

Utrecht University

Gül Kaner  
3738361  
Media Studies  
New Media and Digital Culture Academic Master

# THESIS TOPIC:

Consumer as an Institution in the Fashion System and  
the Participatory Role of New Media Technologies

"Modern wo/man is internally ready to fulfill her/his self image, by purchasing products which compliment it." Ernest Dichter

## **INTRODUCTION**

Fashion is a concept that is used to characterise various visual or behavioural facts, actions and situations. Because it is valiantly used to characterise too many things, the value and significance of the word unfortunately depreciates. The encyclopaedic definition says that fashion is mode of dressing that is prevalent during a particular time or in a particular place.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand the lexical meaning of fashion in New Oxford American Dictionary defines it as a trend in manner of behaviours and doing something.<sup>2</sup> These two definitions are correct statements and they invoke the real meaning of the fashion concept. However they are inadequate to understand it deeply. Fashion should be comprehended as a cultural phenomenon because fashion is more than a mode of dressing or doing something that relates to time and space.

Fashion is a practice that provides opportunities for people to present themselves to others in social and professional environments. It aids people to actualise their identities, to practice their roles, to reproduce customs and social orders or to reconstruct them. Products of fashion such as clothing, accessories, cosmetics, technologies; ways of behaving and living- have culturally and individually constructed meanings. In other words; modes of dressing and doing things as definition of fashion in dictionaries and encyclopaedias depend on various reasons. These reasons ascribe meanings on fashion and they should actually be accepted as the main issues of fashion phenomenon. Fashion is not only about the production of materials but also about production of cultural values that are attributed to things, behaviours and conditions. A person can be included or excluded into a social group regarding to how s/he looks and behaves because her/his behaviour refers to cultural values and personal experiences. Material goods of fashion bear meanings in cultural environment. Elements of fashion might represent certain social status, political and religious views, and gender and ethnic codes. Moreover these elements can be used to practice the existing social orders or can also be used to change existing dynamics of society and create a difference. While fashion is being practised as a social phenomenon, it involves various notions which construct the phenomenon of fashion. These notions can be groups of people, industries, materials, concepts, organisations, technologies and more. Symbolic and material production of fashion is a comprehensive process which gathers diversified fields of studies, business avenues, individual and collective interests. In order that fashion has too many diversified aspects in itself, it also has different agendas such as material production, symbolic production, social change, performing self etc. Due to this interdisciplinary nature of fashion, it has been studied by scholars from various departments in humanities

---

<sup>1</sup> Britannica.com. *Fashion*. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/202258/fashion>

<sup>2</sup> The New Oxford Dictionary. *Fashion*

Utrecht University

faculties such as sociology, history, cultural studies, psychology, performance studies, and moreover school of economics, business schools, and research and development projects in biological, chemical, environmental science departments.

Fashion is not an academic or scientific discipline in itself, but it is studied in applied science institutions, humanities, and natural science departments. Fashion education that is given in applied institutions are fundamentally about the material production, as well as the utilisation and practice of fashion as part of visual culture. Fashion design is the main department that educates artistically talented students to design fashionable and aesthetic prêt à porter or haute couture clothing and accessories. Applied science institutions that provide fashion education also have other departments such as fashion photography, styling, fashion journalism etc. On the other hand, fashion orientated business schools or higher education institutions that focus on fashion as a business, train students about the management of fashion enterprises and aim in the field of brand management, retail/wholesale/import/export managements, fashion marketing and promotion etc. Another field of university level education which concentrates on fashion production is research and development projects that aim for innovation, ecological production, sustainability, and effectiveness of material that are used by haute couture and mass fashion producers. This field of study is not interested in the cultural or aesthetic values of clothing. Functionality is their main priority, because it is an essential aspect for contemporary fashion design. Therefore higher education institutions and researches that are concerned and relevant to fashion phenomenon is not limited by fashion designing schools but extends to a broader scale. These aforementioned fields of studies are mainly based on the material production such as designing, distribution, innovation and sales. In addition to material production of fashion, there are also studies concerning it as a cultural phenomenon, a part of culture, history, politics and gender. These studies are certainly done in departments of humanities faculties such as sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, gender studies, media studies, and psychology.

Aforementioned academic and scientific studies investigate fashion from different perspectives by considering it as a cultural phenomenon. Some approaches to fashion as communication such as Malcolm Barnard's (Fashion As Communication 1996), are that he accepts it as a way that people use to communicate with others even before communicating verbally. There are other studies that approach fashion as a semiological fact such as Roland Barthes (The Fashion System. 1973). He notes that fashion is an inscription, resulting from a technique and normalised by a code (105). David Beard mentions (1983) that The Fashion System is Barthes's first attempt to analyse the relationship between images and text in the production of fashion; it is by no means his last. Barthes discusses how the images in fashion media are textualised and put in written form, and how the

Utrecht University

language that defines the fashion images constructs what fashion actually is. He claims that the visuals in fashion magazines are interpreted according to the text that is attached to photographs, drawings, paintings and how we perceive fashion is depending on its literacy more than the visuals. Thus, if popular fashion says that a blouse is ideal for a certain situation or ensemble, this idea is immediately naturalised and accepted as truth (Barthes 1973). The important question to ask in Barthes's argument is 'who says this specific blouse is ideal for a certain situation?' The question of who decides what fashion is and what it is not is one of the most important concerns of this research that is attempted to be answered in chapter I.

Works of Barthes and Barnard focus on fashion as a cultural phenomenon, a semiotic system and how fashion is created, practiced, utilised and consumed by people. On the other hand there are also very critical approaches towards fashion as an industry and a system. Feminist and Marxist critiques are two of these judgemental approaches. Some discussions of feminist theory such as class, identity, gender representation in media, male gaze consider fashion as a legitimisation of gender roles and disparity of social status. Passivisation and commodification of the female body within the media and fashion shows together with the reproduction of male gaze in advertisements are the main concerns of feminist theory. In addition to this; Marxist discussions that focus on fashion phenomenon accuse it of being the most effective weapon of capitalism as it fosters people to consume more. It is argued that the urge to follow trendy and fashionable goods and styles strengthens capitalism. In further chapters, I attempt to discuss how fashion could be used to avoid such discriminations. Especially in chapter II, with regards to Diana Crane and Malcolm Barnard I discuss -in contrary to feminist and Marxist theories- how fashion can also be used to eliminate gender inequality, social, economic, politic discriminations.

Among all these approaches from Barthes, Feminist Theory and Marxists Theory, Yuniya Kawamura considers fashion as a system (Fashion-ology 2005) that consists of a collective activity and process involving various institutions so fashion is a system of institutions. Her arguments is the commencement point of this thesis's argument. Kawamura's fashion system (13) comprises various institutions such as media institutions, designers, advertising agencies, consumers, editors. They are institutions, groups and individuals who decide what fashion is. They take a role in its production process and this should be analysed as two stages. One is the material production of fashion and two is the symbolic production of fashion. Kawamura concentrates on the symbolic production of fashion and discusses how the various institutions perform in deciding production of fashion.

Besides fashion as a system of institutions as Kawamura argues, it is also a visual language that people utilise to make a statement about themselves. A piece of clothing is not only a piece of material designed by a famous

Utrecht University

designer or a part of a summer collection of a brand but has deeper social and cultural meanings and values. A beret might refer to a lot of meanings besides being just a beret such as a Parisian town-dweller or a communist revolutionary. Fashion is a cultural phenomenon that contains cultural signs and attributed meanings on artefacts moreover a system of institutions that involves too many institutions into fashion production processes such as designers, fashion editors, style icons and most importantly consumers. Therefore fashion should be comprehended as a system of institution with regards to Kawamura. What is missed in Kawamura's argument is the empowered consumer as an institution. She touches upon the consumer in the consumption process but does not mention the significance in the production process. Importance of consumer as an institution in fashion system is the biggest concern of this thesis because the consumer's commitment to the fashion system is highly important to conceive value on the idea of fashion. Consumers do not only consume clothing materially but also uses it culturally as an utterance to perform their "selves". Due to fashion being the most visible marker of social status, gender, ethnic background (Crane 2000: 1). Consumers use fashion as a rhetoric to forge self-defining, social distinction and boundaries, to construct narratives of personal history, to interpret the interpersonal dynamics of other social spheres (13). The consumer is capable of constructing a self-narration via fashion and performs her/himself to others according to that imagined narrator because s/he is aware of these charges that are loaded within fashion. The fashion consumer actively participates in the symbolic production process of fashion so therefore the role of consumer, as an institution in the fashion system, is crucial as well as the technologies and circumstances that enable the participation of consumer in the system.

Active participation of consumer within fashion is not as old as the history of costume. There is a very important revolutionary fact that influenced the position of consumer in the fashion system. It is the Industrial Revolution. This is also the revolution that industrialised fashion production and formed the contemporary fashion system as an institutionalised entity. Industrial Revolution democratised the fashion industry in making goods becoming cheaper, functional, easily attainable, and diversified. Mass production methods made expensive goods accessible for everyone coming from different social backgrounds and thus disparity of social classes also blurred. People started to wear similar outfits with diversified combination options and so dressing was standardised in terms of social, economic and political distinctions. Discrimination of social class and gender performed by means of fashion was impaired. Therefore Industrial Revolution is considered as a crucial fact for fashion in terms of democratisation and institutionalisation (Crane 2000), (Kawamura 2005), (Arbuckle&Sterlacci 2007).

Utrecht University

In addition to the Industrial Revolution there is another revolutionary influence to the fashion system: new media technologies. It is one of the other main concerns of this thesis. New media provides opportunity for the consumer to take more responsibility in material and symbolic production of fashion. Participatory culture (Jenkins 2006), unlike the consumer culture, has created participant users in place of the passive media audience. Users of new media technologies take an active role in the production of media content. The new media user is at the same time the fashion consumer, so reflection of participatory culture on fashion system is also considerably significant. The consumer of fashion as new media user is capable of creating media content concerning fashion issues so the consumer actively participates in the symbolic production of fashion more than before. Utilisation of fashion in terms of social and individual purposes that is involving the fashion consumer into the symbolic production process of fashion is supported by the new media user's participation in media content. The consumer is empowered as user. S/he becomes prosumer, active in production and consumption process of the content and taking responsibility in the symbolic production from productive and critical perspectives. S/he directly gives feedback to other institutions of fashion system. As Mirko Schafer also mentions, the participatory culture describes the new role of users have assumed in the context of symbolic production (Bastard Culture 2011:10). Besides consumer who attend in the production of new media content, amateur middle-class designers can attract the attention of fashion institutions by using new media technologies too. Amateur or local, small-scaled manufacturers and designers can provide free media channels to promote their works. They are capable of communicating directly with their micro-scale target audiences. Moreover, the user also communicates to create alternative production methods for fashionable goods. This means that mainstream, and massive trends are being fractured by a Do-It-Yourself nature of new media technologies and is liberalised. However, this is not only participatory in terms of cultural and material production but also in the empowerment of system. Active participation of the new media user in the fashion system causes them to become closer to old-school producers of fashion system. Therefore the emancipatory role of new media technologies in terms of fashion is not only tempting for consumer but also a discourse that is supported by the system itself. There are various reasons standing behind the question of why the fashion consumer uses new media technologies and participates or why they are encouraged to use them by the new media discourse.

With regards to aforementioned theories and argumentations, this thesis attempts to answer the question of "what is the role of contemporary, new media using fashion consumer in the fashion system". It is questioned that how current fashion consumer participate in the symbolic and material production of fashion and what role new media technologies, social media, and mobile technologies take in this process. The reason to answer this question is to discuss how emancipated and arbiter can individuals be in the consumption and the production of cultural facts. Therefore I focus on two important cultural phenomena which are fashion and media. New

Utrecht University

media technologies have a discourse claiming that passive and obedient audience of old media is transformed into active and participant new media users; I question how this transformation can be observed in the fashion system concerning the consumer. Fashion and media are highly relevant concepts and the consumer of fashion is meanwhile a part of the media audience. Production and consumption of fashion is partially performed on media channels therefore interaction of fashion consumer with media technologies influences the fashion system too. Consequently to be able to answer the main question; firstly it is necessary to study fashion as a system of institutions and explain what these institutions are. Secondly institutionalisation of the consumer as a part of the system, and how fashion is consumed for other purposes than covering the body to emphasise how consumer can participate in the system should be discussed. Finally new media as the main agent of the research question should be explained and their influence on the fashion system should be analysed.

Kawamura, Barnard, Crane and others' arguments and theories that concern fashion do not explicitly focus on consumer as an institution. Kawamura mentions consumer as an institution and highlights the importance of consumption in the symbolic production of fashion. However it requires a better analysis including how consumer utilises materials products of fashion and how s/he practically uses it for individual and collective purposes. My aim is to emphasise the role of consumers and relate it to other discussions from Barnard, and Crane moreover to involve the relevance of new media technologies into the discussion. Fashion has empowering and emancipating aspects which are there to be discovered by its wearer, and when it is discovered, consumer becomes an effectual institution such as designers, editors, scholars, manufacturers and so forth. Fashion has its social agendas for political, social, psychological, practical, historical reasons, as well as many others. It is a communication tool and the consumer constructs all these utilisations and agendas. Among all other duties in other institutions, every individual is a consumer of fashion system. Therefore consumer is one of the most powerful institutions, especially of our contemporary mediated society. Another phenomenon, which has an influential role in the involvement of consumer into the fashion system, is definitely new media technologies. If the Industrial Revolution democratised the fashion consumer then the new media emancipates her/him. By this way consumer does not only consume the fashion but participates in both material and symbolic production of fashion, as discursive constructions, about new media technologies allegedly so.

