but only for a few weeks. Another example, as mentioned previously, includes luxury items, forever being replicated and copied, but in the modern day, counterfeits can be nearly impossible to distinguish, as demonstrated in figure four.



FIGURE FOUR

One bag is real Chanel, worth over \$5,000, and the other costing not even \$200.

It is not just a persona or appearance that some celebrities enhance or invent, Mark Borkowski’s fame formula theory (2008) explains that after the initial rush of fame, something else is set off under such person, most likely by their publicist, to generate coverage throughout the press, again referring to the perception of inauthenticity. It is never usually spontaneous or impulsive, it is premediated by the branding of such person, keeping them central in consumer society, even if the

attention is negative. Another critic of celebrity culture explains the concept of ‘new variant fame’ or ‘vfame’ from the Enlightenment period:

“A state in which we are constitutionally incapable of distinguishing quality from bullshit” Mark Rowland (2008).

It can therefore be argued that the value of a celebrity figure has declined rapidly since the start of the twenty first century, especially through the introduction of social media. As Inglis (2010) demonstrates, the celebrity is an empty vessel that now operates at the level of spectacle and capitalist consumption, often viewed through a screen, thus indicating an impression of fiction to which their audience cannot comprehend. Although aspects of their lives are shown to millions, not everything is presented to the general public and with the invention of social media photograph filters and Photoshop, it can be difficult to tell what these ‘icons’ actually look like. The special effect filters are even able to show a user what they could look like after plastic surgery, as shown in figure five, “making them look like an influencer” (Goldfine, 2019) with a simple tap on a screen. Despite the negative effects of the use of some enhancement filters, a recent survey [2019, see appendices] carried out through Instagram confirms that 74% of participants feel more comfortable when posting a photograph using some kind of filter, although not necessarily involving facial alterations.

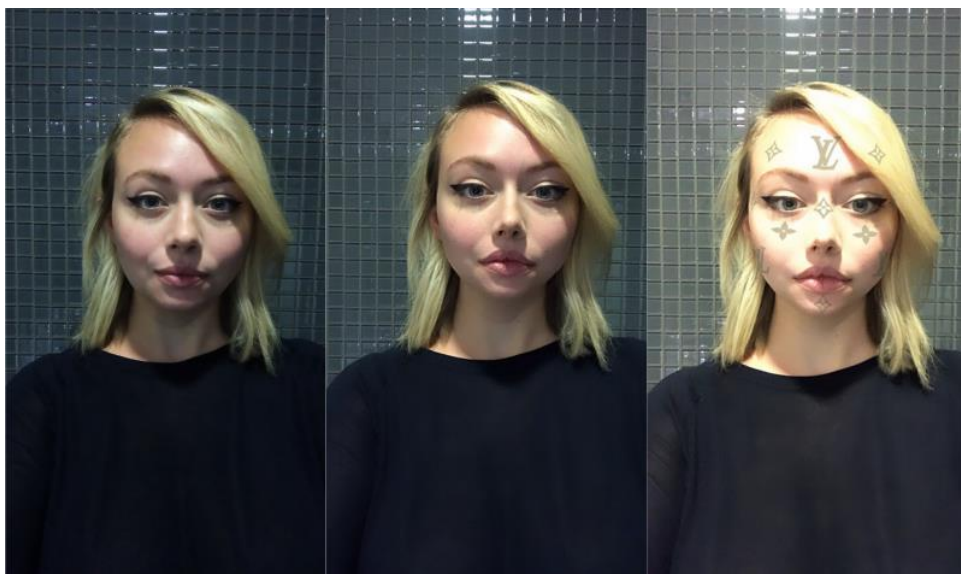


FIGURE FIVE

Image one has no filter, with images two and three giving the user of the filter a much thinner nose, bigger lips and higher cheekbones.

