
The attitude towards fashion of youth in Georgia

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ABSTRACT

Studying fashion as a social phenomenon has become important during recent years. The term has a dual meaning involving a change and an attire at the same time. The present research takes into account the provision which considers fashion as an attire. The research aims to study the impact of fashion as a social phenomenon on youth in Georgia. The survey was conducted with 150 respondents (80 girls and 70 boys) from 3 state universities. The study showed that there is a connection between gender and fashion trends ($\chi^2 = 7.41$, $P < 0.05$), namely female (40%) and male (37.3%) follow fashion trends, while consumer behavior plays the most important role in "demonstrative consumption". Respondents mainly purchase garments in clothing stores rather than boutiques. Online shopping platforms gain popularity year by year (5.2%), moreover websites are essential sources of picking up information about fashion (70.2%). Fashion is not determined by Georgian adolescents as an instrument of segregation between social classes and emulation anymore. Even though some respondents don't follow fashion trends, they still consider themselves as fashionable ones (61.1%). They are not ready to experiment with changing their style (58.8%) or wearing colorful clothes. The majority of respondents of both genders believe that fashion has a further negative impact on their self-esteem than a positive one. Survey indicated specific stereotypes and limitations related to wearing garment due to that fact, they have experienced restrictions and negative attitudes not merely from parents or relatives, but rather from society.

Keywords: *Fashion, fashion standards, social class, youth.*

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Introduction:

Fashion is both a social phenomenon and a form of social interaction. Consequently, the definition of fashion is multidisciplinary [1], [2]. It combines the dynamics of collective and individual identity, patterns of production and consumption, mechanisms of social difference and imitation. It should be noted that the interest in fashion is constantly growing [3], [4]; it is considered at the macro and micro levels as a significant phenomenon for any society. According to Bell [5] because of mutations, "Fashion in sociological studies plays the same role as *Drosophila* in genetics." The "secret" of changes within fashion has influenced the development of the following fields such as cultural studies, cultural anthropology, drama, philosophy, etc [6].

The precise definition of the term is difficult to be identified due to its dual meaning. As explained by Kawamura [7], on the one hand, fashion is considered as a change, and on the other hand- as an attire. In depth study of this phenomenon requires a clear definition of fashion, although a precise definition still does not exist. Moreover, as researchers point out, fashion research is accompanied by a certain "academic devaluation" [7]. For example, Crane and Bovone explain fashion as a similar phenomenon to consumption, which is valued in academia because it is sometimes considered as "capitalist manipulation of society" or associated with "aspirations characteristic of women." Kawamura [2] also indicates that fashion is undergoing an academic devaluation because it is "related to appearance and woman." Despite these difficulties, many classicists and postmodern sociologists have studied various issues (e.g. Zimmel, H. Blumer and etc.) and their works still remain relevant today. Blumer [8] suggested sociologists to consider fashion and to fulfill comprehensive analysis. Over the past 15 years, a new generation of sociologists has paid close attention to his point of view that caused interest in research of fashion, thus it played a significant role in highlighting the difficulties of theorizing in fashion research [9]. It is important to integrate the theoretical and empirical understanding of fashion so that we can apply this knowledge to the analysis of various social issues. This requires clear definitions, greater academic legitimacy of research of fashion, and the interconnectedness of studies.

It should again be noted that the research part of this paper is based on the second provision of the Kawamura definition, which concentrates on the fashion form and its attire side.

Literature review

The existing classical discourse on fashion is mainly related to the works of Herbert Spencer, Tönnies Ferdinand, Thorstein Veblen, and Georg Simmel; they took part in theorization and conceptualization of fashion, to separate fashion from attire, and to turn it into a tangible and substantial artefact. All of them had a prevailing opinion that fashion is a process of imitation, because social relations are essentially imitation relations. Each scholar also offers a variety of analytical accents. Fashion, by its imitative nature, is a phenomenon in the understanding of society, and it originates from the social hierarchy embedded in the system; it is implied that imitators are persons at the bottom of the social

spectrum, while persons who are considered as the source of imitation by them take place at the top of the hierarchy. This is also assessed as underlying idea of Blumer's theory of "class differentiation".