Before giving the detailed outline of my argument, a general description of the subject will be as follows; In chapter I, I am first going to analyse why fashion should be considered as a system of institution with regards to Kawamura. Following this, I will focus on the stages of fashion production and mention what the institutions are that perform in stages of fashion production. After explaining the institutionalised structure of fashion system in

Utrecht University

the chapter I; chapter II will focus on consumer as an institution. I will state how fashion was performed before it was institutionalised, how Industrial Revolution changed the fashion system and how fashion consumer became consumer and started to use fashion as a language to perform a social and personalised identity. Moreover I focus on how contemporary consumer reproduces existing cultural values or how s/he destroys existing rules, constructs new social orders and/or reforms them. Discussing that I attempt to answer the question of what role the consumer takes in fashion system by the action of wearing and utilising. Eventually in chapter III I am going to discuss the new discourse attributed to new media technologies. I attempt to understand why it can be considered as an emancipatory and participatory power on fashion system. To what extend it is emancipatory or why and by whom it is offered as participatory. To be able to answer these questions I study the fashion blog The Blonde Salad as a case and attempt to uncover discursive construction over new media and fashion relationship.

Chapter I explains how the idea of fashion is created and also why fashion is considered a system of institutions by referring to the argumentations of Kawamura (Fashion-ology 2005). Kawamura focuses on fashion in a deeper sense by explaining the word of fashion etymologically, social discourse of fashion and how these institutions construct it as a part of culture and as a study in social sciences. To analyse the institutions she explains the fashion process in six stages. Stages of fashion is also studied by Fred Davis (Fashion, Culture, and Identity 1992) as Kawamura also bases her stages on. Therefore I am going to compare Davis's and Kawamura's stages to understand how fashion has been reshaped in time by the influence of technologies and changing power relationships. Kawamura elaborates Davis's fashion process and improves stages in his model but her model remains linear as Davis's. I aim to analyse Davis and Kawamura's texts and secondly aim to emphasise the tangled nature of fashion process considering to active participation of consumer in the production process. Due to Kawamura and Davis mainly focusing on the symbolic production of fashion, institutions that perform in the stages of material production is not explained in great detail. To name all the institutions of both material and symbolic production of fashion, I am going to refer to work of Arbuckle and Sterlacci (Historical Dictionary of Fashion Industry 2007). They trace the historical evolution of the fashion industry as well as the events, innovations, people, and companies that helped shape the fashion industry, as we know it today. Their work has a business oriented perspective that concentrates on the industrialisation process of fashion and different business segments that are part of the fashion system. They chronologically explain the industrialisation process of fashion by marking its history with important milestones. These include the invention of the first Spinning Jenny sewing machine, standardised sizing system, first show of clothing collection of Coco Chanel in Paris etc (2007 xv-xxxvi). By the aid of this information it will be possible to state the institutions of fashion system and replace them within the stages of fashion production process. The

Utrecht University

analysis of Arbuckle and Sterlacci's text will mainly help to answer the question of who decides what is fashion and what is not and by whom is fashion created.

The descriptive construction of chapter II expands my argumentation and discusses democratised consumership. I refer to arguments of Malcolm Barnard (*Fashion As Communication* 1996) and Diana Crane (*Fashion and Its Social Agendas* 2000) to support my argument concerning positive utilisation of fashion by consumer in a cultural context. Moreover I use my participatory observation as a consumer, new media user and an -inactive- fashion blogger to discuss consumers of pre-Industrial Revolution, post-Industrial Revolution and the changes that are brought by new media technologies. Crane has a historical approach on the significance of clothing and information that clothes convey. She argues that elements of fashion in the 18th and 19th century were used to mark social classes, political power, gender and ethnic groups. However, over long periods of time, class fashion has been transformed into the consumer fashion (Crane: 132), especially with Industrial Revolution; consumer of the 20th and the 21st century has become able to use fashion to disguise social status, gender and ethnic discriminations (1). This comparison of -pre- and -post- Industrial Revolution to discuss altering nature of fashion is an important starting point for my investigation into the revolutionary role of new media technologies. Therefore first of all I discuss arguments of Crane and Barnard regarding how and for what purposes fashion is used. Contemporary fashion system provides opportunities to twist social dynamics and to reform them additionally to create self-narration and self-presentation. Barnard on the other hand considers fashion as a communication tool. He argues that fashion and clothing are maybe the most significant ways in which social relations between people are constructed, experienced and understood. The things that people wear give shape and colour to social distinctions and inequalities, thereby legitimating and naturalising those social distinction inequalities (Barnard: 9). As it seems in these discussions, fashion has had political, social and economical agendas since the history of costume. By means of existing discussions concerning fashion phenomenon I aim to focus on contemporary participant consumers as an institution in the system.

In chapter III, I attempt to analyse the discourse of emancipatory and participatory role of new media in fashion system. To do this, I first of all discuss what we define by saying 'new media' with regards to New Media: A Critical Introduction (Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, & Kelly 2003). What new 'new media' technologies bring into our daily life and how they influence fashion system in terms of power relations, stages etc; why it could be considered as revolutionary as the Industrial Revolution was. Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, & Kelly use six defining characteristics for new media which are digital, hyper-textual, simulated, virtual, networked and interactive. I try to apply these characteristics into fashion and new media contexts to see how characteristics of

Utrecht University

new media alter fashion system, and what 'newness' does new media bring into the fashion world. Further with respect to Schafer's *Bastard Culture* (2011), I attempt to uncover participatory discourse of new media technologies concerning the fashion system. Many industries have been altered by the new media technologies including the fashion industry. Not only fashion consumers and new media users, but also designers, producers and journalists seem fascinated by the capabilities of new media. By referring to selected -mostly online- articles about the relationship between social media and fashion industry, I aim to uncover the discursive construction about influences of new media on fashion system. By analysing the background of these writers -such as being fashion editor, fashion designer, blogger etc- I attempt to interpret the motivation behind their arguments. New media technologies might have a participatory role to emancipate the fashion consumer. However, this is an argument to be analysed from various perspectives and I will therefore attempt to answer the question, 'How these new media can be emancipatory for consumer and why should it be considered as emancipatory?'

Additionally I investigate the fashion blog *The Blonde Salad* as a case study. Chiara Ferragni, the owner of this blog is an Italian self-style blogger who shares her daily fashion, travel and life-style experiences across a variety of online platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LookBook.nu and more. According to the research of [Signature9 comprising 5000 fashion blogs and influence of them in fashion industry, *The Blonde Salad* is selected as the eighteenth most influential one in the global fashion world ([www.signatuer9.com/style99](http://www.signatuer9.com/style99)). I have analysed data of her blog and other social media profiles to uncover why she is considered such a successful blogger. High ratings and visits to *The Blonde Salad* have given her collaboration opportunities with a good number of Italian and international brands. *The Blonde Salad* is a relevant example to analyse the influence of new media technologies on the role of consumer as an institution in the fashion system and to examine the collision of amateur blogging activity with professional profits of fashion industry. Blogging has proven popular for followers due to online profiles providing a medium to dive into the backstage world of fashion. The highly elite and exclusive nature of the fashion industry becomes visible by photographs, tweets, posts and online sharing. So the amateur consumer can observe how editors, photographers, and designers work cooperatively in the fashion system. Blogs, on the other hand, become a profession for the amateur fashion-interested consumer like Ferragni, as an example to emancipation of and participation in fashion system by the aid of new media. Therefore, as a case study, *The Blonde Salad* blog and its linked social networking profiles assembles three important keywords of this thesis. These are fashion system, consumer and new media technologies. In addition it helps to interpret the motivation behind the association of these three keywords.

# **CHAPTER I**

## **Fashion as a System of Institutions**

This chapter attempts to answer the questions of why fashion should be considered a system of institutions, what kind of stages fashion production proceeds through, and which institutions take a role in these stages. It concerns the process of material and symbolic productions and decision-maker-institutions of the fashion system. In order to do so I compare partially similar, partially diversified fashion stages of Davis and Kawamura and I replace institutions that are mentioned by Arbuckle and Sterlacci. The current nature of fashion process is substantially intervened. To emphasise this I state how Kawamura improves the model of Davis and how Kawamura's model could be comprehended more nested than it seems. Hereby the multitasking performance of consumer in fashion system can be clarified.

Among all different definitions and understandings of fashion phenomena, the consideration of fashion as a system of institutions is the starting point of this research. Kawamura's argument is not the first one that considers fashion as a system. Roland Barthes (1998), Mary Ellen Roach and Kathleen Ehle Musa (1980) also studied fashion as a system. However the comprehension of fashion as a system of institutions belongs to Sociology Professor Yuniya Kawamura's. She studies fashion as an institutionalised system in her book *Fashion-ology* (2005). Fashion according to Kawamura is considered as a long process that involves various institutions, organisations, events, and groups of people. It is a communal phenomenon, practice and understanding. It regularly and systematically practiced and repeated by these groups, organisations and events and are therefore considered institutionalised. The reason why Kawamura prefers to use the concept of *institution* is explained with respect to Eisenstadt's argument.

"Institution is the term widely used to describe social practices that are regularly and continuously repeated, are sanctioned and maintained by social norms, and have a major significance in the social structure. The term refers to established patterns of behaviour and is regarded as a general unit that incorporates a plurality of roles. Five types of major institution are conventionally identified: 1) economic, 2) political, 3) stratification, 4) familial and marital and 5) cultural, concerned with religious, scientific and artistic activities. Institutionalisation is the process whereby social practices become sufficiently regular and continuous to be described as institutions. The notion indicates that changes in social practices both modify existing institutions and create new forms (Eisenstadt 1968: 409)."

Utrecht University

Fashion is a cultural phenomenon in that culture may itself be understood as a signifying system, as the ways in which a society's experiences, values and beliefs are communicated through practices, artefacts and institutions. Individuals assemble and collectively participate in producing and perpetuating not only the ideology of fashion but also fashion culture which is sustained by the continuous production of fashion (Kawamura: 39). Institutionalised structure of fashion system is not only practiced collectively but it also has a repetitive and never-ending, continuous nature and that is the main reason to use the term 'institution'. An average fashion cycle, as a rule, seems much more institutionally constrained by numerous aesthetic conventions, publicity practices, and merchandising requirements (Davis Fashion, Culture, and Identity 1992: 123). So the cycle recurses with new seasonal changes. It is never stationary, never fixed but ever changing. Economic, political, and cultural institutions in Eisenstadt's definition indicates continuous and repetitive nature of fashion on the strength of the material and symbolic production stages. The process is the aggregation of influences, interactions, exchanges, adjustments, and accommodations among people, organisations and institutions that animate the cycle, from its inception to its demise (104). Eventually, Davis states that cyclical fashion process has five stages. These stages of the process are *invention*, *introduction*, *fashion leadership*, *increasing social visibility*, and *waning*. Invention is the stage that designers are busy with taking great pride in being thought of as "original," "innovative," "possessed of great creative talent". They court fame and wish to leave their distinctive mark on fashion history (125). The apparel market and key institutions of the fashion system, notably the fashion press and consumers, sustain and reinforce the designer's quest for originality. Therefore the invention stage is starting stage to name clothing as fashion. Introduction is the second stage within which the creations of invention stage are able to make it to the fall and spring openings where, typically, new fashions are introduced. Once a fashion is presented to its premiere audiences and is seen by them as potentially viable, these key persons are expected to adopt the invention as fashion. This stage of the fashion process is usually referred to as that of "fashion leadership", which is the third stage of the cycle. These fashion leaders are either stylistically adventurous people, or expensively dressed luxurious, prosperous, or middle and upper-class fashion-conscious individuals. When the fashion of fashion leaders has attained a sufficient visibility to persuade vast numbers, then it reaches the fourth stage which is increasing social visibility (149). Fashion should be comprehended by collectives so if a creation cannot reach to sufficient social visibility, it cannot be named as fashion. And finally, when the process that has carried a new fashion forward begins to play itself out, as conformity within and across social groups, social saturation, and decline and obsolescence (154). In this way the process reaches the last stage which is waning. Waning is the stage that fashionable clothing and behaviour lose their value and go out of fashion. Therefore waning brings the necessity of new inventions to be named as fashion, so that fashion process is continuous and cyclical.

Utrecht University

The fashion process which was explained by Davis gives a simple insight about how the system proceeds through and how fashion is materially and symbolically produced. Nevertheless it is unidirectional and ignores the adoption and consumption as added values of consumer to fashion. Therefore Kawamura attempts to elaborate the process of Davis, highlighting that these stages have an intervened nature so they do not progress linearly although cyclically pursues. Davis also claims that fashion progresses cyclically because the processes are repeated regularly and sequentially. Kawamura's stages also show that stages can be interposed within the process.

Kawamura elaborates Davis's fashion process into six stages. This detailing is necessary due to the changes occurring in society, culture and technologies. An institution can take more than one responsibility to create fashion materially and symbolically and this induces a tangled form for fashion process. It is worth making note that Davis's book was written in the early 90's and Kawamura's book was written in 2004. Consumption and production activities intervened in time by the aid of globalisation and developments in production technologies and, of course, new media technologies. According to Kawamura fashion proceeds through *production, distribution, diffusion, reception, adoption and consumption* (2005: 1) stages. The first four stages of Davis and first three stages of Kawamura are considerably analogous. Production is equivalent to the invention process of Davis. Producers of fashion, including designers and other fashion professionals who are agents of fashion, make a contribution in defining a taste that is represented as items of fashionable clothing. Once clothing is produced it immediately adopts the term 'fashion' because it is produced to be comprehended as fashion. However the decision is compromised in further stages by the involvement of other institutions. Once clothes are merchandised and aimed to be marked as fashion by institutions of production, they are pushed through the distribution pipeline from manufacturer to retailer and finally to consumer. The links between the production and distribution of clothing and the third stage diffusion of the idea of fashion are interdependent. The fashion system has two types of diffusion agents: 1) designers who take part in seasonal fashion shows in Paris, London, Milan and New York and are frequently the very conspicuous individuals who establish themselves as arbiters of good taste and surround themselves with a cult of personality, and 2) fashion journalists, editors, advertisers, marketers/merchandisers and publicists (73). Diffusion agents are utterly similar to the fashion leaders that Davis explains. They can be fashion professionals and elites but also can be fashion-conscious consumers from middle and lower classes. In this case consumption and diffusion stages intervene.

