

Gender and Culture Inclusivity in the Story of Hope Fashion Collection

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Abstract

Discrimination against minority groups often still occurs and becomes a global problem. The problem of discrimination, such as minority gender and cultural minorities, is a social issue that needs to be exposed to get awareness. Inclusivity is one of the methods used to increase awareness of issues of gender and cultural discrimination. Inclusivity is one of the discourses to answer the challenges of sustainable development goals related to the topic of gender equality and reducing inequality. Fashion is a branch of design that often presents the context of inclusivity through works. The discourse of globalization in the fashion industry also provides an opportunity to raise local content related to minority culture and gender as inspiration and communication through fashion works. The Story of Hope collection is an example of a fashion creation with the theme of gender and minority culture. The problem discussed in this paper is how gender and cultural inclusivity are communicated through fashion stories of hope. The study applied qualitative methods with primary data collection techniques through observation and interviews. The secondary data was obtained through literature studies. The theory used in analyzing the data uses a Barthes semiotic approach and postmodern aesthetic of bricolage. The Story of Hope collection is a fashion creation that adapts gender-fluid trends and applies traditional fabrics to represent culture in contemporary clothing. Story of Hope collection can be used as a communication tool in conveying inclusive discourse through its constituent visual elements.

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Keywords

Inclusivity; Fashion; Gender; Culture

1. Introduction

Globalization frequently makes power disparities that already exist worse by promoting gender and cultural inequality. Diverse cultural manifestations may be marginalized by cultural hegemony, which is fueled by prevailing international norms. Gender disparities may be exacerbated by the exploitation of gender minorities, particularly in developing nations, in globalization-related industries. Furthermore, Western values imposed on indigenous civilizations have the potential to weaken them. In order to ensure that globalization benefits everyone rather than escalating already-existing inequities, efforts to resolve these discrepancies must place a high priority on inclusive policies that empower excluded groups and foster cultural diversity.

Fashion is a potent medium for communication that both shapes and reflects cultural variety. Clothing takes on the role of a visual language, representing cultural norms, identity, and values. Different looks and traditional attire

highlight cultural diversity and promote appreciation. Fashion crosses boundaries in today's globalized society, enabling people to convey their own cultural narratives. designers that promote inclusivity by combining elements from many cultures. In the end, fashion serves as a vital tool for fostering intercultural communication and understanding in addition to reflecting the beauty of cultural diversity.

The gender context is a subject that frequently comes up, particularly when it comes to gender minority groups. Currently, the third gender category is also affected by the issue of gender discrimination, in addition to women. One of the primary concerns regarding gender issues is still discrimination. Third gender issues, particularly those affecting communities of minority men, are complex and have many facets. Scientific studies have shown that discrimination causes differences in a variety of facets of minority groups' lives. These include third-gender people's experiences with assault, mental health issues, inadequate healthcare, and legal difficulties (Bränström & Pachankis, 2018). Lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people encounter prejudice, discrimination, hate crimes, and other types of victimization on a global scale (Chan & Mak, 2021).

Non-binary gender or genderqueer are other terms for the third gender. This gender minority group questions the conventional binary conception of gender as either male or female. People who identify as third gender may have a gender identification that is neither purely male nor exclusively female, or they may completely reject the idea of gender. In recent years, third-gender issues, particularly in minority male groups, have drawn more attention, which has prompted scientific studies to better understand and address the particular difficulties these people confront.

Men are placed in a higher position because of the negative stigma of masculinity and heteronormative culture (Chatmon, 2020). This widespread stigma leads to prejudice against minority populations. A collection of cultural expectations and norms known as toxic masculinity promotes traditional masculine behaviors including violence, dominance, and the repression of emotions that are normally associated with femininity. As it fosters prejudice and marginalization of those who don't fit typical male or female gender norms, this idea has important consequences for third-gender minorities.