According to Herbert Spencer [10], fashion is a symbol of the manifestation of the relationship between superiors and subordinates, which functions as social control. There are many different ways to express belonging to a social class, including: address forms, titles, badges, costumes, and more. Spencer does not explicitly discuss the difference between attire and fashion, but implies that position of the same individual in the social stratification was much more crucial than the garment worn by exact person. Fashion has an internal characteristics: "Firstly it refers to the imitation of comprehensive defects, and then other characteristic features of it." He explains two types of imitation, which are also found in modern society:

1. Imitate for the purpose of worship
2. Competitive imitation caused by the desire to establish equality with another individuals

Thorstein Veblen's theory of the "consumer class"[11] focuses on the following features of fashion:

- Fashion is an expression of the wealth of a person who wears a particular garment (as Spencer points out). A kind of investment of money on clothes is a perfect example of "demonstrative consumption". At first glance, wearing specific clothes indicates economic privilege, at the same time, inexpensive ones are often perceived by the public as unacceptable.
- The less practical and functional the dress, the higher the class symbol, moreover the help of other people needed to wear such type of garment, while plain clothing is a marker of the lower social class.
- Involvement in "fashion" means that it has to be appropriate for the present time, in other words fashion is always changing, but it maintains compliance to the specific period of time and innovation at the same time.

Georg Simmel [12] German sociologist and philosopher, shares the views of Spencer and Veblen and notes that fashion is a form of imitation and social equalization, but paradoxically, it changes instantly over time. The elite sets the standards for fashion, but as soon as the lower echelons of the social stratum imitate it massively, the elite immediately moves to a new style. Fashion simultaneously assists unification of a given class, but also divides them. It threatens the upper bourgeoisie class, because it allows the blue-collar class to cross class barriers, but at the same time there are exclusive elements that should be taken into account, since they are considered as the main instruments for segregation of the social strata.

According to Ferdinand Tönnies [13], changes within fashion is based on the following bipolar types of society: traditional (Gemeinschaft) and modern (Gesellschaft). Firstly, the customs/habits that determine the style of attire are internalized, but over time this "power" weakens mainly due to social changes, and the style of attire becomes more free in terms of interpretation and eclecticism.

It should be noted that the modern and postmodern analysis of this issue is completely different from the classical one. For instance, Blumer [8] does not deal with the model of class differentiation as relevant, moreover he argues that the classical approach does not fit into modern society, also he notes that the elite does not set the standards of fashion "The mechanism of fashion does not seem to be based on the need for class differentiation and class emulation, but on the need to be a part of fashion, to express one's taste," therefore the basis of fashion standards for Blumer is the taste of the customer, while the main task of designers is to guess it and make it applicable to collective.

Pierre Bourdieu [14], he evaluates the notion of taste as a marker of producing and maintaining social boundaries between both dominant and non-dominant classes. Taste is one of the fundamental indicators of social identity. His interpretation of attire and fashion falls within the framework of cultural taste and class warfare. The dominant class highlights the aesthetic importance, while the second one concentrates on the functional and long-lasting use of clothing.

Diana Crane [15], pays attention to change of style and argues that the universal genre "Haute couture" has been replaced by three main categories: "luxury" fashion design, industrial fashion and street style, and fashion houses, moreover internet sites play a key role in predicting fashion trends, following with blogs, well-known fashion magazines and etc. Kawamura [2] concludes that fashion is an institutionalized system in which fashion related personalities, including designers and many other fashion experts, engage collectively and carry on to contribute not only to fashion ideology but also to maintaining a culture of fashion that is achieved through continuous manufacture; However, any garment does not become immediately fashionable, despite its potential. We must keep in mind that fashion is not just what we wear or produce. It has a structural form and due to variability it should be analyzed as an institution.

Methodology:

The aim of the research is to study the impact of fashion as a social phenomenon on youth in Georgia. Specifically:

- What is the semantic significance of fashion for young people

- What is the attitude of young people towards fashion?
- What kind of consumer behavior is typical for Georgian youth?
- How young people get information about fashion trends?
- Which standards have effects on them, whether it has impact on their self-esteem?

Both international and local documents, literature and statistical data were analyzed within the research. The survey was conducted through standardized interviews with 150(80 girls and 70 boys) respondents in Tbilisi- the capital of Georgia. 60 of them were undergraduate students at Tbilisi State University, 45 at Ilia State University, and 45 at Georgian Technical University.

The survey was conducted in October-December 2019 using a specially designed research tool, a questionnaire. An accessibility sampling method was used in the study.

After the fieldwork, the data was coded and processed using SPSS 23 program (using one-dimensional and two-dimensional statistical analysis methods).