Kawamura formulates six stages of fashion process in the same linear manner as Davis and concludes it with consumption. Yet different stages can also be practised simultaneously. It is not followed step by step but as

Utrecht University

one within the other. The tasks of a designer within production and diffusion, for instance, are intervened. The institution of designers are responsible for both stages. Additionally, diffusion is intervened with adoption and consumption stages so these stages exceedingly overlap and interpose. In diffusing a fashion, it should be adopted and consumed by at least little amount of individuals or a group of people. Therefore the scale of people who accept fashion as fashion does not matter in terms of the stages of fashion. Once fashion is produced, it has to be consumed in order for the belief to continue and perpetuate. Without the act and collective interaction to perform reception and consumption, the symbolic product of fashion is not completed.

"No matter what its size, a fashion system seems to have certain basic features. The minimum requirement is a network of people that includes those who introduce or propose changes in dress and those who adopt at least a portion of the proposed changes. The proposers and adopters in this network must be in communication with each other, either directly on a person-to-person basis or indirectly as through mass communication." (48)

By the communication of people and institutions, stages are performed and are all interconnected and intervened from production to consumption. Production influences consumption, and consumption influences production. In addition the diffusion stage contains consumption in itself and, therefore, they can be treated simultaneously in the analysis of fashion instead of sequentially.

The last three stages of Kawamura's process are reception, adoption and consumption. These are the stages that Davis does not place much importance on, but they are very significant stages which help us to understand the role of consumer in the fashion system. Reception is the stage where the consumer meets the fashion, in which it is produced, distributed and diffused. Following this is adoption is the stage after reception which corresponds to individual decision-making of consumer. Individual decision-making refers to free will and self-determination. Namely the consumer is not obliged to adopt what is dictated by institutions of production, distribution and diffusion but s/he is capable of appraising and rejecting the -supposed- fashion and render it the fashion. When fashion reaches the stages of adoption and consumption, it is converted into something more concrete and visible, such as clothing-fashion. Once clothing is manufactured, it is worn and consumed. Once fashion is produced, it has also to be consumed in order for the belief to continue and perpetuate (89). Without the act of reception and consumption, the cultural product of fashion is not complete. So a fashion, which cannot reach to reception stage and not consumed, cannot complete the fashion process and therefore, as a result, cannot be named fashion. These last three stages are completely performed by the consumer. Firstly, two stages are mainly performed by manufacturers, designers, editors, buyers, stores, brands, and consumers. The last three stages are performed only by the consumer. This is an important fact revealing the

Utrecht University

emphasis of consumer in fashion system that is highlighted neither by Davis nor by Kawamura. It shows how influential the consumer is in the system. S/he does not receive material and symbolic fashion as the last stage to consume but actually participates in the decision of naming an artefact or manner as fashion.

Consumption of fashionable materials by people adds cultural and personal values to material products, manners, and tendencies so the production process of fashion continues during the consumption as well. Consumption cannot be excluded from the production of fashion. Consumption of fashionable goods is a way of manifestation of personal, and social causes.

(..) a form of dress or a way of using it is not fashion or 'in fashion' until it has been adopted and used by a large proportion of people in a society. A particular style of dress has to be widely diffused and then accepted for anything to be fashion. However, the object has to be labeled as fashion before it reaches the consumption stage. It has to be recognisable as fashion. (Kawamura. 2005.1)

As we see in this reference, production and consumption -in short all six stages of the process- are intervened because institutions can perform in more than one stage. Moreover, consumption can be considered as the deterministic stage to complete the fashion production process and constitute the collective comprehension over clothing that will be fashion. Comparison of these two formulations of fashion process indicates to us the collective, intervened and participatory nature of fashion system. It also indicates the democratisation of consumership in fashion production.

The idea of fashion cannot be constructed by one single institution or individual but it is a collective activity process and condition that concerns many institutions producing the concept, as well as the phenomenon/practice of fashion (1). While Davis and Kawamura formulate their fashion process they also implicitly state the institutions. In addition to this I am evidently going to specify all existing institutions of the system by placing them in stages with regards to Arbuckle and Sterlacci's Historical Dictionary of the Fashion Industry (2007). Material and symbolic productions are distinguished in Kawamura's arguments, however, to make the same distinction for institutions would be a wrong assumption. Because designing a piece of cloth does not only generate an artefact materially but also adds symbolic values on a piece of material, so the designer ultimately participates in material and symbolic production.

Utrecht University

As already discussed, the fashion process starts with *production* stage. Institutions that perform in this stage are the producers of every aspect of fashion material. These include textile designers, developers and manufacturers, haute couture and prêt à porter designers, fashion houses, and tailors, research and development projects and institutions that invest in the crafting of wearables. Fashion system begins with the selection of yarn - whether a plant fiber, an animal fiber, or a synthetic fiber. The fabric manufacturer employs a textile designer to create the fabrics and trims while developers work on the development of colouring, motifs and stitches. Fashion design as a profession encompasses many different product categories and falls into three main levels: fashion designers with eponymous labels, creative directors who head design teams for brand-name companies, and designers who work for manufacturers or retail establishments (Arbuckle&Sterlacci Historical Dictionary of the Fashion 2007: LIX). The first two group are high fashion, haute couture or prêt à porter designers and the third group is the designers of mass production manufacturers. Furthermore fashion is not just about clothing but also the manner of behaving and living. That is to say, the producer of a behavioural fact also performs in the production stage of fashion. For example, the way Marilyn Monroe speaks, smoking as Audrey Hepburn smokes, dancing as Michael Jackson does, can be considered examples of production of fashionable manners. This should also be included into the production stage of fashion.

The second stage, *distribution*, is performed by retail store managements that have five key areas. These are (1) retail merchandising, buying, planning; (2) retail store operations; (3) sales promotions, marketing, (4) retail financial management and (5) human resources (LX). In addition to retail stores, fashion shows, and fashion photographers, models are also a part of the distribution stage taking place in the fashion process. The third stage, *diffusion*, is the spread of fashion within and across social systems (Kawamura: 74). Therefore the diffusion stage is about the decision of collectives. Designers, fashion media, bloggers, public relations, stylists, models, photographers, and certainly consumer are the institutions of the diffusion stage. Within this stage fashion products become visible and ready to be adopted and consumed. On the other hand, diffusion includes pre-adoption and pre-consumption of the fashion by fashion leaders too. If fashion-conscious consumers adopt the fashion, s/he also takes part in the diffusion of it. Namely consumption goes hand in hand with diffusion and institutions perform more than one task at once.

As it is also mentioned before, the reception, adoption and consumption stages are intervened and the main institutions of all three stages are the consumer. After the consumer meets what is assumed as fashion in *reception* then s/he commits to *adopt* the -assumed- fashion as -the- fashion and starts *consuming* it. How

Utrecht University

fashionable goods are consumed, utilised and valued by the consumer will further be discussed in next chapter. Furthermore, consumption also brings along with it a waning stage, which Kawamura does not mention in her fashion process. Satisfaction of fashion consumption begins to wane at the end. The consumer becomes desensitised against the current fashion; and products and behaviour lose the value of being fashion and therefore go out of fashion. Production of new fashion re-starts and the process starts all over again.

There is one more institution in fashion system, which has not been mentioned by Arbuckle and Sterlacci and this is fashion education institutions. Fashion design schools are responsible for material and symbolic production therefore they constitute an important institution in fashion system. In addition, other fashion-oriented schools that are mentioned in the introduction as business schools, humanities and science schools' research and development departments for manufacturing, development and technologies that often coincide fashion education too. As a consumer, fashion education institutions also take a big role in the production of fashion because they intervene into every single stage of fashion process.

To sum up, concrete products of fashion system are clothing, accessories, and manners, The abstract and symbolic products are the values added on these material and visual facts. Clothing, accessories, and manners function as utilities while fashion has a status function (Kawamura: 44). These status are attributed by the designer's social status, status of brand, personal intention of consumer, collective comprehension and attributed meanings of cultural background. The relationship between all aforementioned institutions operates to convert clothing into fashion that has a symbolic value and is manifested through clothing (44). Roach and Musa (1980) distinguish between simple and complex fashion systems. An example of a simple fashion system can be seen in the Tiv of Nigeria, in which scars used for beautification change from generation to generation (1980: 20). In this fashion system, scar designs and techniques are devised, copied, popularised, abandoned and replaced by others on the basis of person-to-person contact. A simple fashion system is found in small-scale, pre-modern societies. (Kawamura: 46) A complex fashion system is the one our contemporary modern societies experience and perform in cities, and involves the aforementioned institutions.

“(..) Institutionalised system in which individuals related to fashion, including designers among many other fashion professionals, engage in activities collectively, share the same belief in fashion and participate together in producing and perpetuating not only the ideology of fashion but also fashion culture which is sustained by the continuous production of fashion.” (Kawamura: 39)

Utrecht University

Fashion is the result of the acceptance of certain cultural values (Kawamura p:4) and the acceptance of clothing and certain manners as fashion with their attributed values are utilised by people as a way to communicate with others. That is to say fashion consumer utilises fashion as a statement to perform the self and certain social roles and identities. In next chapter I discuss cultural consumption of fashion by people for politic, social, economic, and personal purposes.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **The Consumer as an Institution of the Fashion System**

The consumer as an institution is the second important issue of this paper after the discussion of fashion as a system of institutions. Above and beyond the aforementioned institutions such as designers, editors, manufacturers and so on, every single individual in society is principally a consumer. Thus consumption as an act and consumerism are involved in every stage of the fashion process and every institution of the fashion system. This means that consumption is not limited to the last stages of fashion system but also occurs in other activities such as production, utilisation, reproduction, reformation, deconstruction and more. Consumerism refers not only to the act of consumption, but possesses power and capacity to render goods and behaviours as fashion or not. The consumer does not always adopt fashionable ones that are dictated by media, designers, advertisers and manufacturers as fashion. As it is also explained in the reception and adoption stages, without the approval of the consumer, fashion is not named as fashion.

The position of the consumer in the fashion system has not always been as arbitrary as it is now. First of all, the contemporary fashion system is an industrialised and institutionalised system. What was fashion called before the Industrial Revolution formed in a different way? As Diane Crane also makes the division in her book *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender and Identity in Clothing* (2000), until the Industrial Revolution, fashion performed as class fashion which was a visual language of class, gender, political, and economic discrimination; afterwards consumer fashion emerged and apart from massive comprehended added values on fashion, individually constructed added values also came into prominence. Not only Crane but also Kawamura (2005), Arbuckle and Sterlacci (2008), Barnard (1996), and Davis (1994) also consider the Industrial Revolution as a milestone for fashion phenomenon and industry in terms of democratising the consumer. What this research claims is that emergence of new media technologies can be perceived as a new milestone in the fashion system in terms of emancipation and participation of the consumer in the fashion system as it will be discussed in chapter III. To discuss this revolutionary role of new media technologies, it is necessary to highlight what the Industrial Revolution altered in clothing activity, how corporations brought consumption culture into existence and transformed consumption habits from functionality to sentimentality. In the light of revolutions that are conducted by industrialisation, it will be clear to understand what new media can reform in our contemporary culture and fashion system.

Utrecht University

Comprehension of fashion before the Industrial Revolution was different than it is now. There was no plurality and diversity in the choice of clothing and accessories. Clothing was perceived as private property therefore it was the most visible visual language that determined differences between social classes. Lower social classes had only one suit of clothes (Crane 2000: 3). Clothing was the most distinctive fact in marking the social, political, gender, and religious status. Dressing was even regulated by the rules. During the reign of Henry VIII in England only knights and those ranking above them were permitted to wear velvet cloaks or a silk hose; only countesses and higher ranks of women could wear purple silk or gold or silver cloth (Tierney 2000: 2). On the other hand, figures such as the crown and gown were and in fact still are used as political and religious symbols. Furthermore the pattern, color and style of clothing did not only mark the social status but also space and time. International relationships between countries were performed by visual codes and connotations of fashionable goods and behaviours. Fashion dolls for example were the most important visual figures that promoted French fashion, transmitted French culture outside of their borders and constructed the discourse of Paris as a fashion capital. Fashion dolls were said to be the first means of circulating the latest styles of dress. It became the practice in Paris to display two life-size dolls dressed in the current fashions. 'La Grande Pandora' was fitted out from head to toe each time the fashions changed. The smaller of the dolls, 'La Petite Pandora', even wore the appropriate underclothes. As early as 1391, Charles VI of France sent the Queen of England full-sized dolls wearing the latest styles made to the Queen's measurements (Diehl 1976: 1). By these transfers, dolls were being used as fashion medium to interchange and transmit local and national fashions to international scales.

By contrast with the contemporary fashion process, the adoption and diffusion of fashion was also much slower before the industrial revolution. Media and communication technologies did not mediatise fashion consumption. Dolls, paintings and travellers were the only medium that could transfer local fashions to other lands. Therefore the transition between old and new fashion used to take decades and even centuries. Currently four fashion weeks in a year are organised in international fashion weeks of fashion capitals such as Paris, Milan and New York. In addition to that designers also launch capsule collections between four main seasons so before the season ends, collections already reach the waning stage. Nevertheless the Elizabethan and Victorian eras, for instance, that acquired fame as being stylish and fashionable in the costume and fashion history, creativity in literature, music and culture endured from fifty to seventy decades.