Through a number of methods, toxic masculinity can result in discrimination toward third-gender people. First, people who don't fit into traditional gender roles are frequently seen as undermining the existing gender order, which causes strong reactions from those who do (Puckett et al., 2020). The second mechanism is that discrimination can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including physical harm, verbal harassment, and social exclusion. Furthermore, toxic masculinity perpetuates misconceptions about third-gender people, depicting them as weak, uncharacteristic, or morally reprehensible (Chatmon, 2020). Third-gender minorities are further marginalized by these assumptions, which further fuel discrimination, preventing them from fully participating in both the social and professional sectors.

Minority cultures are not exempt from discrimination issues. On the one hand, globalization fosters cross-national communication and cultural exchange, but it may also stifle minority cultures, creating issues with prejudice (Mutalibovna, 2020). The impact of globalization on identity, cultural preservation, and power dynamics has made discrimination against minority cultures a problematic issue. With the growth and adoption of dominant cultures from powerful nations due to globalization, cultural manifestations frequently become homogenized. As a result of the erosion or devaluation of their distinctive practices and traditions, minority cultures risk marginalization and persecution. According to research, globalization may result in a decline in cultural diversity, which may diminish the independence and resiliency of minority cultures (Sassen, 2014).

Modern information technology advancements give rise to a perspective known as the global dilemma. Local cultures are at risk because of globalization, yet because of the accessibility of information, there are also opportunities for these minority cultures to be known to a larger audience. One strategy for promoting minority cultures is to raise awareness of and respect for them. This is one way the SDGs are being implemented in relation to the sociocultural context's equality movement (Leal Filho et al., 2022).

The gender equality component of SDG Objective 5 strives to empower women and girls for sustainable development. According to scientific data, gender equality has a good effect on outcomes in the areas of economic growth, health, and education (Susan Solomon et al., 2021). The growth of the idea of gender identity variety leads the equality movement to extend its concern for other gender minority groups beyond just women. SDG Goal 10 on the other

hand focuses on eliminating inequality within and between nations while fostering social, economic, and political inclusion for all. In order to achieve other SDGs and advance sustainable development, reducing inequalities is essential (Leal Filho et al., 2022).

Creating an environment that values and encourages variety is referred to as inclusivity. The idea of inclusion makes certain that people of various cultures and genders experience respect, acceptance, and empowerment to fully engage in various social elements (Smith & Bamberger, 2021). By valuing each person's distinctive contributions and viewpoints, inclusivity develops a feeling of community and advances equality. In order to promote social cohesion, well-being, and sustainable development, the scientific study emphasizes the significance of inclusivity in culture and gender. The practical aspect of inclusivity is to emphasize the significance of defending the rights of indigenous peoples and members of minority cultural and linguistic groups (Hatzikidi et al., 2021).

There are several ways to communicate inclusive movements towards minority groups and cultures. Through the medium of art and design, expressions of inclusivity of minority cultures and gender groups are frequently made. In order to convey inclusivity, artists and designers use works of art and design goods. One of the design disciplines that can be utilized to express social issues nonverbally is fashion (Linfante, 2021). Fashion is an interdisciplinary media that can depict cultural issues as a type of nonverbal communication (Castaldo Lundén, 2020). Therefore, by being represented through fashion, marginalized communities, and minority cultures can be more understood and respected.

Story of Hope is a fashion collection that is the subject of this research. The apparel for men from this collection embodies the idea of gender-fluid fashion in a dramatically eclectic design. The issue raised in this essay is: How is the Story of Hope fashion design work inclusive of local culture and gender minority groups? How is the concept of inclusion translated into a visual language through the composition of design elements the subject of this paper? How are meanings conveyed through symbols in the visual arts? The purpose of the research is to find out how inclusivity can be communicated through fashion through visual symbols that are contained in the composition of design elements and trends. Another goal is to make fashion a powerful communication tool in promoting the inclusivity movement related to minority cultures and gender groups so as to increase audience awareness of the importance of the concept in a social system that upholds diversity.

