



Body Aesthetic of Fashioning Icon and Fashion Icon in Fashion Presentation

Elda Leung, Jin Lam* and Joe Au*Institute of Textiles & Clothing, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong*

***Corresponding author:** Jin Lam, Assistant Professor, Institute of Textiles & Clothing, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, HungHom, Hong Kong.

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Abstract

Fashion has been acted as different roles in past centuries. Fashion is not only a product, but also a trend, culture and art. Besides, concept of art in fashion is related to the aesthetic of inspirations and design, and presentation method is one of the most important aspects affecting its fashion aesthetic. The simplest and best way to present fashion or clothing is to dress them. In recent years, fashion presentation is no longer limited to the presentation of typical models, but also by fashioning icon and fashion icon, and all of them are able to create different styles of fashion aesthetic. Fashion aesthetic can be affected by different elements, and body shape is one of the most influential elements as the main purpose of clothing is designed for human body. The aim of this study is to investigate the relationships of fashioning icon and fashion icon to body aesthetic in fashion presentation. The specific objectives are to: (i) discover the critical elements of fashioning icon and fashion icon, (ii) analyse the relationship between body shape and fashion aesthetic in fashion presentation, (iii) study the fashion presentation of non-typical sized models and celebrities, and (iv) explore the demand of non-typical sized models or presenters in fashion presentation. A qualitative research method was adopted and a questionnaire survey with open-ended questions was chosen as a means to collect respondents' views on the body shapes of fashioning icon and fashion icon on fashion aesthetic. The study will be resulted in understanding the relationships of fashioning icon, fashion icon, and body aesthetic in fashion.

Keywords: Body aesthetic; Fashioning icon; Fashion icon; Fashion presentation

Introduction

In the ancient century, fashion was only considered as clothing which was only one of human needs in daily life such as, protecting the human bodies, and representing the forms and diversities of religions and their social and cultural contexts. "Clothing... helps identify people's personal attributes, social affiliations, cultural values, and place in history" [1]. In recent centuries, the fashion concept is developed in modern society; clothing is not just a need and becomes a trend [2]. Fashion industry performs the most attractive view of clothing to ingratiate consumer culture through fashion presentation. The influence of raising consumer culture in fashion is not only in body-related products, but also the presentation method. "Clothes mean nothing until someone lives in them" [3] and "on the fashion runway, models sell the clothes and play to the cameras to sell themselves" [4]. The modelling industry is always due with body aesthetic through visual presentation in the fashion field.

In the twenty-first century, the professional models – fashioning icons, are not the only representatives in displaying fashion, but the celebrities – fashion icons, such as actors, singers and television presenters become another dominant force of presenting fashion by fashion brands and designers. Body aesthetic in fashion has been expanded but not limited to a typical body shape, and different body shapes of celebrities have been made huge influences on promoting fashion brands and products. On the other hand, some fashion influencers such as blogger, You tuber and Instagrammer also presents their own ideal fashion concepts through individual social media platforms. The relationship between fashion and body aesthetic through fashion presentation has been influencing each other to a great extent.

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Relationships between Fashion, Body and Aesthetic

Aesthetic of fashion and body have been widely discussed in fashion literature, such as the development of dress [5], the dressing aesthetic [6], the body aesthetic [7], or related to the aesthetic labour industry [8]. Most studies mainly focus on either fashion aesthetic or body aesthetic, but studies on both areas are relatively less covered. When we discuss aesthetic of fashion, body is indispensable. "Attention to dress is inseparable from attention to the body" [9]. Fashion and body have a parallel development. History of body aesthetic in fashion is a blueprint of fashion future. For example, corset was a popular item in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and "the external bodice corset in its many forms also continually resurfaced throughout the nineties, just as it had in the 1970s and 1980s" [5]. Therefore, it is important to understand the relationship between fashion and body, also the historical development of fashion attitude in body aesthetic. The iconic fashion people present clothing through their body, and they present the aesthetic of fashion and body shape created by the designer, stylist or owns self at the same time.