Fashion before the Industrial Revolution was not only slower than the contemporary fashion process but also more discriminatory and prejudicial. It was used especially to mark social, political and economic inequalities. Virginia Woolf also very successfully mentions this mission of fashion in the biography of Orlando. Although it is

Utrecht University

a fictional biography, the social, political, temporal and spatial purpose of fashion was pictured in a very successful way. Woolf aims to reveal the gendered, political, economical and ethnic inequalities in the story of Orlando and how these inequalities are performed in collective and dual relationships, and questions what the limits of these issues are highlighted by fashion phenomenon are. The book is the epic life story of a British Noble. Orlando is a person who starts his life as a man and continues as a woman. S/he survives for more than 600 years. He lives during Elizabethan Era, falls in love with a Russian princess, moves to Istanbul as the ambassador of King Charles II. While he performs his duties very well in the Ottoman Empire, one morning he suddenly metamorphoses into a woman. She then leaves Istanbul and spends some time in a Gypsy tribe. After Orlando goes back to England, she experiences the Victorian Age. Finally the story of Orlando ends in the present time of Woolf that was 1928. Orlando's biography gathers agendas of fashion such as gender, social class, temporal changes and ethnicity. The very first sentence of the book

"HE for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it" (Woolf: 8)

already indicates us how Woolf and her Orlando is going use clothing, decoration, manner and atmosphere namely the fashion of time and spaces that Orlando will be subjected to. Costume portrayals from *Orlando* such as

"crimson breeches, lace collar, waistcoat of taffeta, and shoes with rosettes on them as big as double dahlias" (Woolf: 12)

aids the reader to visualise the aristocratic profile of Orlando and her/his environment, types of fabric (taffeta), shapes and cuts of clothes (breech i.e.) of the Elizabethan Age. These detailed depictions inform the reader of the current fashion of the era, and when there is a different form of dress or behaviour is pictured, it becomes clear that a stranger to Orlando's social class or nation will be a part of the story. In further sentences for example Woolf mentions this with words as

"shabby man, whose ruff was a thought dirty, and whose clothes were of hoddern brown (*ibid*)".

This picture of a man draws us the profile of a non-aristocratic persona. The colours, situation and form of his outfit are more differentiated than Orlando's. The difference between the two descriptions highlights the differences between the social statuses of the wearers of these clothes. When Orlando meets Sasha, a Russian princess, this time the national dress of Russia is clearly differentiated from the British one.

"A figure, which, whether boy's or woman's, for the loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise the sex, filled him with the highest curiosity (17)."

With these words, it is possible to say that connotations of fashion does not have to be perceived same by everyone. Visuals can also be ambiguous to cultures and individuals that do not have a relevant interpretation.

Utrecht University

They refer to comprehend cultural meanings or viewer can make a personal judgement according to her/his experiences, accumulations and history. In this example Orlando meets with a visual language, that is, Russian fashion, that he has never faced before, and he is confused with connotations that he cannot decode. The loose tunic apparently does not exist in the English culture that Orlando has experienced, so there is no meaningful construction regarding to which gender or social class it represents. On the other hand gender roles and the metamorphoses from a man to a woman that Orlando has experienced also signify these agendas of fashion. The first time she experiences being a “proper” lady was the first time she experiences a skirt around her legs and the change in behaviour that manifests itself with a skirt. According to her era, a lady wears a skirt and being lady requires proper behaviour and social interaction (which may mean not interacting) in addition to this, being a proper lady also means being treated properly and a skirt does not only control the behaviour of Orlando, but also that of others.

“If the sight of my ankles means death to an honest fellow who, no doubt, has a wife and family to support, I must, in all humanity, keep them covered,” Orlando thought. Yet her legs were among her chiefest beauties. And she fell to thinking what an odd pass we have come to when all a woman’s beauty has to be kept covered, lest a sailor may fall from a mast-head (93).”

This last example depicts how a person adopts the customs of being a wo/man depending on the clothing s/he wears and obversely how clothing can also control behaviour respective in the time and space we in which we wear it.

Due to the meanings and values attributed to fashion, it can be used as the most visible phenomenon to mark social status, gender, politics, religion. However, contemporary fashion does not have such walls as fashion before the Industrial Revolution. Consumer fashion, unlike class fashion, have been democratised and liberalised by the influence of the Industrial Revolution. Clothes have lost their economic values when compared to the understanding of clothes as private property during class fashion. Meanwhile they have gained more symbolic importance with the enormous expansion of ready-made clothes at all price levels. Remarkable technological inventions and developments have taken a big role in the democratisation of fashion. The invention of steam machines, the invention of the first spinning jenny in 1767, the patented lock-stitch sewing machine of Singer in 1851, the standardisation of the clothing sizing system between 1880 and 1890 and the first mail-order catalogue business in 1893 were significantly important inventions and developments that reformed fashion system. These inventions also changed the perception and practice of fashion in industrialised societies. Fashion, which was serving for discriminative purposes, was obliged to serve for altered necessities of the consumer such as clothing suitable for an industrialised life-style. Industrialisation generated new business avenues, and people demanded functional and fashionable goods which were suitable for their work

Utrecht University

environment and leisure time. Mass production also decreased the prices of clothes and reduced various styles into basic combination forms. However, while the necessities of people were fed, factories continued to produce more than could be consumed. Mass production brought upon the risk of over-production. Sales were being done on the basis of needs, necessities, functionality and practical value. The risk of over-production could have been solved by changing the perception of people of products. As a solution to this, public relations agencies and advertisers came up with the idea that people put their desires over their needs. So public relations and advertising agencies of big international corporations promoted the idea of completeness of identity and social wholeness of the self via consumption patterns. They constructed a new discourse on customership and changed the perception of consuming. Consuming was depicted as actualisation of the self. Modern wo/men should be differentiated from masses and possessiveness was the only way to succeed this. The over-production risk was saved by this new consumption discourse that created new emotional necessities over needs.

Adam Curtis discusses the consumer culture of 20th century in his documentary, *The Century of the Self* (2002). He states the false interpretation of Freud's psychoanalytic studies by his cousin Edward Bernays and how it was used for the benefit of capitalist corporations. Advertising and public relations agencies used the psychoanalytical theories of Freud to encourage people to consume more, and this new consumption discourse constituted the consumerist human model where a person actualises her/himself via commodities (The Century of the Self Curtis 2002: Episode 1).

"Since the 1950's new kinds of groups have emerged for whom consumption plays a central role in their ways of living. The construction of a sense of identity can be seen as a process which may take use of items of consumption such as clothes, footwear, popular music, or sporting activities, including being supporter of particular music groups, singers or soccer clubs (Consumption Robert Bocock 1993: 27-28)."

This is indeed what we should focus on, because consumption and leading a certain lifestyle involves signs, symbols, ideas and values. These values position the consumer in society. The consumer desires the possession of commodities to be respected and appreciated by society. Class fashion, which was existed before the Industrial Revolution, was also used for social appreciation and involvement, however it was only the reproduction of existing rules and orders. On the other hand, consumer fashion allows the consumer to construct individual narrations and identities. People are allowed to create personal meanings and attribute them to the fashion of the time and space. Massive understanding of any ideological doctrines or cultural practices are fractured into micro societies and even individualistic scales. This is the reason that contemporary fashion as a cultural practice is more ambiguous, multifaceted and in keeping with the highly fragmented nature

of contemporary post-industrial societies. Therefore, as Bocock also states in the reference below, the act of consumption indicates who we are and/or who we want to be in terms of performing an identity.

"Consumption has become an active process involving the symbolic construction of a sense of both collective and individual identities. This sense of identity should no longer be seen as given to people by membership of a specific economic class, or social status group, or directly by ethnicity or gender. Identity has to be actively constructed by more and more people for themselves. In this process of active identity construction, consumption has come to play a central role. Baudrillard suggest that consumers do not purchase items of clothing food, body decoration, furniture a style of entertainments, for instance in order to express and already existing sense of who they are. Rather, people create a sense of who they are through what they consume (Bocock: 67)."

As also mentioned many times before, fashion involves the production and consumption of products, and symbols therefore as Douglas and Isherwood state that it serves for making sense of the world and the things and people in it. Goods are neutral, but their uses are social; they can be used as fences or bridges (Douglas and Isherwood 1979: 12). Unlike the discriminatory class fashion before the Industrial Revolution, consumer fashion can be bent and re-appropriated and it serves for social and individual purposes. The convertible and polysemic nature of contemporary fashion provides the opportunity for the consumer to actively participate in the system. Consumer fashion allows participatory consumerism. The consumption of fashionable clothing, and behaviour become very important in the construction of a personal identity. To be accepted into social groups performs an increasingly important role in the construction of personal identity, although the material necessity is secondary. In case of fashion consumption, the wearer constructs an identity depending on what s/he wears and afterwards s/he results in the most convenient self according the possession of fashionable products.

Self-creation by fashion also changes relations to the bigger scale. As Crane also argues, fashion has a nature that continually redefines tensions in society between the individual and embodies them in new styles (Crane: 13). This also comes from its continuously changing constitution. Every new fashion from its production to its waning stages constitutes new values and meanings in new styles, so that the consumer can use various discourses to interpret the connections between her/his sense of personal identity and the social identity that is conferred by membership of various social groups wearing similar clothes (10). The consumer uses "fashion discourses to forge self-defining social distinctions and boundaries, to construct narratives of personal history, to interpret the interpersonal dynamics of their social spheres, to understand their relationship to consumer culture,... and to transform... and contest conventional social categories, particularly those having strong gender associations (Thompson & Haytko 1997: 16).

Utrecht University

In addition to individual experiences and profits as being respected and involved in social groups, the desire and necessity of constructing an ideal self by means of fashion also charges larger scale agendas on fashion. So today's consumer is not ignorant or obedient fashion victim who imitates fashion leaders, but someone who selects styles on the basis of their perceptions of their own identity and lifestyle. Fashion is a choice rather than a mandate (Crane: 15). Clothing is a denotation, a material value. On the other hand, the connotations of clothing are more important than what it physically is, and these connotations can also be make use of social revolutions.

Jeans for example were produced for the labourer due to their working environment and working conditions. Workers needed thick fabric to perform comfortably in fields and farms. It was a supply offered by the fashion industry in reply to the demand of the working field. However, jeans started in time to represent the rebellion culture. In the 1930s and 1940s, creative and artistic types began wearing jeans in U.S.A., arguably more violent and less creative subculture groups took them up in the 1950s. Activists from the New Left started wearing jeans around the 1960s, as did hippies, introducing a more intellectual, but again, no less marginal mark to the product (Barnard 134). Jeans became the symbol of resistance in the 1950's (Crane 198), because all of these groups "stood strongly in opposition to the dominant conservative, middle-class, consumer-oriented culture of America (Davis 1992: 70)". It was an anti-fashion element to demolish the values of upper classes. Due that revolutionary nature of jeans, people of various social groups, economic and educational backgrounds began to wear them. They can be seen as the most neutral and egalitarian piece of clothing. Jeans may be explained as an attempt to refuse, or to step outside of, all class identification. As it seems in this example there is a "semiotic layering" (Turim 1985) over fashionable goods however a different type of layering than *Orlando*. Fashion accumulates connotations from many different liberated contexts. This contributes to its usefulness for both creators and consumers of clothing, who can manipulate different meanings in the same garment. Making meaning and interpreting them constitute a visual language to communicate.

Malcolm Barnard asks questions such as what sort of communication fashion constitutes and what sort of things it says. "It is clearly not spoken or written communication (even when our clothes have slogans and labels on them), but does it make any sense to speak of misunderstanding someone's clothes or of wondering what they mean by wearing those particular clothes? (Fashion As Communication Barnard 2002: 5)" He claims that fashion is not innocent or neutral but it is about power relations and ideologies. What I disagree with in his arguments is that the change that the fashion system has been through by the influence of Industrial Revolution made neutralisation and personal utilisation possible. He also gives the example of the Punks. Punk Culture

was an attempt to oppose and challenge a dominant, middle-class view, or ideology, of beauty in women and value in jewellery (Barnard 6). Punk appeared to develop "as a reaction against the massive commercialisation of both music and fashion for the young (Rouse 1989: 297)". It was a rage against the *boring* mainstream music bands and dominant life style. Punk enabled the production of the streets' own music, fashion and culture. Punk was an anti-fashion movement that was performed as the fashion of its consumer. In time, the high fashion designers such as Vivienne Westwood also appropriated it and the street style of subcultural movement started to be consumed by the people, which it was in fact a protest against. As the example of Punk shows according to the never-ending fashion production, existing meanings are continuously altered and re-appropriated. Punk as a rebellion movement could be an issue of Vivienne Westwood's new collection, and adopted by high-society at once as it is also displayed in Image 0.



Image 0

As Barnard claims that fashion maybe cannot be perceived as an innocent practice, it is however impossible to deny the liberating nature of it. Fashion and clothing serve to dress something up. They cover the human body and disguise it or present it as something that it is not. By this way the fashioned body represents something else than it actually is. It enables the performing of self-narrated identities. As Shakespeare states that "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players (As You Like It 1623)." If the world is our stage than men and women as the actor of this stage utilise fashion as their costumes depending on their roles, stages and audiences. That is the reason why the wearer spends time, money and effort in the decision process of fashion choices in performing various identities in different social environments. Different environments and different purposes require appropriate costumes. Clothes are intended to be worn in the public space; we fundamentally dress for others and not for ourselves. Even if we pretend to dress for ourselves, it can in fact be perceived as the rehearsal of our real performance in public. This is an important decision making process, because what we

Utrecht University

wear is a statement about who we want to be or who we think we are. “The garment, on this account, then, is the medium in which one person sends a message to another person. It is by means of the garment that one person intends to communicate their message to another person. The message, on this account, is the sender’s intention and it is this that is transmitted by the garment in the communication process. The message is also, of course, what is received by the receiver. The sorts of things that are most important on this account of communication are the senders’ intention, the efficiency of the transmission process and the effect on the receiver (Barnard 30).”

As well as this sort of communication between individuals, it can also be practiced between an individual and a group – as the actor and audience – and between groups. Fashion as communication can allow a person to be accepted into a social group, while it excludes her/him from others. Punk culture for example was differentiated to the dominant culture and it attracted– the others – the participants of subculture. Punk fashion became a statement of a group of people who refused to be a part of the middle class, consuming life-style. In addition to that this attitude of punk, “was an attack to the larger economic system” (136) as well. It twisted the good taste of dominant culture and used the dirty, tasteless, imputed, anti-fashion elements to protest aesthetic values of American economic system. It was not only a protest against the consumption culture but also producers of this economic system. It was an ideological assault on the aesthetic values of the dominant classes. Punk used and is still using fashion and clothing to challenge the dominant ideology and to contest the distribution of power in the social order (Barnard 44). Although at once Punk was about actualisation of the self against dominant culture, implementers of this movement created an identity that was performed collectively and communicated to the masses.

