

## Understanding the Journalistic Perspective Regarding the Role of Media in Transforming Dressing Styles of Women in Pakistan

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### Abstract

*This study attempts to understand the journalistic perspective regarding the role of media in transforming dressing styles of women in Pakistan. Fashion is not only, one of the largest industries of the world but it is an integral and essential part of our life. It is assumed that media has the power to transform and replace cultural norms and values of a society. However, fashion journalists' are considered arbitrators of taste as they tell people about the latest fashion and prompt general public that how to carry or place new trends. They not only highlight but also promote the fashion a step ahead with the transforming cultural dimension of the society. The present study identified the factors that leads to transformation in terms of culture. Theoretical framework of the present research was determined by the cultural transformation theory. To probe the perspective and approaches of fashion journalists, the current research employed In-depth-interview as research method. The proportionate sample of 17 (N=17) fashion journalists (both males and females) were chosen through purposive sampling procedure. The measures for collecting data comprehended a face sheet including demographic details and interview protocol was also developed. The finding revealed that fashion journalists has a significant role to transform dressing styles of women in Pakistan and they hold the ability to reshape and reshape the cultural values of a society.*

**Keywords:** Fashion Journalism, Photographs, Cultural Transformation, Pakistani Newspapers, Fashion Journalists, Clothing.

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### Introduction

Fashion is a resilient force that always play a substantial role in the growth of human society (Okonkwo, 2016, p.1), whereas Cultural transformation is a practice of cultural change that produces a consistent form of change in overall culture. (Briody& Meerwarth, 2016). Fashion journalism is one kind of journalism that has been transformed by cultural studies as it draws attention to imperative themes and overlooked underestimated by contemporary journalism studies. It comprises critical themes such as modernism, gender and the body, consumerism, the city, language, and personality. By placing fashion journalism within a cultural context, themes, which were usually overlooked, become obvious (Wylie, 2012). Culture can be defined as the strength of every civilization, so that no one can indifference the status of culture in a society (Bakar & Connaughton, 2009).

An individual's cultural views have a thoughtful stimulus on his or her approach towards life. It is the eventual context of societal directive, according to the social conception of culture, where public control their norms and values (Baran, 2014). The base of every society lays upon culture. Without culture, no one can live peaceably. The culture of a civilization provides the basis for the lives of its people. (Cohen, 2009).

Culture cannot be conceived without the media and fashion media is a way of representing and accessing the information and understanding different cultures (Tolic, 2011). Fashion journalism and journalists have continually played a vital role in the process of modernization and the establishment of modernity and transformation. Media contents, as a practice of journalism and cultural product, offer a textual escort to what is thrilling and fresh in terms of 'what is in fashion' (cloths, accessories, language, people, and places) (Jinna, 2006).

Fashion essentially involves change, defined as a succession of short-term trends or fads (Easey, 2009) whereas fashion journalists write about the textile industry, news stories, feature articles, reviews, analyses, business reports, consumer reports. (Flamiano, 2017). Fashion coverage is a explicit form of journalism and different from news journalism (König, 2006, p.209).

Fashion is a multifaceted phenomenon that can be studied in a swarm of ways and dressing is an integral part of it. (Edwards, 2010). Dress refers to more than just dresses however it does not have the latitude of fashion. Its prime accent is upon dressing yet it includes the total look of an individual or their ample getup. (Edwards, 2010, p 3, 5). In our modern world fashion is identical with style, dress, beautification, embellishment, and clothing. (Seymour, 2008, p.12). The terms "dress" and "costume" have long been used to discuss clothing and embellishment in cultural, historical, and material terms. "Costume" also often indicates special occasion or theatrical uses of clothing and accessories, while "dress" is used for everyday wear that signifies social status, occupation, religious association, etc. (King & Clement, 2012).

Culture is the revelatory and managing apparatus of society, it is the method through which individuals comprehend themselves, their sphere and the proper collaboration with each other and their surroundings (Danforth, 2008). The actual impression of cultural transformation through fashion contents of media suggests that the contemporary culture is substantially changed from historical view of the culture (Massey, 2000).