Fashion is defined as "a bodily adornment" [9]. "Unclothed body in particular have been traditionally regarded as lacking and unfinished entities" [2]. Fashion and body definitely have a close relationship [10]. Aesthetic is "a general theory of sensory knowledge" [11], and a "shaped feeling and sensitive perception" [1]. It is no doubt that purpose of being a body adornment is a sensory experience in decorating the body in resulted of a beautiful body. Clothing is associated with different design elements, such as colour, shape, line, pattern and texture, the body is linked with silhouette, form, and shape. "The dressed person is a gestalt that includes the body, all direct modifications of the body itself" [5].

Body aesthetic is a relationship between clothing and body and they mutually influence each other. Our bodies are the aspects of ourselves which we present to the world, and clothing is an artificial modification of that presentation process, and is used to change the visual appearance of body shape [12]. It is because our body is part of clothing and the appearance of human is arranged by the interaction of clothing and body of wearer [1]. For example, without shoulders and collarbones, the complete look of an off-shoulder silhouette cannot be seen. Thus, body is the only way to present the aesthetic of clothing and clothing is one of the simple ways to beautify the body. Therefore, body and clothes have an indivisible relationship in fashion aesthetic. "Garments required conveying an appearance of shape for aesthetic" [13].

Fashioning Icon

Fashion changes rapidly and fashion trends are the guideline what we dress for different periods. Fashion designers promote

a particular style or item of clothing in a certain period which determines the dress of people. Some designers have muse to inspire their designs. For example, muse of Paul Poiret (1879-1944) was his wife Denise Boulet. Normally, the muse becomes the image in fashion collection or brand, sometimes as well as an icon. Apart from the muse as the inspiration and icon, in order to promote the brand and collection, fashion designers also choose other people to wear their clothes. Those who are chosen dressed in the particular style or item of clothing that designed and sponsored by fashion designers or brand, become the fashioning icons, such as model and celebrity (singer, actor and athlete, etc.). Model delivers the "commercial practice that commodifies the model's embodied self and delivers it to clients in the form of a look" [14]. For celebrities, their "status can be attributed to a whole continuum of people within the public eye, from high-status, glamorous or skilled individuals through to the most infamous" [3]. As celebrity is famous among public, they are one of the tools in promoting fashion, so as to become the fashioning icon of the brand.

The imperfect Kate Moss is perfect

Kate Moss was discovered by Sarah Doukas when she was a teenage at fourteen. Sarah Doukas introduced her to Corinne Day who photographed the first magazine cover of Kate Moss for 'The Face' magazine in UK. The photographs on magazine that even Kate commented herself were weird and ugly. By contrast, Marc Jacob commented "the image of Kate Moss by Corinne Day... really changed fashion" [15]. John Galliano also chose Kate as one of the models to present his spring/summer collection in 1990, even the fitting of Kate took lots of time regarded to her non-typical model size.

When the Calvin Klein campaign was launched in media and public in 1992, it propelled the career of Kate Moss. She soon became a fashioning icon in other Calvin Klein campaigns, such as jeans, underwear and fragrance. At the same time, Calvin Klein was saved by Kate Moss. The sales in jeans and division of Calvin Klein had double-digit expansion, and Klein credited with the thirteenth annual award of the Council of Fashion Designers of America. The photographs in campaigns presented the real, purity of Kate Moss which satisfied the pursuit of public reality [16]. The comments on image of Kate Moss among fashion industry, media and public defined as cool, wild, waif and grunge. It also inspired 'Harper's Bazaar' for its first fashion article which featured Kate as 'wild, fashion breaks the rules' in 1992. Controversy on Kate image in Calvin Klein campaign raised the attention from the fashion industry and public, and produced huge presentation chances for Kate on fashion campaigns, magazines and shows, such as 'Dolce & Gabbana', 'Chanel', 'Anne Klein', 'Vivienne Westwood', 'Versace', 'Harper's Bazaar', 'Vogue' and 'Elle', etc.

Kate Moss's personal dressing style made a huge impact in the nineties and noughties. Her style was described as "unprecedented, an exhilarating mixes of backstage glamour and postmodern minimalism, seemingly within reach for any girl on the street" [15].

