

***Tesi di Laurea: Moda e Omologazione***

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## **Abstract**

How fashion contributes to build the identity, position and role that social actors play in society?

The intensification of communication channels has led to globalized consumption: this network of relationships shapes the structure of society and assumes a major role in its organization, changes in the institutions and in the adaptation of new balances between social classes.

We'll see how in a society structured in classes, even fashions, tastes, the adoption of a certain way of life and the degree of approval, will reflect the material conditions of social classes.

The point of view from which we will discuss this study, will have the institutionalist approach, which takes the distances from classical and neoclassical economic, and argues that human action is socially conditioned by the institution.

Fashion is a multidimensional system that has not to do with the clothes only, but covers all the activities of individuals that involves a choice. The choice is influenced by imitation, but also by differentiation, and by the institutions in which we are immersed in, that give behavioral models and social criteria of taste. Fashion shows the tendency to conformism and, at the same time, differentiation and variance.

One of the first sociologists that debated the subject, which is the focus of our analysis, was Georg Simmel who, in his mile work *La Moda* deal with this topic.

According to him, fashions are always fashions of classes, those of the highest class perceived from that of the lower class and are abandoned when the latter begins to make them their own.

In our discussion we have to talk about the Trickle- down effect, literally dripping effect from top to bottom, with whom, in sociology, it refers to the spread of habits, behaviors and fashions from wealthy classes to the poorest ones, or from central geographically areas to more peripheral ones. Georg Simmel was one of the first to use this concept, referring to the assimilation of the customs and fashions of the upper classes, by the lower classes.

Veblen, from his American perspective, will highlight how the lower classes are strongly attracted by lifestyles and consumption of the leisure class. The poorest groups in society, initially focused on subsistence, become more and more attracted by the consumer as a sign of reputation. Thorstein Veblen draws a clear picture of the wealthy society of his time, that is represented by an elite who wants to demonstrate its superiority in wealth and social prestige, in two ways:

- The First refers to the conspicuous leisure, that is due to communicate to be as rich as you do not need to work;

- The second way is called instead from Veblen's conspicuous consumption, is the expensive consumption and the ostentation of luxury goods.

So the possibility of more consumption is saw as a source of prestige and social honor.

Veblen's ideas have so influenced economists, as to induce them to encode the concept of Veblen goods, which are those goods whose demand decreases with the decreasing of price, due to the meaning of its prestige.

In this regard, luxury is a typical sign of economic inequality: there exists precisely because there is this inequality among consumers. Luxury goes beyond the functionality, but has a very important function because it is an index of future consumption, allows the market to intercept latent demands: luxury good of today will be the use of the future.

Fashion is the most immediate instrument for imitation: lower class can buy the same items of the upper one. According to Simmel, the history of man is a continuous search for a compromise: blend in with their own social group but at the same time stand in it with their own individuality. Each of us, however, look for the social personification with the psychological tendency of imitation, which could be defined as: the transfer of group life in the individual one.

The incentive to resemble to someone comes from the desire to belong to a certain social group, different from the origin one. Adaptation to fashion is a way of socialization, and this is due to the influence that institutions have on people.

The frantic cadence of contemporary life fits perfectly with the characteristics of fever of fashion. This is due to the shortening of the time, the fastest ascent of the lower classes, but also the importance covered by the fashion industry.

With the advent of industrialism, fashion and its change are more susceptible to productive systems. While before, cultural and traditional differences represented a barrier in which consumption was influenced by the places and social groups to which one belonged, now this limit is overcome with the globalized consumption.

Today, companies are indirectly affecting the needs through advertising, through fashion they may affect consumption and standardize them. Adopt tastes also means producing goods of lower quality, so as to make them accessible to a wider number of consumers.

Instability is one of the peculiarities of fashion: even if fashion meant to last forever, it is characterized by changes, it is so transient during the short term, while in the long run there is a cyclical return of past fashions.

With the Great War, the civil society is completely turned upside down by the radical changes that refer all aspects of daily life, one of these is definitely the fashion and costume. The mass mobilization that characterized the war, was also manifested on consumption, that from this moment on will take the form of a " mass consumption ": the industry begins to produce on a large scale.

Nowadays the maximum integration of international markets, or globalization, has an overwhelming influence on fashion, which also changes as a result of numerous surveys, and expands everywhere. In the early eighties of the twentieth century, fashion has become a transnational phenomenon, brands and goods have a worldwide expansion.

Analyzing fashion as a sociological aspect, the complex of garments is considered the starting point: through these social actors delineate their position in the society. The dress responds to emotional needs and assets, through it, the individual reveals his psychology, his moods; it can be classified as a non-verbal communicative element.

Fashions interprets our time, marketing and advertising have such an important role: they must be always ready to offer consumers what they might want in the future.

We can immediately see how, in our century, everything is relative, everything changes so fast, that he has no time even to be consolidated and institutionalized, that will already be out of fashion. It's very interesting to include in our study, the analysis of Zygmunt Bauman, that labels modern society with the adjective of liquid, because it does not not have the ability to retain long its features. There is a strong analogy between the liquidity of contemporary society and fashion: both of them are instable.

In order to confer to our research a character, that is not only theoretical but also empirical, in the integral part of my thesis, there are some interviews, with a sample of people from different geographical and economic milieus. The central theme of these considerations is the perception of the concept of fashion as well as the center to the periphery of society.

Fashion, in conclusion, is a social question: it evolves with the society. It allows the social actor to a build social status and a position in the society, but at the same time, to distinguish itself from the mainstream group.