However, Fashion is demarcated by the notion of change. Its vibrant nature, its constant transformation, disparity, novelty deceits in the horde of constructions ( from fashion artefact to image and communication) on which it is grounded and which are observing on the marketplace at an cumulative speed. The amount of transformation, needed to arise once a time, is at that time condensed to an ample squatter span, even moderating into a limitless blend of styles and trends. The sequence of gradually speedy initiation of novel goods adjusts far quicker. Manufacturing speed and a constant edition to the necessities of the marketplace (Popescu, 2013).

Fashion is an artefact of the time and should be observed inside a wider cultural perspective for instance designers cultural and social background, social morals and approaches, industrial inventions, and the economic and dogmatic circumstances (English, 2009). Moreover, fashion journalism deliver not only "a display window for fashion design" however somewhat "a pillar of support" for the fashion industry. Fashion editors, reporters, writers, and photographers. They are diligently linked with the fashion industry other journalistic beats (McRobie 2008). Fashion photographs are hardly examined by researchers in the arenas of cultural or journalism studies even though it has progressively converted a topic for examination in fashion studies (Le Masurier, 2020, p.2).

While talking about culture Hodgetts (2006) stated that culture is a set of learned information that we use to understand practices and create social conduct. This learnt knowledge promote different values, generates attitude and stimulus behaviour. Shah & Amjad (2011) describes culture as a consequence of a relationship

among people with the passage of time that can be their particular distinctive culture. While Pakistan is a multi-cultural country that embraces various sub cultures.

Pakistani culture comprises of language and literature, religion, music, customs and traditions, art and architecture, clothing and ornaments, minorities, major indigenous groups, major social institutions, like family, marriage, carnivals, festivals and food. (National Curriculum for Pakistan Culture, 2011) .Pakistan's culture has the association with Western culture hereditary by the state from the region's colonial history; and by the different cultures of numerous minority groups be vested in Pakistan. Pakistan's culture is naturally diverse and not gigantic (Paracha,2015).

The evolving face of fashion, illustrations and restaurant/ cafe business, and youth's increasing preference and attention towards them has directed to rise of new lifestyle trends and shapes among Pakistani youth. Their spending main concern are skewed concerning dining out and on consuming fashionable products (Zafar, 2018).

The study aims to explore the journalistic perspective and the role media in shaping, reshaping and deshaping cultural values in terms of dressing of women in Pakistan. The present research is also an attempt to identify the factors that leads to transform dressing style of women in Pakistan.

### **Significance of the Study**

Present research attempts to explore the journalistic perspective regarding role of media in transforming dressing styles of women in Pakistan. The study also attempts to identify the factors that leads to transform cultural values in terms of dressing.

### **Research Questions**

RQ 1. What styles of dressing do fashion journalists cover?

RQ 2. How fashion journalists play role in shaping, reshaping and de-shaping trends?

RQ 3. What are the factors that lead to transformation in terms of culture?

### **Literature Review**

The literature review for the present study has given a deep insight about the topic. Yazdanparast, Naderi, Spears, & Fabrize ( 2018) investigated the use of media, in cultural transformation ventures to deteriorate cultures and interchange them with a fashioned pseudo-culture. Wiest (2016) presented that Mass media are noteworthy transmitters of cultural communications and perform a dominant role in determining culture, so far the process is multifaceted. There is excessive variation in what communications are recognized by diverse patrons, how they are understood, and how they eventually are working. Additionally, cultures that comprise inconsistent messages are more likely to unintentionally endorse different trails to traditionally appreciated objective.

Shah & Amjad (2011) compared the cultural aspects of the four provinces of Pakistan i.e. Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan with national culture of Pakistan. They concluded that the cultural diversity exists among different provinces of Pakistan, whereas Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) holding the utmost unique culture. Therefore the national culture remains a real representative of the country.