Her street girl style was slip dresses, little black party dresses, tight jeans, tank tops and a new fashion style was a kind of natural lifestyle in daily life. Kate Moss was “an icon of popular culture” [16] which included fashion, music, art and photograph.

Fashion Icon

Unique and independence thinking have been the global trend in recent centuries. With a concept of self-interest and self-comfort, this global trend has been influencing the development of society, as well as dressing in the fashion field. The fashion styles introduced by designer or fashioning icons are not the only guideline for people dressing themselves. People have their own ideas in fashion styling. Some fashion lovers, such as key opinion leader – blogger, Instagrammer, you tuber do not follow the recommended look of fashion designers, but they create their outstanding styles according to their own fashion senses. Fashion key opinion leader is a person who is familiar with fashion and has influence in relevant field through their main performance channel, such as ‘Instagram’, ‘Facebook’, ‘Twitter’ and ‘YouTube’. As some of the fashion key opinion leaders are well-known, and their exceptional dressing styles are able to raise public awareness. These dressing styles are frequently accepted by the public and become a new fashion trend, therefore fashion influencer become a fashion icon during a particular period at the same time. For example, the former First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama became the fashion icon at that time period because of her classic and modern combined dressing style.

The digital stardom of Susie Bubble

The personal blog of Susanna Lau, ‘Susie Bubble’ was begun in 2006 and undoubtedly; it is a lifestyle blog about blogger herself, but not a professional fashion blog. The content of ‘Susie Bubble’ is a confused mixture of photos and videos about herself, other people and fashion stories. “The collective components of her fashion blog create a lifestyle biography of fearless fashion outsiders” [17]. Susie Bubble uses herself as a model to present her daily life which includes her daily dress in self-photo category as many other bloggers use themselves as the muse of photographs.

With non-fashion related background, Susie Bubble was claimed as a status of fashion blogger by the indication of “Moxsie”, a popular online retailer in America. Her self-photos with daily wear were presented in an advertisement banner on the “Moxsie” website without mentioning her name and her personal blog. The advertisement also presented models dressing with her unique styles. The corporate fashion blog ‘Racked NY’ indicated that “Moxsie’s nod to blogger Susie Bubble is a sign of the times” [17].

Susie Bubble further influenced other fashion brands and fashion designers including Nanette Lepore and Christopher Kane were her followers. Hairstyles of Susie Bubble also inspired the Erin Fetherston Fall 2010 runway show. “Susie bubble [sic] you know you are doing something right when half the runway shows from the big leagues had your hair, I think unconsciously or consciously you got

them” [17]. In addition, Susie Bubble was invited as a special model for Gap in 2010, and collaborated different projects with Armani, Dr. Martens and Selfridge & Co. in London [18]. In recent years, the followers of Susie Bubble are not limited in her blog, but also in ‘Twitter’, ‘Instagram’, Facebook, ‘Tumblr’ and ‘YouTube’.

Methodology

In this study, the qualitative research method was adopted to investigate the relationships of fashioning icon and fashion icon to body aesthetic in fashion presentation. A questionnaire survey with open-ended questions was chosen as a means to collect respondents’ views on the body shapes of fashioning icon and fashion icon on fashion aesthetic. The content of the questions was fine-tuned after the completion of the pilot tests within the same sample category and the findings of the pilot study were not included in the overall findings.

Three pilot tests were completed, and fifty questionnaires were collected in this study. The sample category included fashion designers, fashion stylists, and fashion product developers with solid working experience in the local and/or overseas fashion markets. In the survey, the respondents were asked to give their views on the followings:

1. The understanding on the terms of fashioning icon and fashion icon
2. The critical elements of presenter in fashion presentation.
3. The relationship of body shape and fashion aesthetic in fashion presentation
4. The fashion presentation of the non-typical sized models
5. The fashion presentation of celebrities
6. The demand of non-typical sized models or presenters in the fashion industry
7. In the data analysis stage, the content analysis strategy was used to classify the content and quantify specific characteristics in terms of their frequency of occurrence within a selected context systematically [19].