During the Elizabethan era, an image of a person, that holds a similar value to the celebrities of today's society in western culture, was presented to their peers through the art of portraiture. The wealthier members of society, such as aristocrats and the royal family, were among the elite that could afford to have a portrait created of themselves. These artefacts were sacred due to taking such lengthy periods of time to paint in intricate detail, and as a result were only shown to a select few that were deemed worthy, as explained at the 'Elizabethan Treasures' exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery [2019, see appendices]. This notion of sacristy is also implied by Leo Braudy:

"It was always only certain social groups who had an exclusive right to call the tunes of glory, and other visual verbal media were in the hands of a few" (1986).

As technology advanced, portraits and sketches were shared around communities to display the latest fashions worn by such wealthy personalities, which later developed into shopping brochures and magazines. Now in Western society, anyone that owns a smartphone can share a photograph of anything they like with millions of people across the world, in just a matter of seconds. An image is no longer sacred.

With this, the expectations to keep up with the latest looks and fashion trends is an ever-building pressure on the lives of an impressionable audience. Style tribes (Maffesoli, 1996) encourage young viewers to dress similarly to their peers, or even to the standards of celebrities, with numerous lookalike brands, as presented in figure seven. However, with so many people having access to the internet, new influencers are emerging every day, reminding viewers that style is unique and something in which to be expressive. But once again, who is to say these more

‘unique’ looking influencers are in fact themselves under the influence of another to come across in that way?



FIGURE SIX

Numerous times, Fashion Nova have been called out by Kim Kardashian for copying her outfits, with some items being created and sold within days of their appearance throughout the media.

Conclusion

The intention of this dissertation was to examine the notion of the fashion influencer and to decipher how they must evolve alongside western society in order to stay relevant. With an ever-changing idea of who holds the power in the fashion industry, often moving alongside technological developments, it can be difficult to determine where the influence really comes from, and how far just one person can impact the fashions of the times.

In discussing the progression of those that influence fashion, it can be deduced that status is no longer solely defined by wealth, but in today's western society by a number of different factors. The overall image of a celebrity is what makes them fashionable, be it their personal lifestyle, as shown selectively on camera, the clothes they wear, even if provided by a brand for advertisement purposes, or their body image, enhanced through digital or physical modifications. But these unattainable aspirations can be both physically and mentally damaging to those in the real world.

Upon understanding the psychology of why some may sculpt their lives and fashion choices on such a figure, it could be argued that a celebrity can consume a person to the point where they become obsessed with them. A celebrity figure can be used to enhance reality, especially through the use of social media with real-time posts, and used as a form of escapism. To copy another is to live the life they lead, and to dress similarly is to become an extension of the persona displayed to millions across a screen. However, these factors as demonstrated online may not be completely true to life.

With the invention of social media comes a revolution for advertising. Using a fashion influencer as a platform to gain coverage is a new concept introduced into western society, thus indicating how the role of the fashion gatekeeper is always undetermined. It is challenging to understand the off-screen lifestyle of a social media influencer, therefore difficult to comprehend why so many base their own life upon what is implemented to their audience. Their easily-achievable and 'normal' lifestyle has opened a doorway to who classifies as a fashion influencer, with honesty and activism emblazoned over their profiles for everyone to see. How

an influencer reacts to every situation can make or break their career, gaining them more or less exposure with every comment or opinion.

The fashion influencers of today must remember that in order to stay relevant and to impact fashion positively, they must comply with the rules and regulations set out by western society. To move with the times, and the developments in the ever-evolving world of technology, will keep them at the top of their game, and those that ignore this will succeed no more.

It is understood that it may be difficult to predict where fashion influencers will advance to next, especially with the rapid progression of technology outdating more conventional methods of inspiration, such as magazines and blogs, for young consumers in western society. The relevance of the fashion influencer may even become eradicated, with the invention of digital models allowing brands to use minimal fees when displaying their most recent collections, as presented in figure



seven.

Moreover, it could be said that the conception of the fashion gatekeepers may eradicate the role of a social media influencer, when it becomes common knowledge to the general public of paid advertisements, a course of distrust could plea for a new kind of authentic influencer.