2. Literature Review

In his book *The Language of Fashion*, Roland Barthes expanded on Saussure's thesis and discussed fashion as a symbol system. Language is dress, while parole is dressing, according to Barthes, who expanded on this idea to include the world of fashion. Fashion, in the language of fashion, refers to the social norms that define clothes, including the model/type of clothing and the social norms that support it. In contrast, dressing or the expression of each individual through the clothes they choose to wear is known as parole (Barthes, 2005). According to Barthes, there are two levels of semiology for signs: denotation, which is the first level, and connotation, which is the second level. The clear meaning is called denotation, which can also be said to be a specific description of a sign. Connotation is the meaning connected to social and cultural values or it can be said that the meaning implied by a sign.

The foundation of postmodern aesthetics that is used as the basis for the approach in the preparation of the design concept is fashion as a bricolage product. The creation of the design takes from various stylistic elements, both past and present. However, unlike the pastiche approach which is meaningless, the hybrid style born from this design concept has meaning and purpose (Piliang, 2012). Another aesthetic approach used as the basis of the study is deconstruction aesthetics. The concept of deconstruction is part of postmodern philosophy. Deconstruction theory was introduced by Jaques Derrida as a method of reading a text. Furthermore, deconstruction theory is also used as a foundation for analyzing an art and design object. Piliang revealed that Derrida's concept of deconstruction is an analytical method to dismantle the structure of binary opposition to bring up an endless game of signs and final meaning (Piliang, 2012). Deconstruction aesthetics has principles such as anti-logocentric, anti-synthesis, anti-functional, and anti-order. The deconstruction approach can articulate philosophical concepts with many sides, so there is no absolute truth. The anti-synthesis deconstruction principle provides space for the visualization of intuition. The concept of deconstruction provides space to creatively develop the relationship between form and function (Geczy & Karaminas, 2020).

3. Method

This paper is the result of qualitative research. Writing the research results with descriptive-qualitative methods. The descriptive qualitative method is used as a research approach that focuses on providing a detailed and thorough description of the concept of cultural and gender minority inclusivity through fashion design. This method involves collecting and analyzing data through observation techniques, interviews, and analyzing literature studies to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject of interest.

Primary research was conducted using direct observation and expert interviews. The observation method was carried out by direct observation of the 'Story of Hope' design product object. The data obtained was in the form of visual data recordings related to shape, color, motif, texture, and sense-impression both physically and psychologically. The research data was also strengthened by the results of interviews with experts in the field of fashion. The interview technique was carried out using the in-depth interview method, namely digging up the necessary information/data by face-to-face interviews with informants. Secondary data was obtained through literature studies through scientific references related to the topic of cultural inclusiveness and gender minorities, as well as fashion studies as a medium of communication. The theoretical approach used in analyzing the research data is Barthes' semiotics of fashion as language and parole, as well as the study of denotation-connotation meaning. The second approach is postmodern aesthetic studies related to deconstruction and bricolage.

The object of research in this paper is Story of Hope's gender-fluid menswear collection. The research variables are related to the context of inclusivity, culture, and gender fluidity. The research limitation is the study of inclusivity in the Story of Hope collection through visual analysis of the design elements based on the perspective of creation based on the results of observations and interviews.

4. Discussion

Story of Hope is a fashion collection resulting from a collaborative project between Indonesian and South African designers driven by the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia Pretoria. The collaboration aims to improve diplomatic relations through cross-cultural and creative industries, especially fashion. The fashion work reviewed in this paper is the work of Indonesian designer Weda Githa, namely ready-to-wear deluxe menswear with a gender-fluid concept. Fashion can be used as a medium of communication to convey history, identity, status, function, and social role (Barnard, 2011). The Story of Hope collection represents inclusivity through visual indicators of its constituent design elements.

The term "inclusivity" describes the action of valuing and welcoming variety. Through inclusive practices, everyone can feel accepted, respected, and empowered to fully engage in their social environment, regardless of their background, identity, or other qualities. The practice of inclusivity entails developing settings, regulations, and procedures that support equity in access, representation, and opportunity for all persons. A sense of belonging and unity within communities and organizations is fostered by inclusivity, which acknowledges and celebrates the distinctive contributions and perspectives of every individual. The idea of inclusiveness aims to dismantle barriers, advance social justice, and build a more equitable society where everyone may prosper and receive respect and dignity. The idea of inclusivity is something that can be seen throughout Weda Githa's Story of Hope collection, related to culture and gender.