While the example of Punk pictures dynamics between mainstream and sub-cultures, the example of Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* pictured the dynamics between gender roles. The fashion of the lesbian feminist used gender as an agenda of fashion as well. They encouraged the upper- and middle-class, independent, educated women to wear trousers, and therefore they utilised trousers as identity symbol of free women. Especially “working-class women who became artists’ and photographers’ models in Montparnasse and Montmartre began wearing trousers towards the end of the First World War, although apparently not in Paris streets and cafes. These women belonged to an urban bohemian subculture in which some of them functioned as “fashion leaders” (Crane: 122). The widespread acceptance of trousers by middle-class women appears to have been pioneered by marginal groups within that class. In the postwar period, masculine uniforms for women gradually appeared in occupations where women were performing work similar that of men (123). Furthermore not only

Utrecht University

trousers but also suits were a revolutionary manner for the liberation of women in society. Unlike the subcultural movements, the suit was issued as a top down practice by the advertising campaign of the American Tobacco Company. Namely advertisers adopted the technique of the activists into their expediencies. Smoking cigarettes – especially in public – for women was a taboo, so they used smoking women as a challenge to masculinity. The free woman identity that emerged with wearing trousers could be used as an advertising message, so they did. They constructed an advertising message giving the image of free women who are brave enough to smoke in public and involved women from high society in this movement. They lit up their torch of liberty as a protest to fight for their freedom, independence, and self-sufficiency in addition to wearing trousers and vests as their lesbian masculine fellows.

Hip-Hop culture is another subculture movement that emerged as a resistance to the dominant culture. This time ethnicity was an agenda of fashion. "When Run-D.M.C appeared in their unlaced Adidas sneakers, they were making a reference to the way in which shoelaces were routinely removed from prisoners in American jails, in order to prevent inmates hanging themselves. The fashion for oversized and baggy trousers which displayed the waistband of one's underwear also originated in jails: belts were removed from inmates for the same reason that laces were removed, with the result that prisoner's trouser were worn low and that they sagged, thus revealing the underwear (Fight The Power: Rap, Race and Reality Chuck D 1997: 46). This prison connotation of African-American people diffused into the larger scale and was adopted by others. As a result, this turned into the fashion of an ethnic group in cosmopolitan American culture. It became an identity for people who share a similar cultural and personal background, and was used to mark themselves and to be differentiated from others.

As all these examples and discussions state that the fashion system has been through significant alterations in parallel with the industrialisation of society. As I also referred to in the discussion of Barnard and Crane to support my argument, the democratisation of the fashion controversially democratised the fashion consumer and let her/him either reproduce social orders or deconstruct existing rules and construct personal individual narrations of her/himself. On the other hand, while the Industrial Revolution liberated the position of the consumer in the fashion system, it also condemned her/him to consume more in terms of actualising his/her self-narration. This is the problematic aspect of democratisation that was brought about by the Industrial Revolution. I consider it problematic because the way the consumer alters the system is always re-appropriated by the system and re-offered to the consumer as new fashion. An example being the use of the cigarette in breaking taboos meanwhile by the American Tobacco Company. On the other hand, fashion as a repetitive

Utrecht University

nature, encouragingly, motivates the consumer to deconstruct what is offered by the system unlike the class fashion from before the revolution. By this way, the avant-garde consumer always finds a way to escape reproduction. In the next chapter, in addition to the democratising role of the Industrial Revolution and machinery, I discuss the emancipatory and participatory role of new media technologies over the consumer.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Influence of New Media Technologies on Participation of the Consumer to the Fashion System**

Media is one of the most influential institutions in the fashion system. On the basis of this, after the intervention of new media technologies into our everyday life and professional avenues; the way we experience, consume and produce fashion has also been altered. As well as new media influencing music, film, and other creative industries, they also influence the fashion industry. If the industrial revolution has democratised the fashion system as Crane, Davis, Arbuckle and Sterlacci argue than it is possible to claim that new media has been emancipating fashion consumers and liberating the fashion system. However the question is to what extent new media emancipates the consumer. In chapter II it is discussed that the advertisers and public relation agencies are a solution to over-production risk, firstly fostered through consumption culture. They create the discourse of social and psychological wholeness, a projection of an ultimate, self-narrated identity and disguise the real reason behind consumption. In chapter III, I focus on new media technologies from a similar perspective. The characteristics of new media and how these characteristics influence the fashion system are discussed. Afterwards by referring to articles and comments about social media and its influence on fashion, I attempt to analyse why these writers, editors and bloggers consider new media as revolutionary for fashion and what is the motivation behind their argument.

First of all I aim to explain what new media is, what the characteristics are and which discussions on new media I address while I talk about new media with respect to Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, and Kelly's *New Media: A Critical Introduction* (2009). Afterwards I attempt to uncover the new discourse of new media and reflect on the fashion system. Finally I am going to study The Blonde Salad as a case to analyse what it means to be successful in fashion with regards to new media and look at what changed in terms of power relations after new media technologies.

*New Media: A Critical Introduction* (2009) is a very comprehensive analysis about new media phenomenon. It questions what new media is, which ideological values are attributed to the newness of a medium, what the history and theories of new media phenomena are and what new media is capable of that old media cannot provide. Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, and Kelly state six important defining characteristics of new media in their book (2009). These characteristics do not exactly define what new media is but they are definitive concepts

Utrecht University

that help us to portray what new media can be and what they refer to. So according to *New Media: A Critical Introduction* (2009) new media are characterised as being digital, interactive, hyper-textual, networked, virtual and simulated (Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, & Kelly 2009:13).

*Digital* as a character of a medium refers to the shift from analogue to digital. All input, image, text, video, audio are coded, numberised and turned into abstract symbols. Media text is dematerialised and separated from its physical form, easily compressed and accessed in online sources, memory drives, technology networks and more (18).

*Virtuality* is another fact that new media bring into our world. Virtual worlds, spaces, objects, environments, realities, selves and identities, abound in discourses about new media (35). Virtual reality was first experienced by new media technologies. Secondly participants in forms of online communities and thirdly high-resolution images of human body in cyberspace, namely the digitisation of the body presented. Corporeal human experiences are dislodged to virtual spaces. Social interaction and individual experiences in virtual forms have as much influence as corporeal ones in our contemporary culture. Because imagined identities of cyberspace become our realities and corporeal experiences are being performed in relation to virtual ones.

*Interactivity* as the third characteristic of new media is offered as a liberation against the passive audience of old media. It is an added value on medium. Audience of new media can act in the production of media content and meaning as well as viewing, reading, and listening (22). The clear distinction between producer and consumer has been blurred by the participatory role of new media technologies. "Being Prosumer" has become a new activity for producer and consumer of new media. Interaction with the medium does not only affiliate user into production of the content but also provides opportunity for user to construct better communication and interact with other new media users. For instance online communities emerging by social media networks and mobile technologies offer us another character of new media.

*Networked* as another characteristic of new media makes it possible to find any specific groups that have mutual relations, similar interests, common values and shared spaces. Cyber networks of social interests also occur as a decentralisation of the production process. Centralised forms of old media are taken down, which means that online communities of current new media culture are segmented and differentiated. Although masses use new media technologies, the mass audience is fractured (31). There is not one single platform or medium as television to reach audience but there is the large number of micro medium where users are segmented. Such as networked and interactive characteristics of new media, hyper-textuality is also an ideological overtone and a key term concerning new media.

*Hyper-textual* media promise users easy accessibility of media and related contents. New media is capable of linking us to any cyber platforms, content, information and data.

*Simulated* as the last characteristic refers to any synthetic or counterfeit creation, creation of an artificial world that approximates the real one, - a mathematical or algorithmic model combined with a set of initial conditions, that allows prediction and visualisation as time unfolds (Prensky 2001: 211).

These defining characteristics are the added values and missions that are expected from new media technologies. They are the elements of the discourse concerning new media. They give an understanding about the capabilities of these technologies. New textual experiences, new ways of representing the world, new relationships between subject and media technologies, new experiences of the relationship between embodiment, identity and community, new conceptions of the biological body's relationship to technological media, new patterns of organisation and production are the ideological and emancipatory values and missions that are attributed to new media as Lister et al (2009) also state. These expectations include characteristics of new media and what we expect from new media. Four of these missions and added values are also highly related to discuss the position of fashion consumer within discourse of new media and the fashion system relationship, thereby to discuss expected values of new media characteristics and also clarify how the fashion system is influenced by what new media offers for consumer.

1- "New *textual* experience indicates new kinds of genre and textual forms, entertainment, pleasure and patterns of media consumption such as games, simulations (12)". Social networking sites, blogs, profiles comprising fashion content conceive users new textual and cyber experiences different than what we are used to receive from magazines, newspapers and television. They are hyper-textual, simulated, virtual, digital, interactive and networked. So characteristics of new media are highly influential on the way people produce and consume fashion system. Firstly, rich and linked content guides users from one to another source through the hyper-textual nature of new media. Social networking profiles, websites of print media, blogs and online stores can be replaced in only one text so that consumers can easily access to new platforms via hyperlinks. Secondly fashion content that was produced by old media is remediated into new media platforms. Although there is a wide range of prestigious print fashion magazines such as Vogue, Elle, Marie Claire, they are obliged to perform on their new media platforms including websites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. New media users expect to receive live and instant information from fashion shows, parties, events and production processes. They are not patient enough to wait for monthly issues so old media should be transferred to new media platforms to keep followers updated. Thirdly while content gains acceleration, it becomes anonymous too because it is used independently from its producer. Fashion images on the Internet are accessible to public and very difficult to claim ownership. Once it is published it becomes content of an online community to not one

Utrecht University

single producer. Fourthly the content is not only anonymous but also easily reachable by everyone and everywhere digitally. Unlike print media and localised versions of international magazines such as Vogue France, India, Japan, Elle Brazil, Marie Claire Turkey, fashion content on new media is accessed globally so production of fashion becomes globally accessible by the involvement of institutions all around the world. However this does not induce globalisation but the re-localisation. Besides global access, re-localisation comes as fifth. Currently fashion is not only produced in fashion capitals such as Paris, Milano, New York and London but digitised content of other cities' street styles can be spread to new fashion centres such as Tokyo, Sao Paolo, Rio<sup>3</sup>, Istanbul, Stockholm, Hong Kong, Berlin, Amsterdam and more. As a result, it is possible to say that new textual experiences offered by new media technologies provide five significant opportunities for consumer to participate in the consumption and production of fashion.

2- "*New relationships between subjects and media technologies (12)*" is another fact about how new media technologies influence the fashion system. By continuing to the previous one, consumers can interactively use new media tools, social media platforms and mobile devices. S/he is capable of remediating corporeal fashion experience into virtual social networking platforms and become producer of the content. The act of consuming the fashion enables interactive participation in symbolic fashion production. Visibility on social media platforms constitute a role in the symbolic production of fashion. Thereby as the other influence on fashion system new media technologies constitute as extension of corporeal experience into virtual level. A virtual experience layer is added on consumption and production of fashion. This also influences power relationships in production and organisation as the following capability of new media technologies.

3- "*New patterns of organization and production (12)*" in the system emerge. The very big percentage of new media content is produced by the user of medium (user-generated content) (12) so the prestige of high fashion, mass-fashion brands and designers are in the hands of their consumers. Empowerment of the consumer is the seventh influence of new media in the fashion system. New media users do not only participate in the production of fashion content but also distribution, diffusion, reception and adoption stages of fashion processes. Which means that these stages are remediated to new media. New fashion primarily is being diffused and adopted virtually on Instagram photos, blog posts, Facebook visuals, new arrivals updates in online stores and after all it is being experienced corporeally. Reflection of fashion stages into virtual space is the eighth influence of new media. Collections shown in fashion shows are in stores minimum to two-three months after the show, however they are already virtually consumed by digitised images before they are even worn. Thereby brands, designers, manufacturers receive meteoric and efficient feedback from consumers' new media profiles. The feedback is received in an interactive way therefore it is impossible to ignore the critical assessments coming from consumer. In addition to changing power relations between producer and consumer, new actors

---

<sup>3</sup> International Fashion Week in Rio de Janeiro is Named as Rio Fashion Week

Utrecht University

also join to the system. Rapidly growing online shopping platforms are ninth influence of new media in fashion system. With regards to global customer profiles; cheap production, shipping and storage opportunities in China, and Korea; web-stores sell without having any physical stores, so goods become cheaper. Additionally they provide distinctive styles, rather than mass production of international brands so non-conformist consumers mostly prefer them. By this way the shopping experience is being transferred from malls, stores to websites and it causes transition in power relations of the fashion system too.

4- All these alterations in personal, institutional, and professional experiences bring along *new experiences of the embodiment, identity and community* (12). Visuals, texts and information that we share through online platforms aid the externalised self. It creates a new way of understanding the self, others, space and time as tenth influence of new media. This also helps designing of the self and performing self in corporeal and virtual spaces. Virtual experiences reflect on corporeal ones. Online profiles that provide opportunity to share these experiences motivate users to participate more in the networks and provide content of others whom have similar interests. Users whom are interested in fashion are capable of finding platforms to meet their fellows. Street-style blogs such as The Sartorialist, Le-21eme, Stockholm StreetStyle, additionally social networking sites such as Lookbook.nu, Fashiolista.com, Styloola.com create globalised rhizome formed networks for fashion-conscious amateurs and for fashion professionals as the eleventh influence. Response to the potential of these platforms as fashion professionals use them as content providers. Printed magazines gives space in their pages for styling experiences of these amateur social media users. Thereby fashion imaginaries that are offered by mainstream media are being pulled down by alternative street-styles and new media platforms that provide access to these streets' culture is the twelfth influence of new media technologies over the fashion system.

