

“Menswear, The Underdog”: Meta-Analysis of its Counter Culture Influences in the Late 60s and 70s, its Contribution to the Growth of New Trends

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Abstract: Menswear has always been an integral part of the fashion business but even so, less impetus is put on the study of menswear and its influences and growth over the ages compared to women at large. The present paper studies the importance that menswear has had through significant revolutions in fashion history and how it contributes to the cause of women’s wear and acted as a positive inspiration at different periods. Further, it studies the counterculture influences that menswear has had and how it shaped and brought in important styles. An attempt has been made to arrange the fragmented information available on counter-culture influences on menswear. In addition, the paper leaves scope for further, discussions and discourse on the subject. The paper draws on a range of secondary literature for data collection.

Keywords: counter-culture menswear, fashion history, influences on menswear, style-tribes, trends.

1. Introduction

The mention of the term ‘Fashion’ brings clothes to our minds and when we mention clothes and ‘fashion’ we often associate it with women. However, men have also played an equally important part in ‘fashion history’ and they have been an inevitable part of every fashion revolution or phase of style which is considered noteworthy in the history of fashion. Not only menswear over the ages has played an integral part in slowly shaping fashion into what it is today, but it has also helped to shape and influence women’s fashion to a great extent over the ages (Ardeshiri M, 2019).

The history of menswear is also the story of human dress throughout the ages. It is a fascinating and complex journey through distinct social and cultural contexts. The rules and conventions of menswear over time have had the effect of stabilizing men’s fashion and removing some of the vagaries of women wear which has in turn helped in the creation of menswear classics like the military trench coat, which was made from durable gabardine fabric which was specifically designed for soldiers during the First World War (Maarouf, M. A. 2015). The trench coat has become an iconic garment and a contemporary fashion classic that has been adapted for both

men’s and women wear. The masculine-inspired dressing has become a recurring feature across many women’s wear collections across major runways from time to time.

Despite previous attempts by some designers to create unisex clothing, during the 1960s and 70s, historically, men’s and women’s clothing have differentiated themselves through a continuous reevaluation of proportion. Silhouette and line. Fashion’s role in reinforcing gender stereotypes have been well documented in throughout the centuries. However, designers like Coco Chael in the 20th century sought inspiration from menswear to advance the cause of women wear; not only by using jersey as fabric for outerwear for women but also by creating strikingly unisex silhouettes with her garconne or boyish look. Designers like Yves Saint Laurent designed suits for women and thus changed the course of fashion of their time (Baruah, 2022)

A. Influences on Men’s Fashion

Media, Music, and Films have all exerted a significant influence on the evolution and development of menswear, particularly throughout the 20th century, which saw the growth of consumerism and popular culture (Reddy, n.d.). The 20th century also saw a gradual increase in consumerism and relaxation of some of the old rules of fashion that had defined menswear through the previous centuries. The change came through wider participation in sporting and leisure activities as well as through music traditions, which were communicated to larger audiences. After the traumatic years of the First World War, America and Europe were eager to embrace change. The popularity of Hollywood films was particularly important in the evolution of menswear which encouraged a more relaxed mode of dress to gain wider acceptance. The class-based frock coat was consigned to formal occasions as the American lounge suit grew in popularity (“The Peacock Revolution: 1960s UK Menswear · V&A.”)

1) Films

In the same way, it had done for women, films exerted considerable influence on men’s fashion and they helped define

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and redefine male dress styles, thanks to the popularity of screen icons such as Clark Gable, Fred Astairs, Gray Cooper, and Cary Grant. American Cowboy and mob gangster styles were introduced to the European audience by Hollywood. James Dean and Marlon Brando, the new teenage rebels popularized Levis 501 denim jeans by wearing them on-screen. In the early 1980's Giorgio Armani influenced generations of men with sleek Italian suits and established himself in the U.S. by designing Richard Gere's onscreen wardrobe for the film *American Gigolo*. Today, actors like Johnny Depp, Brad Pitt, etc. continue to influence menswear with their onscreen and personal style.

2) Media

There was a renewed interest in men's fashion in the 1980s due to the popularity of fashion and lifestyle magazines including *GQ*, *i-D*, *The Face*, *Uomo Vogue* and *Esquire*, etc. These publications brought a wider view of to the masses by expanding the view of menswear beyond what was locally available in stores to more aspirational and global directions. The internet and the ever-expanding and sophisticated digital mobile communications have extended the range and impact of conventional menswear media channels.

3) Music

Music has always been a major influence on men's fashion and has contributed greatly to the evolution and development of modern menswear. Music has great power to converge with fashion, spanning style, and music genres, product endorsements, and style icons from The Beatles, David Bowie, Snoop Dog, and Kanye West.

