**FASHION CONSCIOUSNESS: NEW MEDIA OR TELEVISION?**

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**ABSTRACT**

The dawn of New Media has changed life as we know it. The Internet has eased communication and shrunk the world, fitting it into palms. User-generated media and blogs, websites, videos have gained world-wide popularity as mediums of expression. Nearly nine in 10 adolescents have access to the Internet and a large portion of the youth spends hours surfing the net, absorbing even minute information regardless of how it affects them. The Fashion Industry is rapidly evolving alongside that of New Media, with a countless rise of fashion Bloggers and websites by fashion houses. Leading fashion houses are also releasing e-versions of their magazines, making it even easier for youngsters to access them and be updated with ongoing trends. People are also getting to know of the latest trends through social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, days before it is telecasted on television or as is in most cases, half of the trends don’t even make it on Televison. From Chanel and Zara to retail cloth stores, New Media seems to have made the youth more fashion conscious than ever before.

**INTRODUCTION**

Fashion today is one sphere that is speedily blossoming. In a general sense, fashion is the latest trends in clothing, footwear, speech or other. Fashion is greatly embedded in the reasons that help differentiate between social classes. It varies according to the personality and lifestyle choice of individuals. Every individual has a unique style that is comprehended by Fashion. Fashion is not a new term. Its evidence dates back as far as the ancient Egyptians, in their wigs, hairpieces, make-up, and jewellery. While to clothe and appear proper is a necessity, fashion is the element that makes one adopt and retain an identity of their own and so it’s no wonder that many people are fashion savvies. Today the Fashion industry is not only the most sought after in terms of employment but is one force that has taken the world by storm.

Everyday a new designer, model or blogger is on the rise. Trends are born, revived and shuffled countless times. The birth of printing press and technology came as a boon to Fashion and it ignited its flourishment. Latest trends would appear on the daily papers and trending fashion shows were telecast on television. In fact, there are even separate channels solely for Fashion like Fashion TV where designers showcase their work on the runway. Adding to that, there has been a consistent rise in shows related to Fashion, like fashion shows, talk shows by fashion experts, contests for models, designers, stylists of all type and photographers, or just experts giving advice and updates on the trends of the season. From corsets, ball gowns and pearls to armadillos, neon and terracotta... the fashion industry has come a long way. What’s interesting to note is that Fashion never really dies, it does get replaced but only to return in a decade or two, like high waists and chokers making a very successful comeback this time around. Indeed print and television gave a boonful impetus to the Fashion industry but New Media has surpassed them all. The dawn of the digital world could not have been a bigger boon to Fashion and it has strengthened its influence tenfold. The internet has opened wide possibilities and the Fashion industry has more than wisely been adhering to it. The world now has a limitless array of Fashion Bloggers and podiums for the same. Every fashion house, brand and magazine has a website, blog or a page on Facebook or all of them and even online stores, giving people an easier and efficient way to access and buy their products. Every big Fashion magazine releases their e-versions online that it has become so easy to be updated about anything related to fashion. And ofcourse, there’s Facebook, Twitter and Instagram among the popular social media sites of today. It takes a day, a few hours or even minutes for the public to be updated on events. Whereas it takes weeks, months for that same event to make it to television or as in most cases, it doesn’t get telecasted. The study is to show whether New Media appears to be rightly responsible for generating a stronger fashion influence on the youth than television.

**OBJECTIVES**

Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To find which has more influence of fashion; New Media or Television?
2. To trace the growth and decline of both the mediums.
3. To trace the growth of fashion consciousness in people

**HYPOTHESIS**

New media is playing a significant in popularizing curvy women and fashion for them.

New media keeps people updated about latest fashion trends.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

An increasing number of people are turning to social media for wardrobe advice, the latest trends and fashion inspiration. Easy sharing of photos and tweets from fashion shows has led to people engaging in the runway experience like the attendees. Social media is not just a platform used to directly engage and interact with the customers but has become a source of inspiration, uniquely influencing designers to be more creative. Inspiration is found by designers and fashion houses in different ways and places and while some feel that social media is just a secondary source, they know that their target audience are on social media and their opinions and wants are important in the inspiration process. There has been a speedy rise in purchases being made via social media. Alyssa Sellors, December 23, 2014. Social Media Influence On fashion.

The word ‘Plus-size’ in Fashion is now deemed as derogatory with fashion houses starting to consider all women as equal. The ModCloth company took off their section of plus-size out of their online site too, noting “Can’t we all just shop together?” The Gwynnie Bee size 10 to 32 subscription rental clothing website that was launched in 2013 is seeing a monthly growth of 20%. Ashley Graham broke the internet as the first plus-sized model to grace the cover of Sports Illustrated. She also launched her own lingerie line for curvy women. Carol Ruth Weber, October 10, 2015. Plus-Size Fashion Now in Trend as just beautiful fashion.