Tolic (2011) explained that culture and media has powerful relationship with each other He agrees that communicative associations, critical approach towards the quicker expansion of print media for the fortification of culture is essential. Whereas, Haiqing (2009) examined the role of media in China's cultural transformation in the initial ages of the 21st century. As compared with the outmoded interpretation which understands the Chinese media as nothing other than an instrument of communist propaganda, it proves that

the media is essential to China's varying culture in the era of globalization. Qadeer (2006) stated both the medium and the message are rising new prospects, stimulating ancient philosophies, and straightening cultural values. The social influence of communication and media has trickled profound into social and cultural institutes. Leonard, Scotter, & Pakdil (2009) explored that communication processes occur in precise cultural contexts, with exclusive normative beliefs, expectations, and communal symbols. Culture influences what people communicate, to whom they communicate, and how they communicate?

Kobos (2004) proposed the inferences of globalization grasp for cultural transformation in Africa and South Africa? The analysis of the effects, particularly in terms of cultural transformation, of the existing powerful practice of globalization. Cultural transformation in Africa is a result of globalization.

Flamiano (2017) argues that fashion journalism includes magazines devoted to fashion, write ups in newspapers, women's "service magazines," Sunday editions, moreover fashion blogs and other online platforms. (p.374). Twigg (2017) coined the role of women's magazines in the cooperation of future life characteristics, concentrating on the management of fashion and clothing. It suggested the examination in discussions regarding changing nature of future years with the occurrence of third Age identities, and the role of consumption in these. Focus was on the management of fashion and age, it analyses four UK magazines: three magazines were selected to signify the older market (*Woman & Home, Saga, Yours*), and one to signify conventional fashion (*Vogue*).

Lamb (2016) visually analyzed in reference to cultural impact. Six American Vogue cover pages that comprised men to study gender depiction. There were little stages to put pictures of culture varying occasions, high profile celebrity weddings, movie premiers, or celebratory photographs of American athletes. Findings revealed that American Vogue depicted both male and female together on the cover pages only six separate times over American Vogue's history.

Ven de Peer (2014) concluded that fortification of the commercial heart of fashionable dress as one of the crucial concerns for fashion journalists in protecting the restrictions of past and present by the rhetorical approach of mixing fashion words (neoteric discourse) and chronological discourse. Popescu (2013) stated that fashion journalism can only be considered within a context that offers a direct link to the analysis of fashion design in all its exertion. The position occupations that assist to sustenance the steadiness and competence of communication within the image campaigns that is considered as a domineering phase in the fashion creation and have advanced instantaneously have to be addressed likewise.

Brennen (2010) offers a brief discussion of the historical context surrounding recent discussions of photography and focuses on the role of photojournalism in contemporary society. As such, it addresses the introduction of photography and its perceived ability to provide authentic documentation of "reality" and details the development of photojournalism during the twentieth century.

Janssen (2006) indicated that the 'aesthetic mobility' of fashion in leading media organizations has been modest as compared to that of other cultural procedures. Journalistic courtesy to fashion is found to differ significantly amongst France, Germany and The Netherlands and through time, in accordance with the size, institutional development and international place of the designer fashion industry in each country and the globalization of the designer fashion industry. Sultana (2002) explained the fashion contents of The News and The Nation in cultural context and concluded that newspapers fashion pages has a great role in changing cultural values of a society. Pakistani print media has a drastic role in moulding cultural values through its contents.

Theoretical framework of the present research is determined by the cultural transformation theory.



## **Cultural Transformation Theory**

Eisler (2003) determined that cultures are going through a continuous change. The concern is whether the change is surface change within the often anonymous assumptions of a domination system or transformative change that happens at a systems level. Our time of enormous displacements is an occasion for transformative change: change that will upkeep a partnership system. Wilber (1996) explained the four quadrants are related in the following way. When individuals change their morals and beliefs (top left quadrant), their behaviours change (top right). When adequate numbers of people change their values, beliefs and behaviours, then a change in the collective values and beliefs occurs (bottom left). This results in a change in the behaviours of the entire group (bottom right).