FIGURE SEVEN - Digital Instagram models @dagny.gram and @shudu.gram

The invention of social media has enhanced everyday life in western society, not only through fashion, and in such a short space of time. It is forever intriguing to discuss how and if technology can develop further and change the course of fashion completely, and even alter the earth beyond recognition.

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Appendices

Ethical clearance for research and innovation projects

Project status

Status

 Approved

Your application has been approved by the General Ethics Standing Panel. You may continue with your project.

Conditions applying to all research and innovation projects

- All sensitive data must be held in a confidential and secure place and destroyed on completion of the project or associated assessment results being confirmed. Anonymity and privacy should be guaranteed. You should ensure that it is not possible to identify an individual from the data you collect. The data should only be used for the purposes it was collected.
- Informed consent should be obtained where appropriate and participants should have the right to withdraw without explanation.
- The approval given applies only to the submission to which it relates. If you change your research, then you are required to resubmit for approval.
- Evidence of any specific ethical requirements will be sought in the outputs from the project.
- Please remember that a breach of Southampton Solent University ethics procedures is considered as academic misconduct (2L: Student Academic Misconduct, 11.x; 4L: Procedure relating to academic misconduct in Postgraduate Research Degrees, 4.Iv; Staff Disciplinary Procedure: Appendix 4).

Actions

Date	Who	Action	Comments
12/12/2019 14:51:00	Sarah Dryden	Supervisor approved	
12/12/2019 14:32:00	Amelia Butler	Principal Investigator submitted	

SurveyMonkey (16 respondents aged over forty), carried out 28/11/19:

1. Do you understand the term “influencer”?

- Mostly answered kind of

2. Where do you look for fashion inspiration?

- 25% social media
- 6.25% magazines
- 68.75% store displays

3. Who are some of your current fashion icons?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Don't have one x 8- Taylor Swift- Kate Middleton x 2- Helen Mirren- Zandra Rhodes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vivienne Westwood- Victoria Beckham- Michael Kors- Charles Tyrwhitt- Alana Stewart	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Amanda Holden- Emma Willis- 40plusnotgivingupyet
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4. When you were 18, who did you look to for fashion inspiration?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pop and TV stars of the 80s- Pop idols- No one x 2- Most people from the 60s- Audrey Hepburn- Fashion boutiques	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 80s pop bands- Vogue magazine- Vivienne Westwood- Gucci- Alexander McQueen- Peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Friends- Magazines- Pop stars x 3- Madonna- Older sister
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5. Have you ever purchased something because it was worn or used by a celebrity?

- 18.75% yes
- 81.25% no

6. At what age do you think social media is suitable for children and why?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Secondary school, should be aware of what's acceptable- 18, have some sense- 11, secondary school, treated like an adult- Any age, can't avoid it, make children safe and aware of dangers- 16, too much social pressure to be "perfect" x 2- 12, age where they understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 15/16, can make up their own minds, more world savvy- 15, matured, common sense, take responsibility- 14/15, form own views and opinions- 13, keep up with friends, monitored- 16, vast implications x 2- Consider introducing gradually, 10, understand it- Over 13
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Kensington Palace, London. Visited 17/07/19:



Elizabethan Treasures (2019) [Exhibition]. National Portrait Gallery, London. 21 February 2019 - 19 May 2019:



Instagram Survey (Ages 18-24), carried out 28/10/19:

1. Do you use Instagram for fashion inspiration?

- 62 people / 76% yes
- 20 people / 24% no

2. Who are your favourite fashion influencers?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ninauc - Deborabrosa - Marcforne - Zoiamossour - Marionaautean - Maria Bernad - Boohoo / MissGuided - Brittany Barthgate - Victoria McGrath - Sammi Maria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chloe Plumstead - Icovetthe - Kylie Jenner - Lydia E Millen - Inthefrow - Lornaluxe - Sofiamcoelho - Hailey Baldwin - Teresaandresgonzalvo - Lydia Rose - Fashioninflux 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gildaambrosio - Olivia Rose Smith - Ruby Holley - Tuula Rose - Naomi Genes - Freya Killin - Kanye West - Virgil Abloh x 2 - Molly Mae - Grace Beverly - Weworewhat
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(28/34 are social media influencers)