Sports Illustrated swimsuit model Ashley Graham likes to call women ‘curvasexalicious’ and not ‘plus-size’ as the fashion industry calls. Alyssa Bailey, February 25, 2016. Ashley Graham: It’s “Curvasexalicious,” Not plus size. Elle

Historically, apparel for plus-size people had a conservative look. Rather regarded as the ‘fat-girl clothes,’ they were heavy on basics, and used more as a shield to hide the body. The past years however has seen changes with H&M, Forever 21, Wet Seal, and Mango launching new plus-size lines. A new generation of e-retailers like the U.K. brand ASOS and the plus-size-only brand Eloquii have found success on the Internet by selling trendy clothes to a younger market. The plus-size fashion movement owes much to the emergence of a new generation of fashion bloggers, who unabashedly challenge mainstream beauty standards using cheeky names like Stylish Curves, Chubble Bubble etc. A single post on the internet can spark a movement and blog posts by bloggers gives impetus to sales. Lizzie Widdicombe, September 22, 2014. The Plus Side, The New Yorker.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 15

* 5 Fashion experts(a Fashion magazine publisher, a stylist, a designer, 2 models)
* Age group 18-25: 5
* Age group 25+:5

Topic of discussion: **Is New Media more powerful than Television in influencing an individual’s fashion sense?**

The Fashion experts in unison were of the opinion that New Media indeed has a stronger fashion influence over television. Television though, still has a fair share of credit of influencing an individual’s fashion sense through movies and daily soaps and its fashion channels. But New Media in an influencing force like no other. *Esther Longchar*, publisher of *RAMPEZINE* said, *“From e-magazines to online stores, New Media has opened innumerable possibilities for the fashion Industry. What makes it to television is already on YouTube, be it the latest red carpet looks or the most recent fashion Show.”*

The participants of the age group 18-25 seemed to agree that New Media has a much stronger influence on their fashion sense rather than television. While some were persistent that the role of television as a fashion influencer has long ended, the rest differed and countered it by saying that television is still shaping the fashion sense of those who have no access to the Internet. But together they voiced resorting to New Media mediums for any fashion advice or to purchase new clothing or accessory.

The participants of the age group 25+ had mixed opinions. They voiced that both New Media and Television have equal influence on an individual’s fashion sense. Every house now has a television set and it largely influences teenagers and housewives like the latest Barbie Dress or the latest style of saris as worn in the daily soaps they watch.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

VICTORIA’S SECRET FASHION SHOW 2015

The *Victoria’s Secret Fashion Show* has been happening annually since the 199s. The 2015 show was another successful one with the likes of *The Weeknd*, *Ellie Goulding* and *Selena Gomez* as performers and *Kendall Jenner, Gigi Hadid* and *Behati Prinslo* as angels on the ramp. The models, performers and other attendees were constantly updating and tweeting live from the scene that even the ones not attending it, across countries and continents were aware of all that were taking place. The models had posted their backstage photos even before the Show was opened. Like *Kendall Jenner* and *Gigi Hadid*, who have millions of followers on *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *Twitter* kept updating their make-up sessions and selfies with the other models. All the looks from the runway were soon all over social media just a few hours after the show kick started. Though so, the full show wasn’t released immediately. The show was telecast twice on television months later on *Zee Cafe* in India. The disadvantage was that people already knew all of the looks that sashayed down the runway.

PARIS FASHION WEEK 2016

The annual *Paris fashion Week* happened in March and glimpses from the show in no time started doing the rounds all over social media and numerously written about by bloggers. *Kendall Jenner* opened and closed the show for *Balmain* and the photos she updated were soon picked up by other fashion and entertainment sites and shared. Fashion sites within hours after the show commenced began updating their followers and subscribers of the trends of the season and summarised the best looks of each day of the fashion show.

SHOPPING

There are about a thousand of online stores giving customers and the public in general an easy access to finding the right accessory and clothing, in terms of size or style. People seemed to prefer shopping online for which they do not have to keep scanning and skipping through stores to find the perfect fit, style and shade. Not only big fashion brands like *Gucci*, *Prada*, *Christian Louboutin* have their own online stores but even smaller brands like *Street Style Store*, *Only* have their online stores. Television though, doesn’t provide as many possibilities for shopping and people don’t prefer ordering items via television since the payment options are long procedures.

ENTERTAINMENT SITES

Sites like Miss Malini, Vogue, Grazia and many other similar pages and sites ardently keep updating entertainment news, be it the best looks of fashion shows, looks on the Red carpet, any recent upload by a celebrity or the season must-haves. These pages and sites have thousands of followers and subscribers and are key influencers of fashion. Only a handful of what are on social media makes it to television through the entertainment news channels like MTV, E24, Zoom, Fashion Police etc.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS**

After conducting the Focus Group discussion and Content Analysis of both New Media and Television, the findings are that New Media influences an individual’s fashion sense more than television does.

The Focus Group Discussion brought forth the opinions of the participants majority of which favoured New Media more than television. Participants working in fashion considered television as second only to New Media. The participants of the age group of 18-25 admitted to turning to New Media for not just general information or news but also fashion advice and shopping. The 25+ age group though were almost neutral.

The content analysis on Victoria’s Fashion Show 2015, Paris Fashion Week 2016, Shopping and Entertainment sites was successful in finding the stronger fashion influence of New Media over Television. Fashion sites on the Internet are far more popular than the fashion channels on television owing to the fact that people, including bloggers, celebrities, stylists and fashion houses and brands are active on New Media.

**CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION**

The study indeed has aptly met with the set objectives. It has found that new media has more influence of fashion than Television. After the dawn of the digital world, New Media has enjoyed a speedy growth as a medium of providing fashion influence whereas television has slid down in its impact. New media’s growth has helped the fashion industry bloom, opened wide possibilities for it and continues to give inspiration to many. Fashion impacts daily life and New media has helped create consciousness of it in people.

New Media via blog posts, YouTube and social media, has helped break stereotypes and has promoted the acceptance of curvy women in society. New Media has made it easier for people to be on track with the latest trends, to shop their desired clothing without much trouble, to maintain their unique style, to find fashionable inspiration from celebrities and other famous personalities, even easier for franchises, brands and fashion houses to be in touch with their target audience and lastly giving people a platform to express their love for fashion. The study has, with success, attained the set objectives and proved the hypothesis.

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