FASHION, IMAGETRANSMISSION ANDHYPERREALITY: THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING AND VIRTUAL TECHNOLOGY IN CREATING A NEW REALITY

JAGVEER KAUR

Department of Philosophy, Punjabi University, Patiala
E-mail: yash28sran@gmail.com

Abstract - This paper aims to understand the transmission of image in fashion industry at different levels. It also tends to comprehend thedifferent channels of transmission and their impact on psychological, social and cultural values of society. Indeed, advertising is a powerful tool that shapes the perception of entire society, but as technological advancements approach, it is all set to create a new reality, altogether, which is totally disconnected from reality but the impacts of which are embedded deep downin every aspect of our lives.

Keywords - Technological Advancements, Advertising, Distorted Image, Hyperreality, Virtual World.

I. INTRODUCTION

Humans have come a long wayin terms of the evolution of clothing and fashion. For around 500,000 years, clothing served primarily as a practical tool for protection from hot and cold weather. From beginning with animal skins to developing more advanced techniques for creating clothes, such as weaving and sewingthat allowedbetter customization and aesthetic expression.But, as Daniel Boorstin, puts in his book, 'The Image', that we suffer from extravagant expectations. We expect in access from ourselves and our surroundings, and that too in the sense, that is beyond reason and moderation, the result of which we can surely see in the world around us, a fabricated world[1].Clothes became the symbol of status and identity, as societies grew complex. This eventually led to the development of the fashion industry, with designers and brands creating new styles and trends that reflected the changing tastes and values of society. Today, fashion is a global industry worth trillions of dollars, and it continues to evolve and adapt to changing cultural and technological trends.The advancements in science and technology have altered the perspective of how one looks at the world and it certainly has changed the attitude of fashion.Fashion has gone through many stages since its inception in whichtechnological advancements play a key role. Fashion technology has the potential to transform the entire fashion industry, from the way garments are designed and manufactured and the way they are advertised and sold. Well, the current scenario of fashion industry does depict the same. Now fashion sells image, "Image comes from everywhere: the ambience of location where clothes are sold, the advertising, the celebrities who wear the clothes and so forth, and image of course, work with the intrinsic, the style, quality and actual price of each item"[2].The designing, manufacturing,potential market and advertising, everything has undergone a complete change.This paper is intended to discuss the transmission of image, which to the extent, I understand can be understood through two points of view, which are through advertising and creation of hyperreal order which are discussed below. Given the current predicament, it is almost impossible to separate advertisements from hyperreality, they go hand in hand. Firstly, it is necessary to understand the terms fashion and hyperreality.Fashion can be understood as, self-expression or a way of attiring, speaking and carrying oneself at a given period of time or place.Though many have given the impression of the idea of hyperreality in their works, but Jean Baudrillard, a French philosopher and culture critic has coined the term 'hyperreality'[3], to describe the phenomenon where one is unable to differentiate between reality and illusions of reality. Hyperreality can be defined as amalgamation of simulations or simulation without any real subject.

II. ADVERTISING'S ROLE IN TRANSMITTING IMAGE AND CREATING HYPERREALITY

Advertising is a medium to convey the message and idea behind a particular commodity. In context of fashion, it helps in creating brand image, setting fashion trends, impacts social and cultural values, increases sales and delivers the message of the brand and shapes perception of its customers. In the words of William Bernbach, one of the giants of American Advertising,"Advertising is fundamentally persuasion and persuasion happens to be not a science, but an art"[4]. It's about creating images that convey a message and inspires emotions. As Boorstin states, "In advertising, as in painting, the non-representational technique is apt to become more popular, to give the viewer ample scope for his unpredictable but always exaggerating expectations". Needless to say, it does the same but it also creates pseudo-needs and encourages people to buy unnecessary things with money that they don't have, only to keep the cycle of consumer culture alive. It

not only costs money but is also a psychological warfare that forms the illusion that happiness comes only by material possessions and tricks the masses in incessant buying. The aim of advertising is to make us buy things. Happiness, boredom and anxiety are feelings that sell most.Baudrillard describes it as, "The whole machinery of advertising is harnessed to the purpose of arresting decay and creating artificial appetites"[5]. The advertising industry is focused on prolonging the lifespan of consumer goods by producing artificial needs. It uses various tactics to do the same. It plays on people's fears of being left alone or left behind and convinces them to buy products to stay up to date and desirable.It also uses certain backgrounds to establish the luxury and sign value of different products by making them exclusive.Teri quotes "Couture sells a luxury image that makes people feel that they are belonging to an elite"[6].It does its bid of communicating with potential customers, typically through television, print media and social media. Brands employs celebrities and models to endorse the products in order to influence consumers purchasing decisions. Undoubtedly, advertising is successful in achieving its goal but with the help of technology, advertising presents a distorted picture of reality. Advertising in fashion heavily relies on hyperreality to present the exaggerated version of reality to increase sales. This is realized through image manipulation to create the illusion and glamour that is not necessarily reflective of reality. The images of models are highly distorted through airbrushing and photographic tools and techniques. As Eugenie Shinkle asserts that, Fashion photography is a powerful tool for shaping our perceptions of beauty and style, it can also be source of manipulation and distortion. By presenting an idealized version of reality, fashion photography creates a distorted picture of what is possible or desirable, and can have negative consequences for those who does not fit this narrow mould. The use of cosmetics on models creates an image that is unattainable in reality and produces the effect which is more appealing than reality. Besides cosmetics and cosmetic procedures, the use of photography further distorts the image. Fashion photography often involves precisely crafted images to deliver certain kind of mood or message. Apart from using particular backgrounds or lighting angles to influence consumers, the post production process also aids in creating hyperreality. The use of tools to fade the blemishes or alter the texture of skin, to make clothes more flawless, to alter the body proportions of the models creates the effect that can't be achieved in reality. In this way, these tools not only deceive the customers but also creates unreal standards of beauty, thus making people uncomfortable in their own skin. It is really hard to break the shackles of the hyperreal images, but as both advertising and fashion photography are powerful tools, these should reverse their roles and should portray reality. Every photograph is a construction of reality and should be left to be a representation of reality and not to be manipulated enough to become reality itself.