Results and Discussion

The understanding on the terms of fashioning icon and fashion icon

All respondents were able to provide examples of fashioning icon or fashion icon. Examples of fashioning icon and fashion icon were classified into three categories: stardom, model, and others including celebrity, fashion designer, and blogger. 60.6%, 18.0% and 21.4% of the provided examples were stardoms (i.e. Lady Gaga, Madonna and Audrey Hepburn), models (i.e. Winnie Harlow and Cara Delevingne), and others (i.e. celebrities - Kate Middleton and Kim Kardashian West, designers - Vivienne Westwood and Gabrielle Chanel, bloggers - Hwahwa Lala and Rumi Neely), respectively.

The result indicated all respondents understood the definition of fashioning icon and fashion icon. The result of a large number of examples was found in the category of stardom and celebrity reflected the fact that “beyond the ‘catwalk’ and fuelled by images presented by the media, the use of celebrities as fashion icons has recently been more widely practiced” [20].

The critical elements of fashioning icon and fashion icon in fashion presentation

40%, 30%, and 19% of the respondents opted fashion style, reputation, and body shape, respectively as the most critical element of fashioning icon and fashion icon in presentation fashion. 10% of the respondents chosen ‘clothing’ as their main concern. Only 1% of the respondents commented that the icon should have own fashion sense and unique style, so as to be a fashion muse to inspire people. This result showed that the fashion style was the most critical element of affirmation from fashion industry to fashioning icon or fashion icon. Karl Lagerfeld commented one of the fashion icons, Princess Diana that “she was the most perfect example of a young beautiful and modern woman with her very own style. No fashion victim, but a personality 100 per cent of today” [21].

The relationship of body shape and fashion aesthetic in fashion presentation

The majority of the respondents (86%) agreed that body shape affected the aesthetic of the fashion appearance, whereas only 14% of the respondents disagreed it. Four pictures were presented to the respondents for selecting their ideal body shape to present the clothing. The result shown that 37% of the respondents picked Gigi Hadid (model) as the ideal body shape in fashion presentation because of her good body proportion, body shape, and healthy image.

34% of the respondents selected an unknown plus sized model because her body shape was close to the medium and healthy body shape of average people. 24.5% of the respondents were attracted by the body shape of Kate Moss (model) because of her slim and balance body figure. Only 4.5% of the respondents selected Watanabe Naomi (Japanese actress) and believed that all body shapes have own attractiveness. The findings suggested that the fashion presenters with healthy and good body proportion were able to achieve aesthetically pleasing in fashion. “In our modern consumer society... well-trained body is... the object of admiration” [7].

The fashion presentation of non-typical sized models

Majority of the respondents (68%) agreed that the non-typical sized model were able to present the total look of clothing. They believed that aesthetic was not only based on body size or shape, but it was also related to colour, proportion, styles, silhouette of clothing. In addition, the fashion sense of the presenter together with the overall visual impact of the fashion presentation was vital. Also, one respondent claimed that non-typical sized model was

“one of the genres of model nowadays”. Only 8% of the respondents disagreed it. The respondents argued that the non-typical sized model were not attractive. 24% of the respondents were neutral. They mainly focused on the style and type of clothing rather than the body shape of the presenter. The non-typical sized models reflected the reality of the target consumer in society. “In every historical period, there exist ideals for body structure. This can change based upon the society’s motivations and resulting characteristic forms of dress” [1].

The fashion presentation of celebrities

Majority of the respondents (72%) agreed that the Julia Roberts and Camila Cabello were able to present the aesthetic of clothing. Although the celebrities were in common body shape, the respondents claimed that their styled clothing were fashionable with individual character and were able to give the audience a new perception about fashion aesthetic. Different body shapes should have different aesthetic that could be achieved through mix and match of different fashion items. The respondents also believed that celebrities could be claimed as a fashioning icon or fashion icon according to their distinct fashion style, personality, and popularity. 12% of the respondents expressed different opinions and stated that although the celebrities were on the red carpet, they might not present the best chosen clothing and the fashion presentation of celebrity on red carpet was only a kind of performance. 16% of the respondents expressed neutral feelings on their fashion aesthetic. The findings also suggested that being a fashioning icon or fashion icon, she was able to present an individual fashion style and create resonance in the public. Like Princess Diana’s oversized men’s suit and shirts, logo sweatshirts, dungarees and cowboy boots became a high street fashion style of women and teenagers in the eighties [21].