As a matter of fact, Do-It-Yourself culture that emerged with Punk is also brought back by blogs as ispydiy.com, psimadethis.com, apairandaspairdiy.com and manual labour networks as etsy.com. New media user creates visual, and textual content to make completely new clothing projects or alternative solutions to imitate and reproduce high-fashion designs as the thirteenth and the final influence. The image I, taken from Do-It-Yourself blog A Pair and A Spare is an example showing a cheaper Do-It-Yourself solution to an expensive



Image I

A black and white photograph of a Balenciaga cut-out top. The top is a light-colored, possibly white or cream, fabric. It features a large, irregular, organic-shaped cutout on the left side of the chest, revealing the skin underneath. The rest of the top appears to be a simple, fitted garment.

Utrecht University

Balenciaga cut-out top.

Aforementioned thirteen specific influences of new media technologies and what their characteristics provide unlike old media show how fashion consumer has been emancipated in fashion system by the aid of new media technologies. Nevertheless consumer is not the only institution that has been emancipated and empowered but there are other institutions taking the benefit of new communication platforms.

New media does only liberate consumer but also advertisers<sup>4</sup>. The Internet advertisement costs cheaper than mass media advertisements. They are also more effective in terms of reaching correct target audience in a direct way. Mass media standardises various types of demographic, lifestyles, identities into one and uses one single message to reach masses. However new media provides micro platforms for specific purposes so manufacturers of such specific interests, hobbies etc. can directly, effectively and cheaply reach their target audience. Efficient advertising message also liberates small and medium size enterprises in front of global brands. Online stores of amateur producers can be accessed globally. Thereby a new group of producers can perform and bring profit by the help of specific online store platforms. So not only alternative styles but also producers of alternative products succeed in efficient visibility in cyberspace.

In chapter two II how the fashion system has been reshaped since Industrial Revolution is discussed. Production became cheaper and accelerated. Class fashion that legitimised the class differences was altered to consumer fashion with similar styling and clothing combinations. Accessibility to cheap material, social and cultural opportunity to perform individual styles encouraged emergent sub-cultural movements and anti-fashion against dominant fashion. Contemporarily new media is creating a similar but re-formed change in fashion production, and consumption as the aforementioned thirteen influences also state. Fashion contemporarily experienced in more reciprocal, participatory and cyber ways. It is not jammed in physical space of the urban environment but capable of reaching to virtual experiences of other spaces and individuals. On the other hand, massive experiences have fallen out of grace. People do appropriate existing identities but produce unique, self-narrated identities too. Using digital cameras and camera phones, mobile devices and profiles that are performed via these technologies can be interpreted as forming a further part of personal image-making. Sharing that type of content reflects on user's online identity and bears future, imagined audiences' approval in mind (Hills, M.

---

<sup>4</sup> By saying advertiser I do not mean to advertising agencies designing advertising campaign but the person or institutions who pays for the advertisement in media channels.

Utrecht University

Participatory Culture: Mobility, Interactivity and Identity: 120). In other words the reason wearer prefers to choose appropriate costume to be socially accepted and also reflects on virtual experiences with the network s/he want to interact with. S/he desires to be approved by cyber followers too. Moreover personal image making and sharing emerge new professions. Blogging, micro blogging, virtual styling enable new income sources and entrance to the world of professionals. Currently fashion bloggers are more influential in fashion industry than celebrities. They are invited to sit in the first rows of fashion shows due that they are considered as press and they are allowed to share sneak peek previews of collections, backstage of making of processes in fashion houses and shows and provide transparency and sincerity for brands. Blogging as an institution and a profession in fashion system emerged as a result of aforementioned influences of new media that emancipated fashion consumer.

Vogue Turkey fashion and styling consultant Ece Sükan is a fashion professional who remarks the liberation of fashion bloggers in fashion industry. She mentions that contemporarily; mainstream dictation of mass media is altered by personalisation that is performed by eye-catching styles of bloggers and street-stylers. They are the new fashion leaders determining what is fashion or not fashion. Because of their influence in fashion diffusion and adoption designers become -so called- servants of them (Hürriyet. February, 2013). Designers and brands should satisfy them. Bloggers receive free clothing, co-work with fashion houses, designers and brands. By this way the brand reach a more efficient and cheaper visibility than collaborating with celebrities while amateurs become an institution in the fashion system. In this reference of Sükan, “personalisation” is the most important fact that motivates brands and designers to co-work with bloggers. Bloggers are influential in fashion system due to their personalised styles differentiated from fashion images of mass media. Therefore they constitute reliable medium for producers to work with and followers to be kept updated about the latest news. In addition to sponsorship collaborations with bloggers, brands also use their social media platforms to broaden their customer profile and reach a bigger audience.

“Louis Vuitton broadcasted its spring 2010 ready-to-wear show live exclusively to Facebook followers, offering a big incentive for recruiting new fans and a reward to its most passionate customers. It’s a changing forum; the media is shifting and because of technology, there are new opportunities for people who understand how to harness it and get their voice out there. You used to have to wait for six months to see what was happening on the catwalk – now it’s instantaneous.” ([S. Clark. Press, C., 2011](#))

says Reportage writer Clark. Bloggers are one of these groups that -getting their voice out there-. They have intervened into fashion system since early 2000's with avant-garde blog The Sartorialist and currently they are an important institution in the fashion system. In addition to personalised fact of bloggers emphasised by Sükan,

Utrecht University

two more important facts are highlighted in Clark's words, these are "passionate" and "instantaneous". These are defining characteristics of current new media using fashion consumer. They are passionate about being able to access recent content and thereby they expect to receive instant updates regarding the collections shows, events and more. And bloggers are the most efficient institution that is capable of doing that. On the other hand fashion system do not only involve new institutions by new media influence but also broadens the audience of high-fashion brands. High fashion is out of the zone of elites but reachable to everyone. Consumers do not have to be invited to fashion shows to experience the high fashion because the elite natures of fashion weeks are liberated to followers of brand from every social class. Bloggers can participate in the backstage of fashion shows and simultaneously share the images and news on their social media profiles. Uri Minkoff, CEO of Rebecca Minkoff, who is also the designer's older brother, states that

"There used to be a kind of dictatorial relationship between the brand and the consumer, the shows were for editors and buyers. Buyers would place their orders and editors would gather their thoughts and four to six months later, a product would hit the floor. So really, the consumer was in the dark and didn't know what the trends were until they hit the floor and even then, it was this highly curated selection. What's very fascinating now with social media is you have everything becoming instant, the moment the designer or the brands shows their goods, not only do you have editors and buyers there, but through major platforms of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest you're getting real time critiques. You've added another layer on the editorial side."

Words as "dictatorial relationship" and "real time critiques" in Minkoff's phrases indicate a change in power relations in the fashion system. As also mentioned in influence of new media, diffusion of fashion shows are altered. Quick response coming from the audience created more interactive collections. The duration after a fashion show until the audience can manipulate the arrival of collection to stores, it is possible to give another direction to what is seen in fashion shows with respect to feedback of the audience. Which means that more consumer-prevailing collections are distributed instead of designer prevailing. With regards to what these three fashion professionals emphasise is that remarkable "personalisation" in styles emerge, new institutions and a desire for "quick" and "easy" accessibility to fashion content strengthens their positions in the fashion system thereby "power relations" have been altered in the system.

In addition to thirteen ways that new media technologies positively influenced fashion consumer and the system, new media elucidates consumers about ethics in the fashion system too. Consumers have awareness about what they consume, what kind of production process proceeds, whether it is produced in an ethical and environmentally friendly condition, etc. They become more conscious about animal rights, environment friendly

Utrecht University

production, ethical working conditions for employees, sustainable fashion and recycling because they are being informed about these details by new media activities of NGO's such as Greenpeace. Greenpeace started Detox Fashion Campaign in 2012. Campaign was about the toxic water pollution caused by the production process of big brands. Consumers were informed by newsletters of Greenpeace, and on other social media profiles of Greenpeace in addition to shares of participants on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and more. Online signatures reached almost five million. Fifteen global fashion leaders such as Nike, Adidas, Puma, H&M, C&A, Li-Ning, Zara, Mango, Esprit, Levi's, Uniqlo, Benetton, Victoria's Secret, G-Star Raw and Valentino have committed to detox in response to growing international campaigns of Greenpeace ([www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org)).



Image II

The second example of the ethical influence of new media on reforming the fashion system is from an activist business project. It is a website called Truth and Fashion founded and promoted on social media platforms. The website is a modelling agency aiming to change society's perspective on fashion and beauty by showcasing the world of curvy models ([www.truthandfashion.com](http://www.truthandfashion.com)). The aim is to create a new visual culture for beauty and fashion that is not limited to 0 sized women and change the perception of the skinny and beauty obsession of an audience, but arouse them about realistic human sizes. In addition to these ethical issues of online fashion manifestations, Do-It-yourself blogs, websites, auction platforms serve as another example to ethics in consumption. Do-It-Yourself blogs provide sustainability in consumption by displaying creative ways to recycle old clothes, materials and accessories within the existing conditions and motivate consumers to produce. Online auction platforms such as E-Bay also help sustainability with recycling pre-owned or pre-used materials by giving chance to create unique styles.

As it seems in these examples new media liberates fashion consumers and changes power relations in the fashion system. Nevertheless it is not as pink as it seems. As Sükan, Clark and Minkoff also implicitly emphasise that not only amateurs but also professionals use new media with social, personal, economic and political purposes. To begin the discussion of motivation behind using new media technologies as a liberation in the

Utrecht University

fashion system I am first going to refer to Technological Imaginaries from New Media: A Critical Introduction (2009). Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, and Kelly discuss the discursive construction of new media as “Technological Imaginary” as popular or collective imagination about technologies (Flichy 1999).

“Technological Imaginary is “realm of images, representations, ideas and intuitions of fulfilment, of wholeness and completeness that human beings, in their fragmented and incomplete selves, desire to become. These are images of an ‘other’ – an other self, another race, gender, or significant other person, another state of being. Technologies are then cast in the role of such an ‘other’. When applied to technology, or media technologies in particular, the concept of a technological imaginary draws attention to the way that (frequently gendered) dissatisfactions with social reality and desires for a better society are projected onto technologies as capable of delivering a potential realm of completeness” (Lister et al.67).

Using technologies on the other hand also means consuming them. Therefore projection of a better society is used as a discourse of advertisers to motivate people to consume new media technologies.

The characteristics, which aim to define new media, also add new values and attribute expectations to them. Being digital, interactive, virtual, networked, simulated and hyper-textual refer to a certain discourse that is constructed concerning new media. And they all actually refer to newness and oldness as contrary values of a medium. Claiming a technology as new declares non-new ones as old. Newness brings along added values to media. Newness charges powerful ideological, experiential and technological changes. (12). New is often associated with a sense of ‘progress’; so new media afford greater realism, greater imaginative scope, more efficient communication (45) which are much romanticised affordances. The word of *new* means being recent, modern, reformed; it is an adjective which distinguishes something established more recent. In other words claiming media as new connotes old as incapable, obsolete and tiresome. This newness has an added value that is attributed to media and constructs a discourse around these technologies. Discursive construction of new media states a positive, emancipatory power for an advanced society. Due to these references of newness, users expect democracy, high-performance, capability, freedom, equality and even more from new media, which actually are limited within the affordance of technology. The power behind the aforementioned discursive construction of technological imaginaries is diversified institutions, corporations, advertisers, companies, political objectives, economic purposes, and ideological reasons, academic discussion that constitute a massive system. And users reproduce it. Fashion consumers also adopt the idea of being liberated as new media users, so they are motivated to be involved in more.

Utrecht University

Schafer's *Bastard Culture* (2011) for instance is an important example that attempts to uncover the real face of industries that motivate users to participate in new media platforms. He studies how cultural production is being transformed by participatory activities and to what extent the new media user are emancipated. In addition to this he criticises the stand of music and film industries about new media technologies. He claims that they accused users who watch online videos and download free media content as criminals and isolated them from the industry (Bastard Culture. Schafer. 2011: 140). As an answer to his argument; it is possible to consider that fashion industry did not make the same mistake as music and film industries. Designers, editors, manufacturers, brands, have been making effort to take the best out of new media. They started to follow user activities of their market and interact with them to receive feedback. As a result they plan their business strategies depending on data and feedback coming from online platforms where their consumer participate. Therefore they need more participation from consumer in new media so they construct an emancipatory and participatory discourse about new media technologies, social media platforms and mobile devices to motivate their consumer in participation.

Since fashion is directly related to consumption, actualising self by possession of technologies influence the experience of fashion consumer and the nature of the fashion system too. Fashionable life-styles depicted in technological imaginaries foster people to consume more to reach the idealised life-style in these images. As it is also expected from new discourse and interactive characteristics of new media, imaginaries unlike the old media experiences, new media content can be reproduced and/or reconstructed by the users. So mainstream imaginaries can be replaced by the alternative ones. However as Schafer argues about motivation to participate; participation in the production process of content is actually part of new media discourse (Schafer: 13). A user is motivated by new media discourse to participate more because, by this way data and feedback is provided from users. Fashion consumer's using new media are motivated to share more content about brands, personal styling, feedback about new collections, etc. There are four important reasons that fashion industry urge consumers to participate. The first one is that producer, designer, manufacturer receive very fast and efficient feedback about their products and collection by using social media and mobile profiles of their consumer. Secondly if the consumer already adopts fashion it is diffused on their social media platforms. By this way the visibility of products increase as free from expensive advertisement campaigns and PR activities. A Fashion Week runway is only as powerful as its echo on Instagram, Tumblr and Pinterest. Fashion brands now rely on influencers to share their latest styles, clothing lines and fragrances. (Shorty Industry awards). An article published in 2010, by Why This Way Founder, Macala Wright states that 53% of Mercedes Benz Fashion Week's overall coverage came directly from online articles and blog posts. It's clearly evident that the presence of style bloggers, not only in visibility but also in influence, has flourished exponentially." (Business Insider). Another research studying motivation behind purchasing reasons was published on Business Insider's website

Utrecht University

and it results that fashion blogs are 31% influential in the promotion and purchase of fashion products (*ibid*). Third reason that fashion industry urge people to participate in new media and fashion consumption is that producer receives detailed data about the consumption pattern of user and plan the second production process according to this data. As Schaffer states for example the more picture and information are added, the better the system organises them semantically (111). Thereby the data provided by consumers' online profiles, producer is informed of their consumption patterns as what they like, what they do not like, when and how their products are consumed as well as demographic, economic, and social information. Fourthly social networking sites as Facebook, Twitter, blogs provide guaranteed placement for advertising messages. In contrast with mass media advertisements, social media advertisement constructs direct communication between message and the audience. Four of these reason are the main reasons that fashion industry desire their consumer to use new media technologies thereby stimulating them with the discursive construction about -revolutionary- new media participation.