B. Counter Culture Dressing

A culture that reacts against the mainstream culture of the time causing social change is called counter-culture. A counterculture is different in its politics, norms, social beliefs, social structures, and importantly in this context, its way of dress.

The 1970s might have been a remarkable period in terms of counter-culture dressing. We are reminded only of the hippie culture when we think of counter-culture dressing. However, the seventies saw a number of counter-culture styles mainly in menswear that paved the way for changes in the field of fashion and brought in new styles and trends from time to time. The concept of counterculture dressing in menswear came in the late 1930s and 40s with the introduction of the 'Zoot suit'. The style was popularized by young African Americans and Latino Americans during this period and originated in the dance halls where some of the more athletic dancers took up the jitterbug dance. The suit became the symbol of self-determination amongst some minority groups. It was an extreme form of the loose-fitted lounge jacket with wide shoulder padding, wide lapels, and additional length through the body of the jacket. Worn in combination with a high-waisted pair of trousers, which were pegged at the hem to be very narrow at the ankles, the overall proportions were pronounced and exaggerated (Alford, H. 2004). It was also worn in flamboyant colors and stripes, worn in combination with a waistcoat, shirt, and tie with an optional watch chain. The recent trend of colorful printed

loose-pant suits and high-waisted trousers may have been influenced by zoot suits.

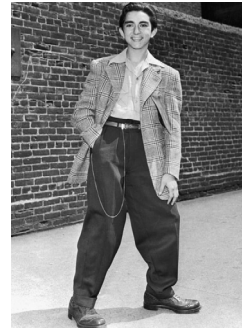


Fig. 1. A teenager in a zoot suit

Source: www.history.com

1) Teddy Boys

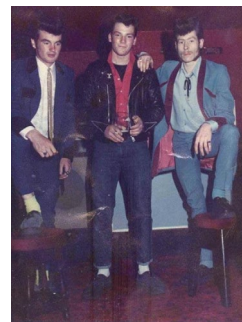


Fig. 2. Edwardian teddy boys

Source: www.vice.com

Originated in post-war London in the late 1940's and early 50s, the British Teddy boys or 'Ted' emerged as a working-class fashion for young men, inspired by the sartorial style of the Edwardian dandies (extremely fashionable men) from the 1900's. Teddy boys wore longer fitted draped jackets, cuffed sleeves, waistcoats and narrow drainpipe trousers. They wore brogues or crepe-soled shoes. Teddy boys became the first definable subculture in the UK. Musically, they associated themselves with American rock and roll (Mitchell, M. 2020).

2) Mods and Rockers



Fig. 3. Mods and Rockers

Source: www.edn.com/mods-and-rockers/

The Mod's and Rockers emerged as two distinct counter – cultures in the UK during the 1960's because of their gang rivalries and opposing dress styles. The mods (acquired from the modernists) preferred tri, fitted Italian suits, pointed shoes and projected a clean, well- dressed look. They preferred listening to Jamaican ska and American soul music, at the same time developed their own style of music. They used logos and badges in red, blue and white on their Vespa scooters and parka

jackets. The un-kept looking rockers who wore black leather biker jackets and rode heavy motorcycles were their rivals. American rock and roll was their choice of music. The rivalry between these two British counter cultures were able to grab the attention of the press for a brief period during the 1960's before the media and public lost interest in them (Kan, M. J. 1998).

3) Skinheads



Fig. 4. Skinheads in 70s
Source: www.flickr.com

Skinheads originated as a youth subculture in the UK. Their look was characterized by their close cropped or shaved heads and their striking allegiance to a dress code that comprised of specific brands such as Ben Sherman, Brutus or polo shirts worn with braces or straight fitted denims with turn-ups. The look was sometimes completed with a Crombie-style top coat and laced up boots or loafers (Travis, T., & Hardy, P. 2012).

4) Hippies



Fig. 5. The Hippies

Source: <https://in.pinterest.com/pin/288371182407525890/>

The word hippie, originally derived from the word 'hipster' was applied to a member of the youth movement that emerged in the US during the mid-1960s. A hippie was a man or a woman whose values were broadly liberal and who favored commune lifestyles, mysticism and use of drugs to enhance consciousness. As a movement, it spread to Europe and beyond and attracted people of all ages. Hippies dressed in a bohemian style that accommodated individual discretion but which broadly adopted the wearing of denim jeans, customized clothing, long hair for men, sandals, fringed clothing with craft adornment and multicolored effects that rejected the convention of fashion. Although the term 'hippie' became somewhat derisory over time, its enduring legacy is more musical than stylish since its ethos was to reject the mainstream (K. 2022, January 6).