Semiotician Roland Barthes sees fashion as a language and a method of communication that manifests itself in parole. According to Barthes, fashion may function as a language, communicating ideas and concepts via symbolic components, personal style, and cultural allusions. Fashion uses signs and symbols, just like spoken or written language, to convey ideas and express identities.

Clothing, accessories, colors, patterns, and styles are just a few examples of the many indicators that are used in fashion as a language to communicate unique meanings and cultural customs. These symbols can be understood in certain social and historical settings since they are dynamic and constantly changing. Wearing traditional attire, for

instance, might symbolize cultural heritage and identity. Several visual indications in the form of iconography, materials, and forms can be used to analyze the degree of cultural inclusion in Story of Hope works.



Figure 1: Batik and Shweshwe Traditional Textile as a Cultural Indicator

Figure 1 shows the contemporary ready-to-wear menswear collection. There are several visual indicators used as signs to convey meaning and messages related to culture. The materials used in the design are batik cloth and shweshwe. Batik fabric is one of Indonesia's cultural icons while shweshwe is a South African cultural icon. Based on Barthes' semiotic approach, the meaning contained in the visual of Figure 1 can be analyzed through denotation and connotation meanings. The denotation meaning of the fashion work in Figure 1 is men's fashion that uses traditional fabric materials. However, the representation of the symbolic meaning of the fashion work in the picture is the second level of meaning analysis, namely connotation meaning. The use of batik and shweshwe fabric has a development of meaning.

The connotation meaning can develop as follows; the historical relationship between the two countries of Indonesia and South Africa that has occurred since the 18th century. The relationship occurred because of the history of slavery and the exile of Indonesians by the Dutch to the South African region. The merging of the two cultural icons signifies an ongoing relationship of diplomacy and collaboration. The next development of connotation is representing local culture through contemporary fashion. Indonesia and South Africa are not major players on the global fashion stage (Adebayo, 2019). This work represents that minority cultures can be promoted to a global audience through fashion products. The use of traditional materials can also be interpreted as an effort to preserve culture through a new form, namely contemporary fashion. Thus, the local culture can be recognized by a wider audience and younger generation, thus supporting the sustainability of batik and shweshwe fabrics themselves.

Another cultural icon is the use of the sarong as an Indonesian fashion identity. Figure 1 shows the contemporary use of the sarong as a trendy fashion item. Just like traditional cloth, the sarong icon shows cultural identity, but on the other hand, the shape of the sarong that has been modified into a contemporary style has created novelty in the image of the sarong itself. The second level of connotation is campaigning for the 'sarong is my new style' movement and also introducing the sarong to the global fashion scene. It implies an inclusive effort towards local culture through fashion as a global language.

On the other hand, Barthes' parole theory perspective speaks of the unique manifestation or expression of fashion within the more general language of fashion. Parole is the practice of expressing one's identity, ideas, and personal preferences through dress. People utilize fashion to express their individual style, fusing various components to

develop their fashion identity and spread it to others. Parole enables people to experiment with fashion, question conventions, and develop fresh interpretations of the language of fashion.



Figure 2: Fashion as parole

Fashion as parole can be observed through how the clothes are used. Figure 2 is used to analyze the symbolic meaning through the fashion as parole approach. The analysis of the design work is not only observed through the shape and details of the clothes, but supporting factors such as; how the clothes are used, body language, and the expression of the user in the picture are also used to communicate meaning. The denotative meaning analysis of Figure 2 shows two men wearing exotic dramatic-style clothing consisting of tops, bottoms, and outers. What is more interesting is the analysis of the connotation meaning associated with fashion as parole. The second-level connotation meaning of the design work in Figure 2 shows a connection to the context of gender minority inclusivity.