3. Would you feel more confident posting a photo with / without a filter?

- 57 people / 74% with
- 20 people / 26% without

4. Have you ever purchased a celebrity product?

- 27 people / 33% yes
- 54 people / 67% no

5. Have you ever purchased a weight loss supplement?

- 15 people / 19% yes
- 64 people / 81% no

6. Was this endorsed by a social media influencer?

- 9 people / 16% yes
- 48 people / 84% no

7. Based on personal experience do you think social media is suitable for children under 13?

- 5 people / 6% yes
- 74 people / 94% no

8. Would you take down a post if it didn't get enough likes?

- 14 people / 18% yes
- 62 people / 82% no

Interview with Norwegian Micro-Influencer @saraflaaen (6,045 followers) carried out 25/11/19:

1. Do you agree with sponsored or paid posts?
Yes
2. Do you include them on your profile? If so how often?
I do - always marked as ads. How often varies, it depends on how many pending collabs I have at the moment
3. Would you base a sponsored post on the items/amount you're paid for it?
No, at least not with intention, I try to stay true to my style and make my pictures look natural. I would never put in less effort if it was a paid collab.
4. Who is your favourite brand that you have collaborated with and why?
Tough one! I'm really happy to collab with Change Lingerie, as their products are so high quality and I love their body positivity values. I've also collaborated with some Norwegian festivals, which was a lovely experience.
5. What do you look for most from your followers? Likes, interactions, inspiration etc.
I think I must say interactions. Never was too preoccupied with likes but I love it when people send me DMs or sweet comments!
6. What are some of the consequences/dangers that you have personally come across with your life being so closely linked to social media?
No, no direct danger. But I have experienced that people recognise me, and I have occasionally received some creepy messages, but I have never really been afraid.

Guest Talk from Alex Stedman of The Frugality blog (240k followers), 27/11/19:

- “Women constantly feel pressure by the amount of ads on social media telling us we need to have everything. It is emotionally draining.”
- Worth can be determined by likes. Without them, brands will have to work harder to find influencers that will help to convey their identity, not just a popular figure, and it the comments will become more important.
- The future is uncertain on all platforms, must always have a plan B
- Stigma around influencing, don’t purposely do it, I don’t want people to feel as though they have to keep up, implies intent, started blog before Instagram
- Important to be transparent and honest in terms of advertising
- Trend for working with micro influencers - more engaged audience



Mark Leckey: O' Magic Power of Bleakness (2019) [Exhibition]. Tate Britain, London. 24 September 2019 - 5 January 2020:

Dream English Kid 1964-1999 AD 2015 addresses the relationship between popular culture and technology as well as exploring the subjects of youth, class and nostalgia (Tate, 2019).

PRIMARY IMAGE (09/11/19)

Nam June Paik (2019) [Exhibition]. Tate Modern, London. 17 October 2019 - 9 February 2020:

- Bridging the gap between art and technology, encompassing a variety of artistic genres



- TV Garden 1974-1977 imagines a future landscape where technology is an integral part of the natural world, seemingly distinct realms of electronics and nature coexist, following Buddhist philosophy that everything is interdependent, capturing the desperate and sometimes overwhelming content of contemporary mass media

- 1963 radio-controlled robot,

‘mechanical performer’, making technology appear closer to humanity

- TV chair 1968, Paik predicted that video technologies will become so engrained in daily lives that it would blend into our



living environments.

Mocks people’s

obsession with their own image, camera above, monitor underneath transparent seat displaying live video feedback, sitting on the chair makes it impossible to watch

- 1960s experiments with audio-visual equipment, recognised the power, thought artists could help steer them to become more democratic tools for cultural output. Realised it would become more widely available, turning every consumer into a potential

producer. Used magnets to distort electronic signals, politicians as subjects, visual satire.

(PRIMARY IMAGES 05/12/19)