

# Fashion Photography and trend cycles

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# *Abstract*

In today's world, fashion is no more just about how a person carries themselves but also about making a statement through their look. Fashion trends are driven by many mascots in the industry such as celebrities, supermodels, politicians and many other celebrated people across the globe. Just like that, fashion photography is another language to promote new and upcoming trends among the society. Many designers across the world believe that fashion is an art and hence, should be displayed like one. Therefore, these designers prefer creating their statement rather than borrowing it from the celebrities by the means of fashion photography.

Since always, fashion photography has been used to spread not only fashion trends but also many stereotypes on "ideal beauty" or perhaps a result of a social issue. Photographers these days use this tool to raise their opinions at various subjects.

Despite all these things, one can argue that whether fashion is driven by photography or how an image is being promoted or is photography merely a tool to display fashion trend. This paper argues on the factors which might conclude that just like fashion, fashion photography also has a trend cycle which follows or works together with every trend that is introduced in the fashion industry.

Keywords : Trend Circles, Social issues, Fashion trends, Ideal beauty, stereotypes

## *Introduction*

Fashion industry has always been considered an exclusive one. Although, the industry comprises of a basic requirement of human i.e. clothing, yet is an expensive industry. It follows a certain parameter to cater the society with different trends. These trends are predicted by a dense process of research, analysis, surveys and reviewing past trends which is known as forecasting.

The easiest and the most accurate way form a new trend is to first create a forecast. Just like fashion trends, the way to display and promote fashion also changes time to time. It can be said that these photography trends are forecasted through fashion forecasting itself. Fashion designs create the products by referring these forecast and hence prefer creating the mood similar to the forecast which eventually lead to creating a trend in fashion photography as well.

Fashion photography is no more a way to promote fashion but has now turned into a way of expression and art. Since the invention of photography, many evolutions took place resulting to changing trends in fashion photography. Earlier, designers and companies starting using this special system to raise awareness of the new designs and trends of every seasons by carefully designing and publishing the work illustrated with photographs starting a new and powerful trend of conveying fashion through fashion photography. (*Photography: A Tool for Conveying Fashion, Silvia Ventosa*)

Brands have always tried building an individual brand image which helped them reach their target client by the means of fashion portrayal by its tool “photograph”. The development of mass communication was instrumental towards fashion becoming as prominent as it is today. Photography, on the other hand, plays a fundamental role as it helps to generate a collective memory which ensures the success of creations. This work is aimed at focusing and describing the reasons why photography became a factor of coexistence with fashion by providing elements which make it indispensable to that very purpose.

## *Objective of the study*

Fashion always runs in circles. Designers, brands, influencers seek inspiration from the history and create a new style which when is followed by masses becomes a trend. It repeats over ever generations but is always more stylised and modern than the last time it existed. The trends are study in the form of forecasts where each brand gets guidelines for future designs. The paper aims to study whether, just like fashion, if photography also follows these trends.

Also, the paper aims to examine the understanding of people in general when talking about photography being an asset or a misleading hoax to the fashion industry. Trying to understand what the society interprets from the ways fashion brands promotes fashion around the globe. Is it a healthy way? Or is it degrading society at some level.

Fashion has always been stained with the comments on how it has created an idealistic image of body and self which is practically unrealistic and hard to achieve. The paper examines how people from different age groups, professions and cities think differently about the industry.(Why retro-looking photography matters for fashion blogging, Enrica Picarelli, June 2015 )

## *Methodology*

To study the objectives mentioned above, a survey was prepared and people of various age groups and qualifications were asked to fill it. Total 50 surveys were filled having people from age of late 40s to young age group in their 20s. The survey was designed in way that it categories and identifies patterns to make generalised conclusions on how the society can effect on the way people interpret fashion and fashion photography. In this survey people were asked to share basic information about them like their name, age and profession followed by a series of questions about fashion industry.

A personal interview was arranged with Mohd. Asif Malik, a television serial director. He has been working in the industry since past 30 years and has directed various shows like Jeena Isi ka naan hai, Balika Vadhu, Savdhaan India and many more. Being a director he has worked with many costume designers and fashion designers and has seen the industry from inside as a witness of how seriously the fashion industry takes the “positive body image” issue. He was asked five questions on how he as a director and being a part of this industry interpret the importance of fashion imaging and photography to promote fashion across the world.

Following is a sample questionnaire.