CNN also paid attention to the raising start of bloggers and published an article including the interview with one of the successful fashion blogger Leandra Medine. Medine's one-day experience during New York Fashion Week 2012 is documented with a glamorous narration. Journalist Grinberg states the importance of Medine's blog by claiming it "as an efficient medium to be used by designer for a better communication between consumer and product. It's that direct line to fans and potential consumers that makes Medine a desirable partner to designers and brands, especially during New York Fashion Week, when she's constantly sharing images and insights from the runways (2012)". She adds "the clearest indication of her industry clout resides in the coveted front-row seats she occupies at runway shows during New York Fashion Week. Traditionally reserved for celebrities and industry heavyweights, the seats have opened up in recent years to bloggers regarded as influential taste-makers with a broad reach (2012)". However what is the story behind the glamorous life of a once ordinary consumer Medine? Being an efficient medium from the eyes of fashion industry means being influential to convince and motivate their followers to purchase what is seen in visuals. Higher number of followers means a bigger audience for what is seen in posts. This is the reason that participation of new bloggers are encouraged and as a result efficient bloggers are supported by the industry. Grinberg's opinion about Medine's glamorised life-style after achieving to be an influential blogger sounds very motivating for other fashion interested new media users to participate in blogging, image sharing on social networking sites etc. Affiliation with world-famous designers and brands is a desirable fact for fashion-conscious consumers so s/he is encouraged to create content and provide visibility for these brands with the hope of collaboration or at least interaction with fashion professionals, however only a very small amount of new media users are lucky to be contacted personally by Karl Lagerfeld or Vivienne Westwood.

Utrecht University

Industrial Revolution is introduced as democratising the fashion system in terms of consumption habits, which was actually true, however this impact of Industrial Revolution should have been approached critically. Currently new media technologies are being introduced as emancipatory and participatory -that is also partly true - however due to the aforementioned four main concerns of the industry; participation should be considered as an "extension of culture industries" (167). Industrial Revolution provided opportunity to protest against mainstream and dominant culture, it abolished class differentiation. New media is currently enabling conduction of fashion system by participation in fashion production and creation of the content, however fundamentally these are only transformed versions of existing consumption and reproduction patterns. In addition to four previously mentioned reasons that motivating new media users to participate in creation of content about fashion brands, the fifth one is to change the perception about the exclusive nature of fashion and bring transparency. Fashion shows used to be available only to elite and high-class profiled customers of designers. Currently social media ratability of bloggers made them a stronger institution in the system, so elites are replaced by bloggers who used to be amateur consumers. The reason is to increase the visibility of collections and products in media, thus constructing a transparent and sincere brand image become possible. Although products that are launched in fashion shows are highly expensive for middle-class consumers, there are also co-products, cosmetics, and accessories that can be affordable. Broader product range creates higher broader visibility for brand names and the visibility is achieved by new age fashion leaders as bloggers. "When a designer or a brand invites digital publishers, it says that the publishers represent the brand, their audience represents the brand and the type of content they create represents the brand," said Karen Robinovitz, co-founder and chief creative officer of Digital Brand Architects. Digital publisher in this context is the blogger and participate in the diffusion of these images to increase virtual visibility. By this way high-fashion products are desired by more people. The desires of exclusive products stimulate them to head towards affordable versions as mass-fashion brands or Do-It-Yourself solutions. In conclusion the disguise of transparency to a world of professionals remains professional and elite to middle and lower class fashion consumers. Participation, transparency, emancipation are actually the illusions of colliding fashion and new media discourse.

## The Blonde Salad: A Case Study

To analyse how participant consumer is reproducing the order of fashion system with new media technologies, I focus on The Blonde Salad as a case study. The Blonde Salad is a fashion blog, founded by Italian, Milanese, law school student Chiara Ferragni. It is possible to say that it is one of the most successful self-style blog currently. But what does being successful mean for a fashion blog? What is the purpose of writing a fashion blog and what are the consequences of being a successful fashion blogger? To find an answer for these questions, I am first going to explain what a blog means; I am going to give details and data about The Blonde Salad and Ferragni. Moreover I will attempt to uncover the motivation behind writing a blog and influences of a successful blog in the fashion system.

*Blog* is a contraction of *Web log*; it is an online personal journal which is frequently updated and intended for general public consumption (T. Journal of Youth Studies. 518) and fashion blogs are used as a platform to share styling interests, fashion essays, photos and images of a blogger. Some blogs are named as street-style blogging for example The Sartorialist. Street-style blogs share photos of ordinary or fashion-conscious people from the street who have an eye catching outfit or unique style. Moreover they attend at fashion events such as international fashion weeks, organisation, parties and more. They are the new generation fashion journalists whom decide the agenda of fashion media. Another type of fashion blogging is sharing fashion news, beauty and fashion reviews, new seasons of cosmetic, clothing, shopping, and accessories just as a fashion magazine. These types of blogs function as fashion magazine but in a virtual form, and can be perceived as equal to fashion reporters of magazines, television programmes and newspapers. Third type of fashion blogging is self-style blogging such as The Blonde Salad. Self-style bloggers publish their self-images as photos and videos by naming the brands they wear and sharing personal styling experiences relevant to visuals of the post. Self-style fashion bloggers are the new fashion leaders of the fashion system. They are highly influential on production, diffusion, adoption and consumption of fashion. “This particular pedigree of citizen journalists (bloggers) are proving central to the democratisation of the fashion industry, allowing broader audiences of fashion consumers to engage and interact in a way they never have. It is this interconnectivity that underpins the very concept of participatory culture. Within the industry itself, fashion bloggers are breaking down barriers of the well established hierarchy of professionals, taking centre stage (in this case, front row) alongside fashion’s elite foray of famed editors, designers, supermodels and brand executives” (Emily Burman. Citizen journalism in Fashion Blogsphere. 2012). Therefore blogging is a respected activity in a -new-mediated- fashion system. They are perceived as the most influential participants of the new fashion system that is controlled by new media users.

Utrecht University

The success of The Blonde Salad comes from numbers. It was founded in 2009, with desire to recommend to its followers a personal look every day with great attention to detail, complete with text and captions as Ferragni states ([www.theblondesalad.com/about](http://www.theblondesalad.com/about)). Less than two years after its opening, The Blonde Salad reached 110,000 views daily. Currently it approximately has more than 800.000 unique visitors and 12.000.000 views per month. The blogger Ferragni got biggest breakout street-style star of the year award by New York Magazine. She collaborated with more than forty Italian and International brands including Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent, Louis Vuitton, Mercedes-Benz, Tommy Hilfiger, Mango and Nikon. In addition to the blog, Ferragni has profiles on other social networking and content platforms as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, Instagram, Lookbook, Bloglovin, and Styloola. Number of likes on her Facebook page is 350.000, Twitter followers are 162.000, YouTube Channel subscription is 23.000 and her Instagram followers are more than 1.1 million. The interpretation of these numbers guides us to receive The Blonde Salad as an amateur fashion platform that turns into a very effective medium for the blogger's self-styling experiences and co-working fashion professionals.

The very first personal motivation to start a blog, as Ferragni mentions, is to recommend her fashionable taste to others. Hereby we can apprehend the desire to be a part or the pioneer of an interactive network concerning fashion content. Sharing the corporeal experience with bigger numbers of people on virtual space with cyber communities conceives self-satisfaction and social and psychological wholeness as a commitment to new media technologies. By her blog and other profiles on new media, Ferragni comprises interactive networking with and for people, bloggers and users who share similar taste and interests. As it can also be seen in the image above, buttons of her other profiles are always visible on the left bar. So her supportive profiles as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram are linked to one another. Image III is what you see when you click on *About* page. It is full of names that Ferragni and the blog appeared in, brands, designers, magazines, newspaper, TV shows she collaborated, worked with and sponsored by. All these data and names can be interpreted as the curriculum vitae of Ferragni, which is welcoming more and more brands to be invested by. Only the *About* page with numbers of followers prove how influential she can be in fashion industry. The Blonde Salad is not only collaborated and sponsored by fashion brands but also car brands as Mercedes-Benz, Mini Cooper, Piaggio Vespa, electronics as Nikon, Frends Headphones, life-style magazines, restaurants and hotels. As I also mentioned in the introduction, fashion is not about clothing but also about a way of living and behaving.

The initially amateur but in due course professionalised participation of Ferragni in fashion system becomes important in diffusion, adoption and consumption of fashion. She performs blogging duty as a profession with regular and profoundly written blog posts, high quality photographs, trendy products and linked profiles on

Utrecht University

Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, Lookbook, Bloglovin. A blog on itself certainly is not enough to reach such high numbers of followers so The Blonde Salad is linked to other platforms to broaden the reachability. As all this data proves, is that Ferragni is a medium on her own. Twelve million views a month is twenty times more than monthly circulation of Vogue Turkey for example, so The Blonde Salad as a medium and fashion leader is an attractive investment for brands with regards to the numbers. Additionally to invest for sponsorship or collaboration to The Blonde Salad is much cheaper than half page advertisement on Vogue. By sending free products is faster and more efficient than replacing pricy advertisement images. Therefore the reason that bloggers are conveyed as emancipation in fashion system is not only for consumer but also for brands. They are freed to create self-designed advertisement and public relation channels.

As a matter of fact The Blonde Salad constitute an efficient medium worth to be invested by brands. In the Wikipedia article regarding the blog, demographic of its followers are intentionally mentioned. It says that 30% of the followers are Italian and rest is mainly from U.K., U.S, Brazil and Japan. These details provide data regarding the target market that Ferragni is influential and reachable for potential investors and collaboration. However collaboration with professionals also brings along regulations and binderies. Such high numbers of sponsors ruins the amateur soul of a blog. To share the personalised fashion experience of Ferragni becomes a stage to advertise the dictation of sponsors. If we come back to our discussion of technological imaginaries concerning the fashion system; it is possible to say that the psychological, economic, social gaining of an efficient blogging is highly attractive for amateurs and professionals due to economic opportunities, social visibility and actualising



Image IV



Image V



Image VI

Utrecht University

a recognised self identity. Nonetheless there is the risk of loosing the independent amateur soul of a blog and this is important to continuing being influential and prospering. Blogger Medine mentions in her CNN interview "the reason people find us so relatable is because we ultimately are an extension of people on the outside who want to be on the inside. We receive the luck of the draw." (Medine. 2012) . However as Image IV-V-VI also displays that Ferragni's three days sequential total of Burberry Prorsum outfits worn on New York Fashion Week Fall/Winter 2013/2014, remains at risk to cause a follower to think contrary because the image does not feel different than looking at a full page of a Vogue advertisement. In other words the reason why followers prefer to see images from Ferragni and Medine instead of Vogue, Elle and Cosmopolitan is under the risk of being over-professionalisation. To be able to remain as an influential blogger it is the crucial point to make the balance of being the medium between amateurs and professionals. Once a blog as The Blonde Salad becomes professional then it should be considered as part of fashion professionals not amateurs. However the reason of being a successful blogger originates from the amateur perspective with following reasons:

- Success of creating personalised style
- Capability of reaching an audience who follows this style
- Power to encourage people to participate interactively in production and consumption of fashion by providing hyperlinked sources in their fashion credits, comments and supportive profiles
- Consistency in daily posts and other linked profiles
- Persistence in daily content, visuals, texts, and news
- Transparency for fashion industry.

These are the reasons why they are preferred by both their followers and professionals. Bloggers serve as a significant model to the emancipated and empowered amateur consumer of fashion who becomes professional by the influence of new media technologies. Nevertheless they are also example that make us question to what extent we can be emancipated and empowered. In other words if a consumer is empowered and professionalised by participating in new media, the system involves in her/him to gain strength. So emancipation becomes an illusion for amateurs but it remains as new forms of reproduction of culture industries. This illusion is implicitly monitored in the reference of Nina Cherny below.

"Social media has fundamentally changed the way people shop and discover fashion. Consumers have greater access to brands and expect open, authentic dialogue, we're taking these conversations beyond Facebook and Twitter by giving consumers a visual and tangible way to feel involved. Letting consumers play fashion designer for their favorite brands not only gives consumers a real voice, but also provides brands with a visual, interactive and predictive way to find out what consumers want to buy before anything hits stores."

"Giving", "letting", "to play", words can be interpreted as a reference to power relationship in fashion system. In these words of Cherny it is understood that consumer can either be freed or allowed to participate according to

Utrecht University

decision of designers and brands. A consumer can be as emancipated as the producers allow her/him to be. So, could it be possible to say that a real liberation for fashion consumer and new media user can only be provided within the allowance of the system?