5) Glam Rock

Glam rock was a style that emerged in the UK in the 1970s; its playful nod to androgyny was popularized by artists and

musicians such as David Bowie and Marc Bolan. The look was deliberately excessive and colorful and included the wearing of platform shoes or boots as well as jump suits for men and women (Stratton, J. 1986). Glam rock style was characterized by flamboyance and theatricality which was popularized by pop stars of the period who pushed the boundaries with their stage shows and public appearances. Although the glam rock style didn't endure into the 1980s, during its brief run it liberated menswear by allowing the usual rules of dressing to be relaxed and broken (K. 2022, Janu).



Fig. 6. Glam idols 70s

Source: <https://glamidols.tumblr.com/page/12>

6) Punk Rock

Punk Rockers also known as 'punks' emerged in the UK and USA during the 1970s and immediately attracted attention and notoriety with their extreme appearance, which included outlandish spiked hairstyles in dyed coolers, body piercings, torn or slashed clothes, graphic T-Shirt prints and bondage trousers. Clashing combinations of neon colours, animal prints and leathers also characterized the punk rock. Closely associated with punk-rock music, this counterculture embraced both sexes and even flirted with cross-gender looks; however, the predominantly tough appearance of the punks lent itself to a rebellious menswear style that rejected the conventions of fashion. Designer Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren, famously helped to define the UK punk style with their early collections. Subsequent designers have drawn inspiration from the punk movement including Jean Paul Gaultier, who appropriated the tartan kilt as a fashion item of menswear (Hebdige, D. 2012).

7) New Romantics



Fig. 7. New Romantics

Source: <https://www.beyondretro.com/>

This music-inspired subculture emerged in the UK in the late 1970s mainly among disaffected art school graduates who

shared a love for David Bowie and Roxy music's flamboyant and sometimes gender-ambiguous stage style and music. Soon the subculture developed its music style from a strong nightclub tradition. The look was characterized by androgynous clothing, sashes, and ruffles, with the men wearing conspicuous makeup and arranging their hair upwards into quiffs or pout styles, which heralded the big hair looks of the 1980s. Musically, the nightclub scene developed its style and acts but ultimately fell victim to its sense of exclusiveness which limited its lasting appeal. Today, the new romantics are strongly associated with the early 1980s and an age of excess and foppish menswear (Cleaver, 2018).

8) Hip Hop



Fig. 8. Hip hop style from early 80s

Source: <https://www.dazeddigital.com/music/article/40787/1/janette-beckman-golden-era-rap-new-york-hip-hop-photography>

Hip Hop emerged during the 1970s in the US among African-American and Latino-American youth communities. It has to define itself in successive decades through its assimilation of street styles and evolving music culture, which commands loyalty and devotion from its followers. With its original link to street art, graffiti, and urban music, the early hip-hop style was characterized by oversized bomber jackets, baggy jeans, and graffiti-inspired prints on T-shirts and sweat tops (Shackelford, 2022)

Men's hip-hop style began to accommodate alternative expressions of style during the early 2000s this included more designer labels, such as Gucci and Louis Vuitton, combined with personalized often ostentatious jewelry. The hip-hop culture gave rise to its design labels including Phat Farm, Sean John, and Rocawear. Unlike other subcultures, hip-hop continues to redefine itself without compromising its meaning and values (Reese, E. 2019).

2. Review of Literature

In a broader context, Fashion has always been a reflection of the cultures, beliefs and times that we live in. Fashion which is a product of the culmination of different elements of a society has always been of particular interest to various groups interested in fashion both within academia and beyond it. "Menswear" in particular has somewhat never had as much focus as womenswear has had over different periods. However, it has always remained an underdog and silently contributed in removing the vagaries of fashion that dominated womenswear at different periods and contributed in simplifying womenswear. The subcultures that emerged during the 50's,