## Photography - a language of fashion

Fashion photography has always been a key when it comes to showcase and raise awareness about current or future ideas and perceptions. Over the years since photography was introduced, many designers and brands have changed the world constantly.

In today's time, fashion has evolved from being limited to certain range of body types to eventually becoming more inclusive. Fashion photography, now is a big part of fashion activism helping influencers and designers to become more vocal about various issues of mankind in a creative and more effective way than any other form of media or art.

### Name

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

### Year of Birth

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

### Occupation

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

### Opinion on fashion trends

- I like to keep myself updated with upcoming fashion trends
- I follow those trends which define me
- I choose to follow whatever suits best as per the need
- I do not give that much thought to it

### Do you think photography plays a role in how Fashion is showcased?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

### Fashion Photography in today's world is

- An important form of art and expression
- An impactful way to spread social issues across the world
- Promotes unachievable body goals
- Is responsible to create stereotypes related to ideal beauty
- helped in reducing stereotypes
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Since earlier times, fashion designers have always chosen skinny and tall models to add seduction as a key to create an exclusive brand image. Do you think it is fair as a consumer of fashion

- it's important as it announces the target client in the market
- it creates a sense of negative body image in consumer's mind
- It is important to sell a brand even if it means degrading social mindset
- these are marketing strategies to compete with other similar brands and it's only fair
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think fashion photography has been mainly responsible to make fashion exclusive

- Yes, It promotes that fashion is only for those who can afford and have a looks for it
- No, it's just a mode of promotion
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you follow trends in fashion photography

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Do you believe photography in a way is responsible for creating the stereotypes build by the fashion industry?

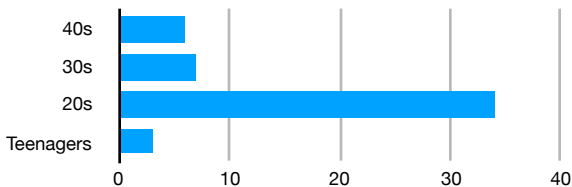
- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Do you think, fashion photography is heading towards reducing these stereotypes

- Yes, it is now trying to promote positive body image
- No, it is the same
- The changes are too slow
- It's subjective to as per the need

# Major Findings

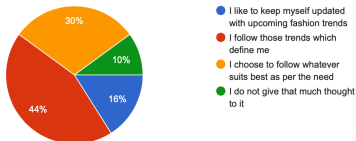
The graph below shows the number of people in different age groups. The major lot was of the youth to examine how much is the youth aware of the industry and whether is it a bad interpretation or a good one. The people from age group of 30s and 40s are the ones who have established and have seen the industry change from either inside or outside. The 20s age group is the youth with strong opinions and much open mindedness than the people in the group of 30s and 40s. And finally, teenagers were asked to fill the survey to understand if the upcoming youth has different opinions than the present group. Out of these people 94% agreed that fashion photography plays a role in how Fashion is showcased



The studies found out that a major part of the group covering 44% mentioned that they like following fashion trends but only those which define them. Where as the teens were keen on keeping them updated with the new and latest fashion trends and only 10% of the crowd mainly, housewives, teachers and doctors of the crowd didn't give it much thought.

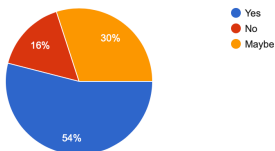
Opinion on fashion trends

50 responses



Do you believe photography in a way is responsible for creating the stereotypes build by the fashion industry?

50 responses



54% believe photography has been responsible for creating the stereotypes over ideal beauty and body goals although 18% think that it is irrelevant.

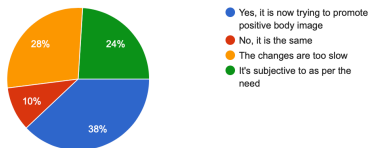
After evaluating these surveys, an observation was made that even though majority of the group thought that the body stereotypes were created because of the involvement of photography during early 70s when photography was introduced, yet majority thought that these stereotypes are being removed and positive body image has began to be promoted. Even though this change is slow, it is happening eventually. But still 24% thought these changes were subjective and were only used as a key to promote fashion. 10% still believe that it is still the same and that change is not really happening.

When asked that do they think that the idealistic beauty showcasing and promotion of brands using seduction as the key, almost 89% youth in their 20s and teens thought that it is important to promote a brand using this key if they want to announce their target client in the market. Where as 46% of the people consisting older generation people inter 30s and 40s think that it creates a sense of negative body image amongst the viewers of their promotional advertisements or photography.