## **CONCLUSION**

As an attempt to answer the question of “what is the role of contemporary, new media using fashion consumer in the fashion system”; fashion and new media phenomena are discussed in the same context since the beginning. To understand why new media can be emancipatory and participatory for the consumer of the fashion system, I explained first of all what fashion actually is unlike the common usage of the term. Fashion is more than a mode of dressing that is prevalent during a particular time or in a particular place as dictionaries define. It is a cultural phenomenon which brings cultural, political, economic, and individual issues into one. Therefore it is produced and consumed by the institutions that have relevant issues concerning it. With regards to its interdisciplinary nature, fashion is investigated by various academic and scientific researches and theories. Considering fashion as a system of institutions is one of these theories that evoked the main question of this research. In order to elaborate the discussion of the research question first of all I clarified the collective nature of fashion depending on its institutions by arguing Kawamura’s fashion system theory. For a better insight about institutions it was necessary to focus on how fashion system proceeds through. With respect to Davis’s stages of fashion production and Kawamura’s additional details into his model; I compared both of their model to emphasise how these stages are transformed in time and reached to more complex process. While doing that I stated that consumer is the absent fact in their discussion. Therefore I was evoked to discuss the role of the consumer and guided to discuss when and how the consumer has become a powerful agent.

Parallel to institutionalisation and industrialisation of the fashion, consumers have also been through certain alterations. While the Industrial Revolution constructed a more democratic, and liberated fashion, consumer began to use it for different purposes than social discrimination but for social involvement, protest against order or differentiation from masses. As examples of the feminist move, the Punks and jeans; consumption of goods and behaviours became a way to actualise the self. Usage of clothing other than body-covering empowered the consumer in the system. To be able to argue utilisation of fashion by the consumer, Barnard’s and Crane’s examples constitute important evident. They highlighted how active and liberated the consumer has become in the system. In addition to this, Crane’s division of how fashion is used before and after the Industrial Revolution was an important milestone to elaborate the discussion with the introduction of a new revolutionary fact as new

Utrecht University

media technologies. Such that, the results of the Industrial Revolution as reachability, decreasing prices, democratic interpretations and utilisations of goods and manners guided how to argue the role of new media. On the other hand critical approaches to consumerism as *Consumption* (1993) and *The Century of the Self* (2002) remark that revolutionary changes can not be as revolutionary as they are alleged. Therefore it was necessary to have a critical approach to prospective revolution of new media.

The comparison of the pre and post Industrial Revolution circumstances helped to map arguments about liberation that can be provided by new media technologies. For this reason how Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant and Kelly position old media audience and new media users directed the argument about new media using, emancipated fashion consumer. Firstly I explained the characteristics of new media and what meanings, expectations and discourse are attributed to them. Next, I emphasised thirteen significant influences of new media technologies over the fashion system. The statements of old media journalists and new media bloggers about social media and fashion relevances stressed that new media have a positive impact to urge consumer to participate in the system. Such as non-profit organisations can reach consumer to raise their awareness and foster them to act in their protests against brands, on the other hand designers personally contact with consumer who has potential to set new trends and invite to participate, feedback coming from the new media user can be powerful enough to give a direction to new collections of brands and designers. These are important changes that have been experienced in the fashion system by the influence of new media technologies. Consequently to examine the relevance of the fashion system, consumerism and new media, The Blonde Salad was exemplified as a case study. The questions as why a blog is considered as succesfull, how as fashion blog become an attractive investment element for designers and brands, how an amateur fashion inquisitive become a professional by the aid of new media were aimed to be answered. Finally according to the accumulation of all these references, comparison, discussions, examples, and investigations I reached an end result, that the emancipation and participation that is provided by new media is limited to the allowance of the system such as consumerism as a result of the Industrial Revolution provided.

It is indisputable that new media provides new platforms for users and consumers to participate, interact, create content and more. They reformed passive mass media audiences and outsider middle-class fashion consumers. Elite audience of high-fashion is liberated to broader and diversified groups. High-fashion and mass-fashion have become visible to everyone, everywhere. Nevertheless every advanced interaction with the system makes consumers and users part of it as in the example of Industrial Revolution and new media technologies. Being involved into production assuming to be empowered also means reproducing its rules. Bloggers therefore are an

Utrecht University

important group to analyse the structure of the system in terms of consumption, production, participation and emancipation dynamics. On the first hand it seems like they e(lectronically)-democratised the exclusive fashion world by representing ordinary people and their tastes, desires and wishes nonetheless they become a part of this exclusive environment and begin to practice its rules by going far from their fellows.

We do not know yet if bloggers as an institution of the fashion system is an overestimated group of young street-stylers or if they will be reliable fashion media and journalists in time and will be permanent actors in the system. Blogger revolution can be just an illusion of the system that is served to assure us that we are participating in the system or that they can be the real revolutionaries of our new media generation. I believe that in time we, the consumers and the users, will be able to observe if bloggers as avant-gardes will disappear from the first rows of fashion shows or they will remain permanent and bring along more fellows to the fashion system. Thereby, in future we might be able to conclude this discussion over fashion systems and media technologies or we might come up with new discussions by the involvement of new players to the game.

# **LITERATURE**

## **Books**

- Appadurai, A. *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*. First Edition. University of Minnesota Press. 1996.
- Arbuckle, J. & Sterlacci, J. *Historical Dictionary of the Fashion Industry (Historical Dictionaries of Professions and Industries)*. First Edition. Scarecrow Press. 2007.
- Arnold, R. *Fashion A Very Short Introduction*. First Edition. Oxford University Press. 2009.
- Barnard, Malcolm. *Fashion As Communication*. Second Edition. Routledge. 2002.
- Barthes, R. *The Language of Fashion*. Bloomsbury Academic. 2006.
- Bocock, R. *Consumption: Key Ideas*. Routledge. 1993.
- Crane, D. *Fashion and Its Social Agenda*. University of Chicago Press. 2001.
- Davis, F. *Fashion Culture and Identity*. The University of Chicago Press. London. 1992.
- Diehl, Mary E. *How to Produce a Fashion Show*. Fairchild Publications Inc. New York. 1976.
- Eisenstadt, S.N. *Social Institutions: The Concept*. International Encyclopaedia. 1968.
- Flory, P. *The construction of new digital media*. New Media and Society 1.1: 33–38. 1999.
- Goffman, E. *Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. First Edition. Anchor. 1959.
- Hebdige, D. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. Routledge. 1979.
- Hill, Daniel D. *As Seen in Vogue: A Century of American Fashion in Advertising*. Texas Tech University Press. Lubbock, Texas. 2004.
- Jenkins, H. *Interactive Audiences? The 'Collective Intelligence' Of Media Fans*. 2002.
- Kawamura, Y. *Fashionology: An Introduction to Fashion Studies*. First Edition. Bloomsbury Academic. 2005.
- Lister, M; Dovey, J; Giddings, S; Grant, I; & Kelly, K. *New Media; A Critical Introduction*. Second Edition. Routledge. New York. 2009.

Utrecht University

- McKenzie, J. *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*. First Edition. Routledge. 2001.
- "Fashion". *New Oxford American Dictionary*. Oxford University. 2010.
- Pine, J. & Gilmore, J. *Experience Economy*. Updated Edition. Harvard Business Review Press. 2011.
- Prensky, M. *Digital Games Based Learning*. New York. McGraw-Hill. 2001.
- Roach, Mary E & Musa, Kathleen E. *New Perspectives on the History of Western Dress; A Handbook*. NutriGuides Inc. 1980.
- Rocamora, A. *Fashioning The City: Paris, Fashion and the Media*. I.B. Tauris. 2009.
- Rouse, F. *Understanding Fashion*. BSP Professional Books. Oxford. 1989.
- Shakespeare, W. *As You Like It*. 1623.
- Schäfer, Mirko T. *Bastard Culture! How User Participation Transforms Cultural Production*. Amsterdam University Press. Amsterdam. 2011.
- Tierney, T. *Tudor and Elizabethan Fashions*. Dover Publications. New York. 2000.
- Thompson, Craig J. & Haytko Diana L. *Speaking of Fashion: Consumers' Uses of Fashion Discourses and the Appropriation of Countervailing Cultural Meanings*. Journal of Consumer Research, Inc. Vol. 24. June, 1997.
- Turim, M. *Gentlemen Consume Blondes Pp. 369-78 in Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, Vol.2. ed. Bill Nichols. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1985.
- Woolf, V. *Orlando (Annotated)*: A Biography. Mariner Books. 2006.

## Articles

- Cervetti, N. *In the Breeches, Petticoats, and Pleasures of "Orlando"*. Journal of Modern Literature XX 2. Winter, 1996.
- Chittenden, T. *Digital dressing up: modelling female teen identity in the discursive spaces of the fashion blogosphere*. Journal of Youth Studies. 13:4 505-520. 2010.
- Gençtürk-Hızal, Senem. *Fashion as a Way of Communication: Boundaries of "Modus"*. İletişim Arastırmaları. 2003.

Utrecht University

- Hills, M. *Participatory Culture: Mobility, Interactivity and Identity, Case Study: Social Networking and Self Identity*. Digital Cultures Understanding New Media Ed: Creeber, G. & Royston, M. Open University Press. New York. 2009
- Hovey, J. *Kissing a Negress in the Dark: Englishness as a Masquerade in Woolf's Orlando*.
- Sükan, E. *Modanın Sokak Çocukları*. Hürriyet Pazar. February 24. 2013.

## Movies

- *The Century of the Self*. Dir. Adam Curtis. BBC. 2002.
- *Orlando*. Dir; Sally Potter. Perf; Tilda Swinton, Billy Zane, Quentin Crisp. Sony Picture Classics. 1992.

## Online

- *Fashion*. Britannica Online Encyclopaedia. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/202258/fashion>. Access Date: November, 2013.
- Clark, S. Citizen bloggers taking the fashion world by storm. Reportage Online. April 2011. <http://www.reportageonline.com/2011/04/citizen-bloggers-taking-the-fashion-world-by-storm/>. Access Date: July, 2013.
- Cochrane, L. The Guardian. *How Fashion Bloggers Are Cashing in*. October, 2012. <http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/fashion-blog/2012/oct/29/fashion-bloggers-cashing-in>. Access Date: 2013.
- Denomme, J. *The Rise and Influence of the Fashion Blogger*. June, 2013. Fashion Notes. <http://www.fashionnotes.com/content/2012/06/the-rise-and-influence-of-the-fashion-blogger/#yALhgs6jOrrmtz3W.99>. Access Date: July, 2013.
- Greenpeace *Detox Our Future*. <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/campaigns/toxics/detox/>. Acccess Date: June, 2013.

Utrecht University

- Grinberg, E. *Social Media Bring Fashion to the Masses*. September, 2013. Edition CNN. <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/09/09/living/fashion-week-social-media-technology/index.html>. Access Date: July, 2013.
- The Blonde Salad. <http://www.theblondesalad.com/about>. Access Date: June, 2013.
- Etsy. <http://www.etsy.com/>. Access Date: July, 2013.
- The Blonde Salad Facebook Page. [https://www.facebook.com/theblondesalad?ref=br\\_tf/](https://www.facebook.com/theblondesalad?ref=br_tf/). Acccess Date: July, 2013.
- Fashiolista. <http://www.fashiolista.com/>. Access Date: July, 2013.
- Chiara Ferragni Instagram Profile. <http://instagram.com/chiaraferragni>. Access Date: July, 2013.
- I Spy DIY. <http://www.ispydiy.com/>. Access Date: June, 2013.
- Le-21eme. <http://le-21eme.com/>. Access Date: July, 2013.
- Chiara Ferragni LookBook Profile. <http://lookbook.nu/chiaraferragni>. Access Date: July, 2013.
- Nadjm, M. *Fashion's Love of Social Media*. Huffington Post. June, 2013. [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/maz-nadjm/fashions-love-of-social-media\\_b\\_3394143.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/maz-nadjm/fashions-love-of-social-media_b_3394143.html). Access Date: July, 2013.
- Pinterest. <https://pinterest.com/>. Access Date: July, 2013.
- P.S. I Made This. <http://psimadethis.com/>. Access Date: June, 2013.
- The Sartorialist. <http://www.thesartorialist.com>. Access Date: July, 2013.
- Shorty Industry Awards. *Best Use of Social Media for Fashion*. [http://industry.shortyawards.com/category/5th\\_annual/fashion](http://industry.shortyawards.com/category/5th_annual/fashion). Access Date: July, 2013
- Signature 9. <http://www.signature9.com/style-99>. Access Date: May, 2013.
- Styloola. <http://www.styloola.com/>. Access Date: July, 2013.
- Chiara Ferragni Twitter Profile. <https://twitter.com/ChiaraFerragni>. Access Date: July, 2013.
- Tumblr. <http://www.tumblr.com/>. Access Date: July, 2013.

Utrecht University

- The Blonde Salad Youtube Page. <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheBlondeSalad>. Access Date: July, 2013.

## Images

- Image 0: Design History. Vivienne Westwood. Design History 2013. <http://designhistory2013.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/vivienne-westwood.jpg>. Access Date: August, 2013.
- Image I: Vanderzeil, G. *DIY Balenciaga Inspired Crop Top*. A Pair and A Spare. Australia. 2013. <http://apairandasparediy.com/2013/07/diy-balenciaga-inspired-crop-top.html>. Access Date: August, 2013.
- Image II: Greenpeace. *Toxic Thread: The Big Fashion Stitch-Up*. Greenpeace. November, 2012. <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/publications/Campaign-reports/Toxics-reports/Big-Fashion-Stitch-Up/>. Access Date: August, 2013
- Image III: Kaner, G. *The Blonde Salad About Page Screen Shot*. 2013.
- Image IV: Pozzoli, R. New York Fashion Week: Day. The Blonde Salad. New York. 2013. <http://www.theblondesalad.com/2013/02/new-york-fashionweek-day-9.html>. Access Date: August, 2013
- Image V: Pozzoli, R. *New York Fashion Week: Day 7*. The Blonde Salad. New York. 2013. <http://www.theblondesalad.com/2013/02/new-york-fashionweek-day-7-2.html>. Access Date: August, 2013.
- Image VI: Pozzoli, R. *Burberry Prorsum Show*. The Blonde Salad. New York. 2013. <http://www.theblondesalad.com/2013/02/burberry-prorsum-show.html>. Access Date: August, 2013