60's, 70's and early 80's contributed greatly to menswear and helped create iconic styles and pieces for generations to come. In the article *Stilyagi - Fashion, Youth Counterculture and Individuality in the Communist Soviet Union*, the author Marella Alves dos Reis discusses *Stilyagi*; A Youth Counterculture from the Communist Soviet Union that mixed Fashion with Individuality. The author describes counterculture clothing to be a result of the society in which it was born and the influences of the West and how it managed to stand out during the peak of communism in Russia (dos Reis, n.d.). In addition, Josh Sims writes in his blog about the decline of counterculture clothing and how the fast pace of the world and the rise of the internet has led to its death. He elaborates on the effect of the decline of style tribes on the growth of strong trends in men's fashion (Sims, 2021). Conversely, Kwame Adiya studies counterculture menswear while stressing on the growth of punk fashion and the contribution of legendary designers such as Vivienne Westwood and Japanese Designer Rei Kawakubo whose names became synonymous with punk goth. The author also stresses on the contribution of designers like Rick Owens and Everard Best who helped contemporize punk fashion (Adiyia, 2021). Again, Jonny et al. discuss the growth of the hippie culture and its beliefs that was rooted in reuse and up-cycling of garments and study the connection of sustainability and the hippie fashion of the 70s. Chaplin, T., & Mooney, J. E. P. (2017) in their book, 'The Global 1960s: Convention, contest and counterculture stresses on the growth of counter-cultures during the 60's and the influence of these counter-cultures on various aspects of people's lives during these periods including Fashion. Moghadaseh Rouhi Ardeshiri in the paper titled 'Menswear, a fashion trend for women in the 1970s' studies the counter-culture of the 70s with a focus on the movie 'Anne Hall' and the influence on fashion of important elements like 'Cinema', and 'Society as well as explores how socio-political events during that period led to the projection of menswear for women in the movie Annie Hall. Luther Hillman's book titled 'Dressing for the Culture Wars' demonstrates how fashion was influenced by the political climate. Hillman depicts fashion as both a result of the political scenario well as the cause of it and its impact on the changing narratives of race, gender and sexuality (Hillman, 2015). The book titled "Summer of love: Psychedelic art, social crisis and counterculture in the 1960s. Vol. 8" studies the impact of the 1960s on politics, society, and culture, focusing on psychedelic art. It includes insightful writings on comics, movies, light displays, graphic design, and typography. The book also examines the influence of 1960s fashion and architecture and the role of hallucinogenic substances in creating art. The book also addresses historical transition themes like sexual liberty and student freedom. It was observed that there has been a plethora of articles related to counter cultures, its stages of development and decline and their interesting distinct identity that were expressed in a pronounced way through fashion. However, the data is scattered across different mediums and counterculture influences in menswear has not been studied extensively in academic, and the styles that its influence has made possible to be created in modern menswear and menswear

across different periods. As such, this paper is an attempt to outline the counter-culture influences on menswear with focus on the 60s and 70s and the influence they have had on shaping today's menswear and in removing certain vagaries existent in womenswear. It also aims to organize the scattered data available on the subject and add to the exciting data available on the subject.

3. Methodology

Drawing on a range of secondary literature, this paper studies the impact of different counter cultures that emerged at different periods on menswear and the interesting styles that they helped take shape.

4. Results and Discussion

A. Styles that Emerged from Counter Culture Clothing

Through the study of the available data on the counter culture influences on men's fashion, we could infer the various trends that these cultures helped to create. Further, it also sheds light on the style tribes these counter cultures helped to create, that we had during the 60's and 70's. In addition, an attempt has been made to arrange the scatted information that was available on the growth of menswear and the influence it had on womenswear.

The '60s and the 70s were exciting times in fashion history particularly for men because nowhere else during the history of menswear had men been able to explore in terms of clothing and break the barriers and rules related to menswear Liverpool, T. G. (2005). The counter cultures that developed during these times had a strong sense of identity that was reflected through their fashion choices that help create 'style tribes', a niche that gave each a sense of identity and a sense of belonging. Just by looking at what a person was wearing and his/her general lifestyle, we could understand his/her belief systems. As such they became the reference points and source of inspiration for many designers in the decades that followed and created styles that lived through different times and became fashion staples. One of the most prominent styles that still rules the fashion scene is 'Goth Punk Fashion.'

The individual credited with starting the punk-fashion revolution, Vivienne Westwood, has now become a household name in the fashion industry where her namesake brand consistently pushed fashion forward (Adiyia, K. (2021, March 10). Someone who was heavily influenced by Westwood was Rei Kawakubo, a designer that has since become renowned for her renegade, avant-garde, and often outlandish designs. Since the founding of her label Comme Des Garcons, in 1973, Kawakubo has often played with the same themes that made Westwood and her early work so revolutionary (especially in her earliest collections). More recently in her S/S11 collection, Kawakubo shifted to designs that were looser-fitting, and opted for fabrics and styles that are more in tune with the contemporary state of goth/punk fashion but remain rooted in the core ideas of these subcultures. Kawakubo is not the only Japanese designer who has pushed punk/goth fashion to the forefront of the industry. Japanese designers can be largely

credited for punk/goth fashion becoming a mainstream style. Designers like Yohji Yamamoto and Jun Takahashi of Undercover have become prominent figures of the fashion industry and have fully embraced punk/goth styles. Loose-fitting, graphic-filled, black clothes have been consistent in their collections showing Kawakubo's influence on the artists and Japanese fashion as a whole (de Perthuis, 2019).