III. FROM PHYSICAL TO VIRTUAL: THE TRANSMISSION OF IMAGE AND EVOLUTION OF PERCEPTION

But it is not the only type of transmission of image that is the result of technological progress. What fascinates here is its abilityto make simulations so close to reality that it baffles and intrigues mankind of being unable to distinguish reality from simulations. The fashion industry too, hasn't limited itself to the traditional ways, but in fact, it has evolved with the time. It isn't limited to sequins, flowers and drapey effects, but has moved into the most cherished aspect of postmodern era, i.e., hyperreal. The actual hyperreal phase has started as soon as the digitalisation hit.With the advancements in digital sector, everything became available to be controlled by the tip of finger, and imagination has become our only limit.In the digital age, fashion is no longer confined to physical realm. The rise of virtual fashion has created a new frontier where the possibilities are endless and the only limit is the imagination.The fashion industry has embraced the virtual world eagerly. Soon, the actual world was floating with the figures of virtual world. The accessories of cartoon figurines have paved its way into fashion and leads to what is termed as 'cartoonification of fashion'. There are various examples that can support the above argument.

Thecartoonifying of clothes, accessories and footwear is the result of abridging gap between reality and metaverse. We can start with the notable red boots, that are making people go crazy all over the internet. The MSCHF goes with the idea that cartoonishness is an abstraction that relieves us fromshackles of reality.Ithas introduced big red boots on 16th February, 2023, same as worn by legendary anime key character,Astro boy. The boots seem to be directly pulled out from the cartoon show and are designed in a way that gives cartoon-esque effect. The brandin one of its press releases proudly announces that, "Boots are really not shaped like feet, but shaped more like boots". The trend of cartoonification isn't limited to a single brand, but is predominant in almost all luxe brands. Loewe, a Spanish luxe brand, last year had introduced theentire collection of heels,that featured a whimsically round design inspired by Minnie Mouse's footwear. Some dresses, tops and skirts from their Fall/Winter 2023 collection posesunreal quality.They exhibit an extraordinary smoothness andstablity, giving them an uncanny yet captivating appearance reminiscent of AI generated creations.The same brand has designed pixelated t-shirts, hoodies and jeans that draws inspiration the fashion of virtual world and seems as

the attire of an avatar rather than that of real-world humans andappears to be directly pulled from gaming world. Jonathon Anderson, the creative director of Loewe,skillfullyplays with the concept of 'hyperreal' in his designs.Another notable collaboration involves JW Anderson partnering with Wellipetsto launch a captivating collection of mulesresembling frogs. The bags sold by various brands, leans towards a playful aesthetic, resembling toys rather than having a utilitarian objective.These are among the few instances of how hyperreal has taken over the fashion in physical form.