The symbolic meanings communicated through visual indicators and how fashion products are used are efforts to foster awareness of the existence of gender minority groups, acceptance of the concept of gender diversity, and reconstruction of gender identity. These concepts are communicated through fashion. Gender inclusivity in Figures 1 and 2 is shown with gender-fluid fashion, which is the borrowing of feminine characters in menswear. Feminine characteristics such as the shape of the crop top cut, the wide flare silhouette on the pants, the high slit of the sarong, and the use of accessories such as earrings are stereotypes of feminine fashion. The borrowing of feminine characters is a challenge to conventional men's fashion styles (Eum & An, 2022). The gender-fluid context breaks down the binary gender boundaries of male and female fashion stereotypes.

The results of an interview with expert photographer Ajung Parawira, the photography in Figure 2 depicts emotional intimacy between two men known as the popular term bromance. The model's gimmicks, poses, and expressions in presenting the clothes create a fluid impression between feminine and masculine characters. The concept of bromance in Figure 2 is in line with the provocative gender-fluid fashion character in challenging the stigma of toxic masculinity and heteronormativity. Figure 2 shows the overhaul of heteronormative values through fashion and how the fashion is presented through the gimmicks and expressions of its users.

Analysis of Figure 2 shows a campaign related to minority gender inclusivity communicated through fashion. Gender inclusivity through gender-fluid fashion in menswear is a progressive movement that aims to challenge traditional norms and stereotypes associated with clothing and gender roles. This emerging trend celebrates the idea that clothing should not be confined to rigid gender boundaries, but rather be a means of self-expression, allowing everyone to explore and embrace their unique identity.

The beauty of gender-fluid menswear lies in the context of the versatility and freedom it gives to its wearers. It challenges pre-existing notions of how men should dress and encourages a more inclusive and open-minded approach to fashion. According to an interview with Ali Charisma, chairman of Fashion Chamber Indonesia, gender-fluid fashion frees individuals from the confines of societal expectations, where everyone can mix and match styles, materials, and silhouettes to create ensembles that fit who they are. The gender inclusion movement also has the potential to foster a more accepting society, as it encourages dialog and understanding of the complexities of gender identity. Accepting gender-fluid fashion in menswear signifies the fashion industry's consistency and commitment to progress and equality.

Figure 2's examination of the parole notion by Barthes can also be read as demonstrating an effort to promote gender inclusion through menswear that embraces gender fluidity, encourages acceptance, and challenges outmoded preconceptions. As the movement gains strength, it opens the door to a more sympathetic and understanding society where everyone is valued and allowed to express themselves freely.

To fully comprehend the significance of the story of hope design work, analysis utilizing the deconstruction and bricolage aesthetic method is also applied. A revolutionary strategy that contests long-standing conventions and constructions in the fashion business is the deconstruction of aesthetics in gender-fluid fashion. Deconstruction, which has its roots in postmodern philosophy, aims to overthrow preexisting notions and hierarchies in order to create space for a more inclusive and fluid view of gender and clothing.

In order to promote a more open and liberated approach to self-expression, deconstruction aesthetics in gender-fluid fashion strives to dismantle the strict binary divide between men's and women's apparel. By disassembling and reinventing clothing, Story of Hope's work blurs the boundaries between typically masculine and feminine aspects. Deconstruction can be used to produce clothing that defies classification by combining different textiles, experimenting with proportions, and using asymmetry.



Figure 3: Eclectic style in the Story of Hope Collection

Figure 3 shows the aesthetics of bricolage and deconstruction used as the basis for the creation of the Story of Hope artwork. Bricolage in fashion, related to the context of postmodernism, is a creative and innovative approach that involves using different and diverse elements to build a new and unique style. Bricolage in fashion emphasizes resourcefulness and the ability to reuse existing materials and ideas in unconventional ways. The Story of Hope fashion works in Figures 1, 2, and 3 clearly apply the concept of bricolage by combining traditional styles with contemporary trends. Figure 3 shows a modified sarong paired with a top in the form of a long Western-style outer. In Figure 3, it can be seen that the modern western style meets the exotic eastern style.