Fig. 9.

Source: <https://fashionmovesforward.com/the-latest/2021/2/parallel-cultures-the-emergence-of-punk-fashion>

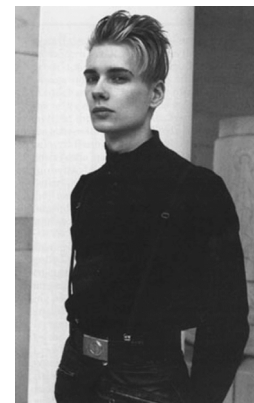


Fig. 10. Goth – Punk fashion

Source: www.post-punk.com



Fig. 11. Goth- punk fashion

Source: www.rougemag.squarespace.com

As punk style has become increasingly coveted by archivists and has reached mainstream popularity, more designers have emerged to offer their interpretations of punk fashion - one of the most well-known being Rick Owens. Dubbed "The Dark Lord", Owens has redefined the idea of how punk/goth fashion

should look and feel when being worn. His designs often include men wearing shoes with massive heels with shorts and pants donning his signature, disproportionate drop-crotch (Adiyia, K. 2010).



Fig. 12. Moschino Pre-Fall 2023
Source: www.pinterest.com



Fig. 13. Rick Owens Spring 2020 Menswear collection
Source: www.vogue.com



Fig. 14. Etro A/W'20 and Loewe Spring S/S'20 Getty//Getty Images
Source: <https://www.esquire.com/uk/style/fashion/>

The late 60's and 70's brought in many styles that stayed as classics through different periods and has reinvented themselves in different ways. The most prominent of them being bohemian fashion, bright paisley prints, flower prints, the bell-bottoms that keep reappearing in the form of flared denims at different points of time Teasdale, C. (2020, May 6).

Another influence of counter-culture menswear that still keeps on coming back into trend is the hip-hop style of dressing. Oversized T-shirts and trousers, caps and sunglasses, and prominent accessories like chains, bracelets, and rings are some of the elements that have been taken from the hip-hop style.

This style is a staple among musicians, rappers, and the youth (DeLeon, 2018).

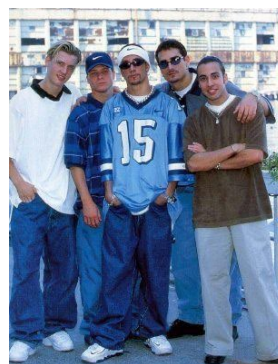


Fig. 15. Hip-hop style in 2000

Source: <https://in.pinterest.com/pin/62346776085468385/>



Fig. 16. Menswear inspired from New Romantics

Source: <https://www.wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-features/gallery/menswear-trend-the-new-romantics/menswear-giorgio-armani-prada-trussardi-7230563-portrait/>

The sleek fashionable look and pieces like shirts, linen, cotton trousers jeep coming back in trend and have become staples in the wardrobes of fashionable men across the world at different periods of time.

This study offers a novel perspective to the growth of menswear as a result of counter culture influences that helped in the creation of 'style tribes' which were instrumental in creating iconic trends that allowed men to explore with their style and sense of identity and gave them freedom to dress in whichever way they preferred. The main limitation of the study lies in the fact that it is dependent on secondary data. However, since the secondary data has been collected from extensive sources, it was possible to get a satisfactory result that allowed the study, arrangement and synthesis of the information in a systematic and concise manner.

5. Conclusion

The study of the important style revolutions in menswear in this paper helped us to understand how 'style tribes' were created during the 60's and 70's that allowed the creation of iconic styles and pieces in menswear so much so that fashion designers even today, go back to study the trends that emerged as a result of these counter-cultures as references for their collections. We still find trends like 'punk fashion', 'hip-hop', etc., to be widely popular among the youth and masses. It also

stresses on the importance of menswear in fashion and how it has always been a silent contributor in removing some of the vagaries in women's fashion from time to time. The late 50's, 60's and 70's will always remain to be an incredibly important period in the history of menswear, for all the sub-cultures and the styles they helped to create. These counter-cultures somehow, allowed Art to remain in fashion and menswear in particular. The paper also adds to the exciting literature available on menswear and leaves scope for further discussions and discourses on the subject.

As rightly stated by the Irish poet and playwright, Oscar Wilde,

"One should either be a work of art or wear a work of art"

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