Discussion:

An important place in the study was devoted to the study of student consumer behavior. According to the survey, only 40% of respondents are employed. The average monthly income of the respondents is 750 GEL (SD = 2.0). The students mostly buy clothes once a month (50.4%). It should also be noted that, according to the cross tabulation the difference was revealed between universities in terms of the amount spent per month (see Figure 1).

Most students spend up to 100-200 GEL on clothes, 500 GEL or more mainly under graduated students from Tbilisi State University (6.33%), then from Ilia State University (1.53%), and in the Technical University such case does not exist at all.

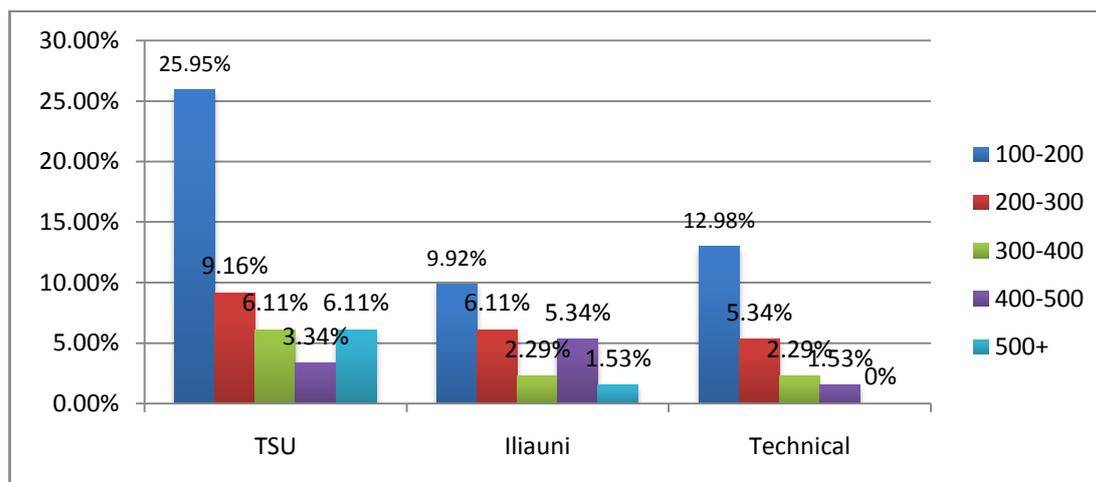


Diagram 1. The amount spent on the purchase of clothing for 1 month

Correlation was identified between actual income of respondents per month and amount spent on items related to fashion ($R=0.56$, $p < 0.05$); the relationship between variables mentioned above is statistically significant, the higher is the income per month, the higher amount is spent on fashion items.

Students were asked to answer close-ended question "Where do the respondents mainly buy clothes", 69.5% of them indicated clothing stores, 19.8% - markets, only 5.3% - 5.3% online stores or boutiques.

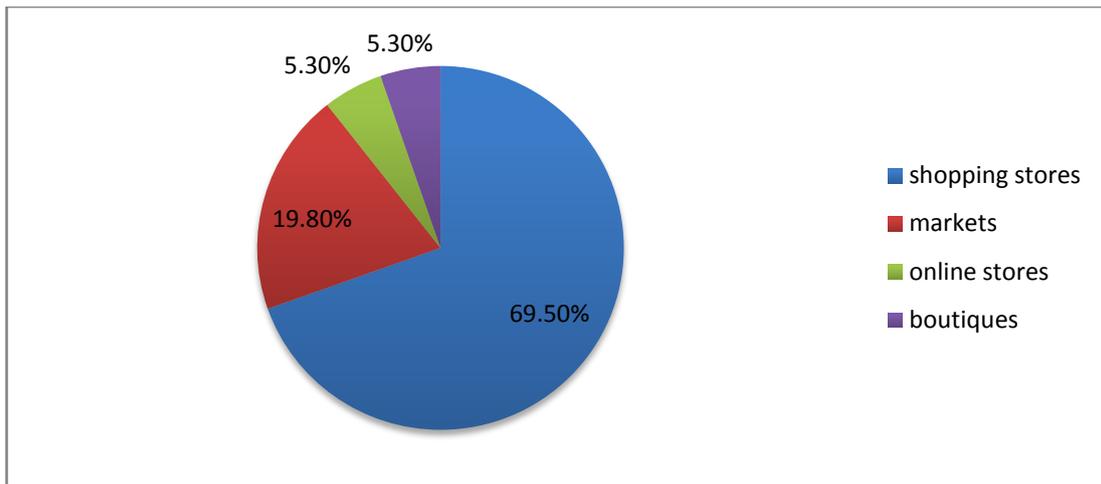


Figure 2 Main sources of clothing purchase

Interviewees prefer brands which are targeted to youth (Bershka, Zara, Terranova, Koton, LC Waikiki, H&M, Stradivarius ...). In this case, specific trends was revealed according to the universities, namely the students of the Technical University mainly wear Coton or LC Waikiki, in the case of TSU Zara or Bershka, and in the case of Iliiuni Stradivarius. Luxury brands (Dolce and Gabbana, Prada, Tommy Hilfiger) are mostly fixed in the case of TSU students.