This theory suggests that cultural transformation occurs, the whole- system has to change and individual and collective presentation influence cultural transformation. However, this theory is relevant to the current study to understand the Pakistani fashion journalism in context of cultural transformation. In reference to fashion journalism and cultural transformation, media is considered a trend setter. It slowly and steadily transform the culture of a particular place by depicting new trends and styles of dressing (clothing) and ornaments. However, fashion journalists play key mediator and moderator role in this regard, they not only continuously stay in touch with fashion industry but they also inform people about the latest trends and get feedbacks. They are the key players who play.

It is evident from the literature that media play a pivotal role in promoting, changing, modernizing and transforming cultural and social values and norms of a society.

## **Research Method**

Current research is exploratory in nature and employed *In-depth-interview* as method. Semi structured format was followed and interview guide was prepared. The *population* of the study comprised of journalists covering fashion in various organizations of Pakistan. The proportionate sample of seventeen (N=17) fashion journalists (both males and females) was chosen through *purposive sampling* procedure. As Tongco (2007) explicated that the purposive sampling procedure is a form of non-probability sampling that effectively works when one wants to analyse about a cultural sphere with erudite experts' with inside. The *inclusion criteria* of the subjects were fashion reporters, writers, editors and photographers working in different media organizations of Pakistan.

## **Measures and Procedures**

For making variables operational, and determining the relationships of different concepts, data was collected through face sheet including demographic details. An interview protocol was developed to get complete information regarding the research topic. Furthermore, an informed consent Performa was designed to formally introduce the issue and to get consent of the participants. Respondents were accessed and ensured about confidentiality of information. The average time for the interview was 50- 90 minutes. The interview was managed by one to one. An interview protocol was developed which included demographic details, identification of the factors leading to changing trends of dressing in Pakistan.

## **Results**

Fashion journalists were interviewed and categories were developed inductively and themes were derived (Table 1). It is evident from the findings that fashion contents of Pakistani media mostly depict traditional, modern and fusion of east and west in terms of women dressing. Traditional dressing is considered as wedding wears, party wears, casual wears that includes shalwar kameez gharara, lehanga, Angrakha etc that covers full body. Whereas, Modern dressing refers to flowy gowns, medium or short length shirts of modern cuts, embroidered tops and dupattas in trendy forms. Moreover, fusion of eastern and westerns

dressings styles get more attention of the fashion and life style journalist that they use to pinpoint through fashion writings and with pictorial display.

Table 1: Inductively Developed Thematic Categories regarding Depiction of Women Clothing/ Dressing Styles in Media

Category	Themes	Key Terms
<b>Dressing Styles</b>	Traditional	Wedding wear, party wear, casual including Shalwar Kameez and Dupatta(loose trousers and shirt), Gharara, Lehanga, Angrakha, choridar
	Modern	Flowy gowns, medium or short length shirts, trendy cigarette trousers, chick ice cream pastels, statement dupattas, embroidered denim, tops etc.
	Fusion of east and west	Sleeveless shirts, skirts with kurta and tea shirts, footless tights, nude and bright colors, off the shoulder and strapless dress.

Further findings demonstrate that there are certain factors that has been playing key role in transforming cultural values in terms of women clothing/ dressing in Pakistan. Journalists' perception shows that fashion contents of print, electronic and digital media always try to keep theirs readers and viewers up to date with coverage of national and international fashion shows. Latest fashion trends, designers and textiles collections get snootier space in media. Along with media socio-cultural freedom of Pakistani women especially elite class allow them to follow the latest trends presented by media. The women in Pakistan are more educated and economically sound then before, their liberal attitudes are also an imperative factor that make them bold in their choices. Moreover, flexible political environment has also created and enormous impact to adopt western dressing style. On the other hand, globalization has also played a drastic role to transform the dressing style of Pakistani women. Rapid increase in fashion industry and competition between national in internal brands is also a fundamental reason of transformation in dressing styles. Celebration of national and international days has also been celebrated with true latter and spirt and the commercial policies of media houses are the crucial aspect that give them more coverage than usual.