But fashion is no longer limited to palpable domain, it has entered in the virtual sphere. Needless to say, as every other aspect of our lives is shifting to a different paradigm, be it travel, art, movies, homes, etc. fashion industry is also making the move in same direction, the direction of NFTs. NFTs are non-fungible tokens, which means that they are unique and non-replaceable. They are stored and traded on blockchain, a digital public ledger, and can be bought and sold. Now, what is the role of NFTs in fashion industry. The NFTs in this enterprise, comes in various forms, like virtual attires for avatars, digital content for interaction and digital twins as well. Traditionally, the fashion shows are part of physical world but as the pandemic hit, fashion industry has sought its survival in the virtual form, as we have created a second self of ourselves in the virtual world. For Baudrillard, virtual world isn't opposite of real, but it is kind of a black hole in which real is disappearing.The Fabricant's iridescent dress in May 2019, was the firstever sold fashion NFT for $9500.Soon, almost every big or small brand shared interest in this blooming industry of future. The virtual dressing/fitting rooms like YourFit, ZeeKit, Magic Mirror etc. has come to aid in building the new future as it allows the customers to virtually try on clotheswith the help of either 3D models and camera or AR and further recommends size and fit. Now-a-days, various tech giants are sourcing their resources in developing the best of virtual dressing rooms and stores.Virtual stores are also playing significant role in transforming the shopping experience. 3D virtual stores are offering the best of physical and virtual worldsas it merges the convenience of online shopping with realistic looks and interactive feel of the physical stores. Some brands also offer group shopping experience through zoom or identical apps. But it doesn't end here, some brands are selling lavish digital outfits which can be worn by the owner with the help of AR. For e.g., 20,000 sneaker NFTs releasedby Nike, that can be worn via snapchat filter.Apart from that, NFTs are vital part of metaverse, it is a kind of new marketplace, which fits best with the definition of hyperreal.Gucci has introduced 'Gucci Grail NFTs', which are exclusive for metaverse market and features exclusive digital artworks, collectibles and virtual fashion items.The big fashion houses are exploring this marketplace by selling the garments for avatars. The other way to exploit the market is through digital twins. It is a virtual replica of a physical objectsbut now can be produced at any stage of actual production. It can be used as a tactic to appeal the customers, but it is proving rather beneficial in various ways. This allows designers to refine their designs before production, thus minimising the wastage of time, energy and resources. It also helps in knowing the preferences, desires, behaviour and purchasing pattern of customers by introducing the individual avatars, thus helping the brands in designing sales techniques to target the desired audience.

IV. IMPACT OF FASHION

Though fashion has become important part of our lives, but it's behind the scenes are quite horrific. We are already aware of the hazards and exploitation caused by tangible production. Virtual fashion is considered far more sustainable than the physical one, but it isn't the case.Though virtual fashion offers exciting avenues for creativity and self-expression, but it is crucial to acknowledge and tackle its environment challenges. The substantial energy consumption of digital platforms and the infrastructure supporting virtual fashion, along with electronic waste generated by device manufacturing and obsolescence, have notable ecological impacts. Additionally, data centres energy requirements and expansion contribute to carbon emissions and habitat destruction. To address these issues, it is important to promote energy-efficient technologies and sustainable practices within the virtual fashion industry. Extending the lifecycleof electronic devices and minimizing technological obsolescence can help reduce electronic waste. Implementing green initiatives in data centres and prioritizing renewable energy sources can mitigate their environmental footprint. Furthermore, it is vital to cultivate a culture of conscious consumption in the digital fashion realm. By encouraging users to make thoughtful choices and avoid excessive digital consumption driven by trends, we can curb the perpetuation of consumerism and overconsumption associated with virtual fashion. To achieve a sustainable future for virtual fashion, we must combine technological innovation with environmental awareness. By prioritizing energy efficiency, minimizing waste, and promoting responsible digital practices, we can ensure that virtual fashion coexists harmoniously with the well-being of our planet. The impact of virtual fashion on people's psychology can be both positive and negative. On the positive side, it provides a platform for self-expression and creativity, allowing individuals to explore unique styles and boosting their self-confidence. Virtual fashion also promotes inclusivity by enabling individuals to experiment with different body types and identities, challenging

traditional beauty standards. However, virtual fashion can also contribute to escapism and detachment from reality, potentially leading to social isolation and addiction. It is crucial to strike a balance and be mindful to the potential effects on mental health and well-being. Furtherresearch is needed to understand its impact completely.

V. CONCLUSION

The integration of technology and advertising has profoundly influenced the creation of hyperreality, blurring the lines between the real and virtual. By harnessing the power of technology, advertisers can manipulate and augment reality, engendering hyperreal environments that surpass the limitations of the physical world. Furthermore, by digitally showcasing outfits in virtual worlds, social media platforms, or virtual events, virtual fashion has transformed the traditional forms of fashion industry, offering alternative forms of consumption while mitigating the environmental impact associated with conventional clothing production. Though virtual fashion offers exciting opportunities, one should always consider privacy, ethical and psychological concerns. In our relentless pursuit of creating utopic environments to escape the chaos of our everyday lives, we often find ourselves fully engrossed in improving virtual experiences, inadvertently neglecting the significance of the real world. Undoubtedly, this drive has fueled advancements in technology and advertising, enabling the construction of hyperreal environments that captivate our senses and transport us to alternate dimensions, thus making us at the risk of losing the value and importance of tangible world around us. As we continue to push the boundaries of technology and immersive experiences, we should not forget to cherish the innate beauty of real world. We should strive for harmonious coexistence of both worlds to enrich our lives.

REFERENCES

[1] AR is augmented reality that superimposes virtual world over the real one.
[2] Boorstin. D., The Image: A Guide to Pseudo Events, Vintage Books, New York, 1992, P 3
[3] Agins. T., The End of Fashion: How Marketing changed the Clothing Business Forever, Harper, London, 1999, P15
[4] Baudrillard. J., Simulacra and Simulation, originally published in French by Editions Galilee, 1981
[5] Adi Ignatius, Advertising is an Art- and a Science
[6] Baudrillard. J., The Consumer Society, Sage publications, London, 1998
[7] Op. cit., Agnis, P 22

★★★