Popularity of online shopping, is growing more and more not only in the world, but also in Georgia. According to the Ministry of Finance, \$ 3 trillion was spent on on-line shopping in the world in 2019, while in Georgia 81.6 million GEL in the last 6 months. According to our studies, students who use online shopping websites (5.3%), 52% of their salary is spent on buying products online.

There was a gender difference in the use of online shopping; 28% of female and 18% of male users use the sites to buy. Internet shopping sites are dominated by American (Amazon, Ebay, Asos), then Chinese (Alliexpress, Taobao, Alibaba) and the popular are Italian stores. It should be noted that the influence of social networks is growing and similarly the rate of use of Georgian sites (2.3%).

Table 1: Popular online shopping websites among Georgian youth

N	Popular online shopping websites	%
1	American	9.2
2	Chinese	4.6
3	Georgian	2.3
4	Facebook pages	2.3
5	British (6pm)	1.5
6	French	1.5
7	Italian	0.8

Most of the respondents (32.8%) wear M size clothes, which is observed in the case of both genders. When they were asked what problems they face due to their specific size, the following categories were identified based on the answers received from students: 19.1% said that fashionable clothes in stores are not designed for large sizes, S-M sizes

clothes sell quickly and are often not available (5.3%), The store often does not have non-standard size shoes (4.6%), which applies to both high and low sizes, the dimensions do not match the European sizes when shopping online (1.5%).

Georgian youth mainly relate fashion to attire. It should be noted that fashion have influence them whether they follow it or not, moreover 61.1% of respondents do not follow fashion trends, but still consider themselves a fashionable person.

A correlation was found between gender and fashion trends ($\chi^2 = 7.41$, $P < 0.05$). In particular, 40% of female and 37.3% of male representatives consider themselves as follower of fashion trends.

Respondents were asked to name the sources through from which they get information about fashion or fashionable clothing; The strongest influence was found by Internet websites (70.2%), friends or relatives (25.2%), fashion magazines (3.1%), while 1.5% aren't interested in news about fashion at all. Respondents also mention that price determines the quality of the item (77.1%).

Table 2: Sources of information about fashion

N		%
1	Websites	70.2%
2	Friends or relatives	25.2%
3	Fashion magazines	3.1%
4	Not interested in news about fashion	1.5%

The results of the survey show that respondents are not ready for experiments, which is related not only to the change in style (58.8%), but also to the color tones. Young people avoid using light tones often (67.2%). Respondents believe that clothes or shoes should be comfortable, therefore they are not going to sacrifice comfort just because they look fashionable (77.1%).

In their opinion, trends are renewable, but at the same time old fashion is returning, this can be considered as the reason for them to keep old clothes.

Respondents believe that modern fashion has reversed aesthetics and limited itself to abstraction (29%), as an example they have mentioned trends introduced by the Balenciaga brand (especially so-called Chunky Sneakers). According to some of the respondents, modern fashion is no longer limited to any specific standards (23.7%), while only 0.8% of respondents can not name a specific standard.

According to the majority of respondents, fashion standards affect self-esteem (59.5%); Nearly a quarter (24.4%) think it has a more negative than positive impact on them (18.4%).