The status of celebrity as icon to present clothing was because of their reciprocal relationships with fashion brands and designers [18]. With the instigation of media through internet, magazines, movies, television, and their popularity and reputation in society, fashion labels are connected and promoted to the public through different surfaces.

The demand of non-typical sized models or presenters in fashion industry

Majority of the respondents (88%) agreed that there was a demand of non-typical sized models or presenters in fashion presentation. Only 8% of the respondents disagreed to the statement. They stated that the typical size models or fashion presenter were still dominant in the fashion industry, especially in the high fashion and haute couture catwalk show, magazine photography and advertisement. 2% of the respondents was neutral to the statement. The non-typical body sized models or presenters were demanded because they reflected the current market situation and needs of different customers. For example, the plus size body shapes are the huge market in the world and

is a demand, especially the Western countries. On the other hand, the plus size model or presenter is given negative comments and is almost invisible in fashion industry [22].

Conclusion

Body is the best tool or media to present the complete concept of a style. Clothing is a bodily adornment. The complete look of a personal clothing style is combined with body and clothing. Clothing and body are the critical essentials of fashion presentation. Fashion presentation has not limited on catwalk stage, fashion magazine and advertisement since eighties. Stardom and celebrity have become the models to present the clothing through movie, and red carpet, etc. As the influential website "Clothes on Film" commented the film "American Gigolo" that "American Gigolo is not even about its protagonist; it is about what he wears. American Gigolo is about Armani" [3]. Popularity, image and reputation are the main advantages of stardom and celebrity to be a fashion presenter. Apart from stardom and celebrity, supermodels in eighties and nineties were other best choices of fashion brands or designers to present clothing. With a prevailing of "perfect" or trendy body, supermodels became the attraction and noise. Iconic image is created along the increasing of popularity and fashion sense. Fashioning or fashion icon is famous fashion presenter who has fashionable style that influencing the trend and inspiring the clothing style of public. Fashioning or fashion icon is a live fashion presentation, especially stardom and celebrity, either clothing in private life, nor in high-profile event. "What and how they are wearing" are the focus or concern of media and public in which are related to clothing and body.

"Fashion can force anybody at all into the structure it has postulated by tricks that reduce, enlarge, length, etc., so that the physical body is turned into the fashionable body" [7]. In current society, on one hand, fashion is used in body transformation; on the other hand, fashion professionals are limiting body by using the extreme body size, i.e. size zero, the typical sample size of clothing in fashion runway and magazine photograph shooting [22]. Being one type of fashion presenters, however, fashioning or fashion icon, especially stardom and celebrity are not limited in the strict or typical body size. For example, Lady Gaga, Kate Middleton (also known as Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge) and Lyn Slate. Even though these type of fashion presenters are not in perfect body size, they are able to present their fashion style and influence the followers. Some non-perfect body figure fashioning or fashion icons were even invited to present clothing in the runway show. In addition, fashion presentations on blogospheres, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, etc. are presented by the models without typical "perfect" body shape, but they can still attract their followers to pursue their fashion styles. This contradiction shows the "commercial female image as a commodity and intermediary of ideals of beauty, and real women as individuals and their physical self-expression" [7]. Nevertheless, the future trend in fashion promotion as Marshall-Johnson stated that "brands continue to

involve well-known individuals in their promotional campaigns... some of these are likely to be older, and more experienced... are emerging in fashion brand advertising, such as... 82-year-old Jacquie Tajah Murdock appearing for Lanvin" [3]. Fashion industry is suggested to widen their aesthetic concept. Instead of the "perfect" extreme or slim body shape instigated by the media and social culture, all body structures have their own character to present the aesthetic of fashion.

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Conflict of Interest

Authors declare **no conflict of interest.**

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