Bricolage, a concept that questions the notion of a single, unified style in the postmodern fashion environment, celebrates the fusion of allusions and influences from other cultures, historical eras, and styles. By using this technique, fashion designers and consumers can challenge conventional fashion standards and adopt a more inclusive and flexible view of style. The concept is consistent with the connotative meaning that is revealed at the second level of meaning, which is cooperation and bilateral ties between the two countries symbolized by fashion design pieces.

The concept of bricolage in fashion has a close relationship with eclecticism. Eclectic fashion refers to the practice of combining different elements or styles that may seem unrelated at first glance, creating visually captivating and unconventional ensembles. Bricolage can be seen as a manifestation of eclecticism in action, as it involves assembling diverse and often unexpected components into a harmonious whole. This statement is implemented in the use of different materials between batik and shweshwe, a fusion of traditional and contemporary styles. The composition of diverse elements such as colors, motifs, and shapes are also combined to bring novelty to the work. The symbolic meaning of the bricolage concept is an inclusive movement for the diversity of minority cultures to be shown to the global fashion scene. Through this, it is hoped that awareness of these minority cultures and gender groups will increase in a more positive direction.

5. Conclusion

Fashion encompasses a complex web of meanings, symbols, and expressions in addition to the actual materiality of clothing. As people interpret and develop their fashion identities by the choices they make regarding their attire and personal style, fashion enables them to take part in the continuing conversation between cultural and social codes. In the end, fashion turns into a potent medium for cultural expression, social identification, and self-expression.

A freeing and transforming movement, deconstruction aesthetics in gender-fluid fashion enables people to express themselves in their truest form. This design offers the way to a more diverse, inventive, and sustainable fashion business that appreciates each person's uniqueness by challenging conventional norms and embracing fluidity. In addition to increasing acceptance and understanding of the complexity of gender and identity, it is a significant factor in bringing about positive change in the fashion industry.

The celebration of creative freedom, inclusion, and sustainability in postmodern fashion and the idea of eclecticism are intertwined. Designers and consumers can develop distinctive and expressive looks that subvert established conventions and advance a more progressive and open-minded fashion industry by embracing a variety of influences and trends. By empowering people to actively participate in shaping their own personal fashion narrative, this strategy promotes a more diverse and ethical industry.

The results show that the Story of Hope design collection can be used as a communication medium to raise readers' awareness of the context of inclusiveness in minority cultures and marginalized gender groups. Advances in information technology in the era of globalization have provided opportunities for local cultures and gender minority groups to be better known. The gender-fluid fashion collection Story of Hope is an example of work that can represent

Fashion can serve as a vehicle for advancing and increasing awareness of cultural inclusion and gender diversity movements, as demonstrated by the Story of Hope Collaboration Project. The Story of Hope collection was developed as a potent medium for representing and elevating gender diversity and inclusivity in minority cultures, rather than merely as a means of self-expression or trend-driven design work. Story of Hope Fashion has the power to change lives by going beyond the domain of tangible goods and into the social commentary and cultural dialogue that it touches.

Benefits to society include the ability to use the Story of Hope fashion collection as a vehicle for activism that actively advocates tolerance, acts as a spark for a larger conversation about diversity and acceptance, and pushes for a more understanding and tolerant society. The Story of Hope joint effort can fundamentally represent the dynamically changing nature of culture. This fashion line has the ability to upend preconceived notions about beauty, dispel prejudices, and honor the diverse range of identities that comprise our international society. Through this lens of transformation, fashion becomes a dynamic force for change, igniting discussions and clearing the path for a more tolerant and inclusive society.

One useful outcome of the Story of Hope collaborative effort is that it encourages the reintroduction and conservation of traditional fabrics to ensure their sustainability. The idea can help traditional fabric industry companies and artisans thrive in the modern fashion sector.

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Conflict of interest:

The authors declare that there is no competing interest.

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