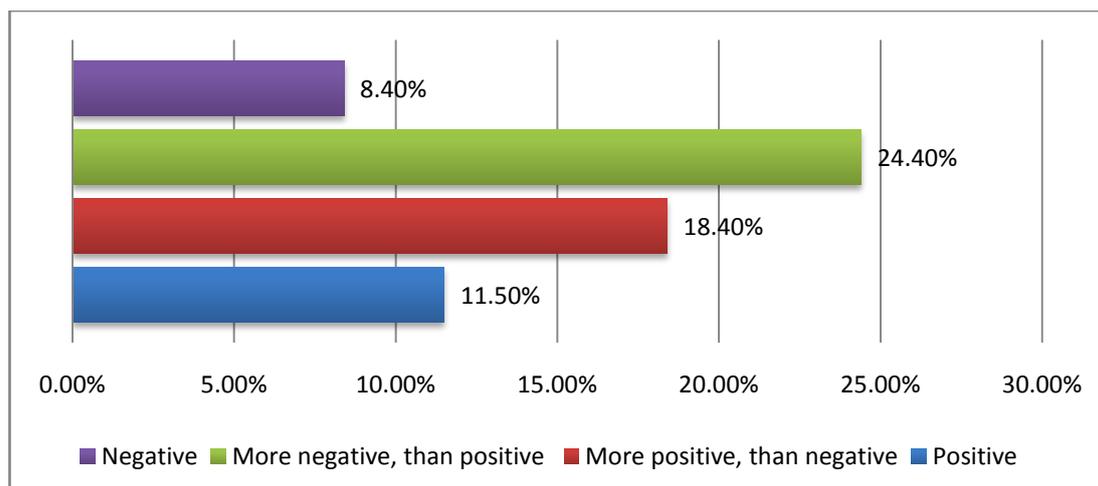


Figure 3: Impact of fashion standards on self-esteem

When we asked how would they name their style of dress, more than 1/3 (35.5%) of them described it as Casual, 20.6% as classic and 2.3% as vintage.

In terms of fashion, only 20.6% of respondents were able to determine role model, including the influence of famous Georgian and foreign designers (6.9%), among them were referred Karl Lagerfeld, Victoria Beckham, Demna Gvasalia, Anouki Areshidze and etc. It is noteworthy that not only European or American celebrities, but also Asian, especially Korean artists (3.1%) were considered as role models for them.

According to the majority of respondents, there are stereotypes in the society, in particular, wearing expensive brand clothes, but no attention is paid to whether this clothes suits the person or not (9.9%); particular colors are considered as markers of femininity or masculinity (5.3%).

10.7% of the respondents mentioned that at least once their family members restricted them on wearing specific clothes. In the case of girls, the main limitation is short clothes (skirt, dress, top) (4.6%), and in the case of both genders, the ripped jeans are unacceptable for old generation (3.1%). One of the married respondents (girl) mentioned that her husband's family was forcing her to lose weight and change her style.

Only 13% of respondents felt negative attitudes from the public because of wearing narrow or low-cut clothing (leather pants, leggings, top).

Conclusion:

The interest in studying fashion as a social phenomenon is constantly increasing; despite the "academic devaluation" the discussion of fashion-related issues at the micro and macro levels indicates its importance in contemporary society.

As for the present study, the results showed that the problem of duality of the concept of "fashion" is less noticeable among the adolescents; it is mainly related to attire for the adolescents and is no longer considered as "female aspiration". Our study found a connection between gender and fashion trends ($\chi^2 = 7.41, P < 0.05$), namely 40% of female and 37.3% of male say that follow fashion trends; consumer behavior, which involves spending money on clothes, is the most crucial pattern of "demonstrative consumption". Wearing luxury brands (Dolce and Gabbana, Prada, Tommy Hilfiker) indicates economic privilege, while inexpensive items often perceived by the public as unacceptable, but at the same time the universal genre "Haute couture" is replaced with Casual style; thus the segregation of social strata is gradually losing its meaning. The same issue is highlighted by the respondents using mainly clothing stores (68.5%) instead of boutiques (5.3%). They are more focused on online stores (5.2%), especially on the popular American platforms. Internet sites are no less important source of receiving information about fashion (70.2%).

The mechanism of fashion does not seem to be based on the need of class differentiation and class emulation; the type of imitation defined by Spencer - "imitation for worship" - is not common for Georgian youth (20.6%); It is noteworthy that fashion influences them whether they follow it or not; though 61.1% of respondents do not follow fashion trends, they see themselves as fashionable persons.

As for fashion standards, respondents believe that modern fashion has reversed aesthetics and limited itself to abstraction, but at the same time almost 1/3 indicates the absence of specific standards.

Respondents are not ready to experiment with changing their style (58.8); Young people also avoid actively using light-colored tones. Most of the respondents (59.5%) believe that fashion has a more negative impact on their self-esteem rather than a positive one.

Respondents point to clothing-related stereotypes, limitations that manifest themselves at both the macro (individual) and mezzo (community) levels. In particular, color –segregation by gender, modern garments are usually unacceptable to both parents and society, which is often expressed openly(verbally) or indirectly (by expression).

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