68% people think that fashion photography is an important form of art and expression which in today's world has become a great medium to raise global issues and spread awareness.

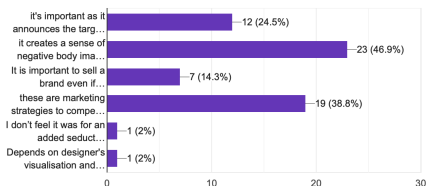
Do you think, fashion photography is heading towards reducing these stereotypes

50 responses



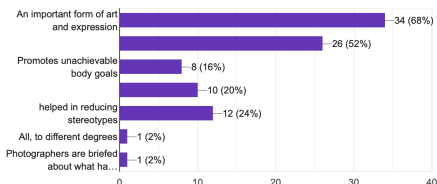
Since earlier times, fashion designers have always chosen skinny and tall models to add seduction as a key to create an exclusive brand image. Do you think it is fair as a consumer of fashion

49 responses



Fashion Photography in today's world is

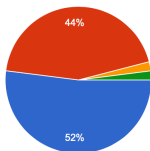
50 responses





Do you think fashion photography has been mainly responsible to make fashion exclusive

50 responses



- Yes, it promotes that fashion is only for those who can afford and have a looks for it
- No, it's just a mode of promotion
- Not entirely but it does play a role
- To make their creations known all over the world Photography is the only way for a designer...

52% people think that photography has been mainly responsible to make fashion exclusive to those who can afford and have the looks for it. Where as 44% believe that it's just a mode of promotion for any brand.

## *Personal interview*

A personal interview was arranged with Mohd. Asif Malik, a television serial director. He has been working in the industry since past 30 years and has directed various shows like Jeena Isi ka naan hai, Balika Vadhu, savdhaan India and many more. Being a director he has worked with many costume designers and fashion designers and has seen the industry from inside as a witness of how seriously the fashion industry takes the “positive body image” issue. He was asked five questions on how he as a director and being a part of this industry interpret the importance of fashion imaging and photography to promote fashion across the world.

How do you interpret fashion photography?

You can say that if there is no photography there is no fashion at all. It is the most crucial and important part of the fashion promotion and marketing. It's main purpose is to portray a design. It connects to the theme to the mood and brings reality. It gives you an image of what the designers is trying to create. It positions the trend in the market. It lets the fashion connect to the audience. It is the last and the most crucial level of a design process. If there is no photography, nothing from above is possible.

Does fashion photography trend repeat the way fashion cycle repeats?

Yes, As time passes trends repeat. Modern elements are added and the old trends are carried forward and contemporised with time. For example, the vintage photography became popular as the vintage clothing came back in the trend. 70s filters were added. Glitches were deliberately added to create an old-school vibe.

Fashion industry is trying to be inclusive. Comment.

This is because of the society becoming more open minded and confident. But on contrary, there is a possibility that designers are using this positive body image “wave” to promote and highlight their products and brands. It could be just a new branding technique or a new trend of positive body image or the world is actually changing for better.

If all this are not specifically changes at all and just a promotional strategy, why do you think it's working?

This is done to make an emotional connection with audience and use it as a new strategy. I have seen many designers are genuinely trying to include models to try and eliminate the so call “ideal beauty norms” where as there are still some designers who have no such intentions and are only doing this to seek emotional attention from the audience. They hire one or may be two “non-idealistic models” and expect the viewers to think that it is actually a way to promote positive body image and inclusivity.

Is fashion photography is an art which degrades social and mental health?

## *Conclusion*

The survey shows how the age, generation, city and occupation changes mentalities and look outs of people on the fashion and photography industry. The main finding was even that though society points out various stereotypes created by fashion industry yet the youth believes that fashion industry isn't responsible and it is all very subjective.

Fashion industry and photography works together to create a mood and a new trend. Thus, it can be concluded that the photography trends also repeat with the fashion trends since designers try to create the whole mood of the era by recreating, resigning and contemporising old trends.

Fashion photography is not the reason behind the promotion go negative body image but is only a projection of a designer's point of view. This point of view when is carried out with photographs and media create trends which promote stereotypical thoughts amongst the audience.

Therefore, it is only fair to say that fashion photography and fashion go hand in hand to promote or degrade and new trend or style.

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