Table 2: Inductively Developed Thematic Categories to identify the Factors Leading towards Transformation in Dressing Styles of Women.

Category	Themes	Key Terms
<b>Factors leading towards transformation in dressing</b>	Media	Pin point latest trends though fashion writings and pictorial display. Up-to-date reporting of fashion shows, designers and textiles latest collections, review of national and international fashion, Commercialization.
	Mediating role of fashion journalists	Up-to-date reporting of fashion shows, draw attention of the readers towards latest designs and styles, unique and creative writing style, value added pictorial display, review of national and international fashion collections.
	Socio- Cultural freedom	Liberal attitudes, economic independence, education, flexible political environment, chic, trendy and graceful dressing.
	Western Influence	Globalization, rapid increase of fashion industry, competition with international brands, Hollywood influence, celebration of national and international days.

## **Discussion and Analysis**

Our appearance is significantly pretentious by the way we dress up. It is said that modern dressing make women feel dignified as they know that they are representing a modern picture of themselves. On the other hand it is a constant believe that traditional clothing signify the culture of a region and fusion of other cultures especially western culture is causing transformation in the actual clothing style of Pakistani women.

Present study was designed to understand the journalistic perceptions regarding the role of media in transforming dressing styles of women in Pakistan. Fashion journalists' are considered arbiters of taste and tell people, what they should want to buy (Janssen, 2016). They are the key players who prompt the general public that what to carry and how to carry different trends. They draw an innovative picture of traditional, modern and fusion of east and west in terms of women dressing. Wedding wears, party wears, casual wears that includes shalwar kameez and Dupatta, gharara, lehanga, Angrakha gets sound coverage in media. Whereas, due to commercial media polices bound the fashion journalists to promote western dressing among their viewers and readers like sleeveless shirts, gowns in replacement of dopatas, kurta with jeans etc. Ven de Peer (2014) coined that fortification of the commercial heart of fashionable dress as one of the crucial concerns for fashion journalists in protecting the restrictions of past and present by the rhetorical approach of mixing fashion words.

Further findings revealed that there are certain factors that has been playing key role in transforming cultural values in terms of women clothing/ dressing in Pakistan. Commercial media polices and mediating role of fashion journalists play pivotal role to give massive space to national and international fashion shows. Latest fashion trends, designers and textiles collections get huge coverage in media. They keep their readers up to date with their unique and artistic writing styles.

In journalistic viewpoint socio-cultural freedom of Pakistani women especially elite class allow them to follow the latest trends presented by media. The women in Pakistan are more educated and economically sound then before, their liberal and substantial attitudes are also an imperative factor that make them bold in their choices. Moreover, flexible political environment and no specific government policies regarding fashion journalism in Pakistan also allow journalists to keep their readers and viewers familiar with western cultural and life style that ultimately leads to cultural transformation. Fashion essentially involves change, defined as a succession of short-term trends or fads (Easey, 2009).

On the other hand, globalization also inspires the journalists. Rapid increase in fashion industry and competition between national in international brands, Celebration of national and international days and the commercial policies of media houses are the crucial aspect that get them more coverage than usual.

## **Conclusion**

Pakistani society and culture has become more globalized, up-to-date and offers planetary for resourceful thinking, writing and pictorial display, which has stemmed in more inventive and artistically motivated fashion journalists to come forward. Pakistani young women has been accepting of modern and profuse fashion content regarding clothing. Moreover, the commercial policies of media houses are a major reason to show the transformation dressing trends of Pakistani women as media as a fourth pillar of society holds a great impact through its opinion writings and pictorial display. On the other hand globalization and competition among textile industry and fashion designers also leads to transformation. This transformation effects the individuals through media that ultimately reshapes and reshapes the cultural values of a society as a whole.

Further research should focus upon the comparative analysis of perspective of national and international fashion journalist, to see the more hidden factors behind the phenomena.

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