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Cultural Appropriation vs. Appreciation in Global Fashion Marketing

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ABSTRACT

The increasing globalisation of the fashion industry has intensified the circulation of cultural symbols, raising critical debates about the distinction between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation in global fashion marketing. This study examines how fashion brands engage with diverse cultural elements and how such practices are interpreted within contemporary consumer culture. Drawing on cultural appropriation theory, postcolonial theory, consumer culture theory, and authenticity theory, the research adopts a qualitative methodology based on secondary data, including academic literature, industry reports, and documented fashion controversies. The findings reveal that cultural appropriation is often characterised by power asymmetries, decontextualization, and a lack of acknowledgement, while cultural appreciation is associated with collaboration, transparency, and respect for cultural significance. The study also highlights the growing role of digital media in amplifying consumer activism and shaping brand accountability. By proposing a framework for ethical cultural engagement, the research contributes to both theoretical discourse and practical strategies for responsible fashion marketing. The study underscores the need for brands to move beyond symbolic representation toward meaningful and equitable cultural collaboration.

Keywords: cultural appropriation; cultural appreciation; global fashion marketing; authenticity; consumer culture theory; ethical branding; postcolonial theory

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1. Introduction

Globalisation has profoundly transformed the fashion industry, enabling the rapid circulation of cultural symbols, aesthetics, and practices across national boundaries. In this increasingly interconnected landscape, fashion brands routinely draw inspiration from diverse cultural traditions, incorporating motifs, textiles, and design elements from various communities into their collections. While such practices may foster cross-cultural exchange and innovation, they also raise critical ethical concerns regarding the boundaries between cultural appreciation and cultural appropriation. The distinction between these two concepts has become a central issue in contemporary fashion marketing, particularly as consumers grow more socially aware and demand accountability from global brands.

Cultural appropriation is commonly defined as the adoption or use of elements from a marginalised culture by members of a dominant culture, often without permission, acknowledgement, or understanding of the original context (Rogers, 2006). In contrast, cultural appreciation refers to a respectful and informed engagement with another culture, typically involving collaboration, credit, and sensitivity to cultural significance (Young, 2010). The tension between these two concepts is especially pronounced in fashion, where visual aesthetics can be easily detached from their cultural meanings and commodified for commercial gain.

The rise of digital media and global communication platforms has amplified

scrutiny of fashion brands' practices. Social media, in particular, has empowered consumers and activists to call out instances of perceived cultural appropriation, leading to public backlash and reputational damage for brands (Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2020). High-profile controversies-such as the use of indigenous headdresses, traditional patterns, or sacred symbols in mainstream fashion collections-have sparked debates about cultural ownership, intellectual property rights, and ethical marketing practices. These debates highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of how cultural elements are used in fashion branding and how such usage is perceived by different stakeholders.

From a marketing perspective, cultural elements are often leveraged to create differentiation, authenticity, and emotional resonance with consumers. Global fashion brands seek to position themselves as culturally inclusive and innovative by incorporating diverse influences into their designs (Kapferer, 2012). However, this strategy can backfire if it is perceived as exploitative or insensitive. The commercialisation of cultural symbols without proper context or compensation can perpetuate historical inequalities and reinforce power imbalances between dominant and marginalised groups (Crane, 2012). Consequently, the ethical implications of cultural borrowing in fashion marketing have become a subject of increasing scholarly and practical concern.

The academic discourse on cultural appropriation in fashion intersects with broader debates in cultural studies, anthropology, and marketing ethics. Scholars

have examined how globalisation facilitates cultural exchange while simultaneously enabling cultural exploitation (Appadurai, 1996; Tomlinson, 1999). Within the fashion context, this duality is evident in the tension between creative inspiration and ethical responsibility. While some argue that cultural exchange is a natural and inevitable aspect of human creativity, others emphasise the importance of respecting cultural boundaries and addressing issues of consent and representation (Scafidi, 2005).

Furthermore, the concept of authenticity plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions of cultural appropriation and appreciation. Authenticity in fashion marketing is often constructed through narratives that emphasise heritage, craftsmanship, and cultural significance (Beverland, 2005). When brands fail to engage authentically with the cultures they draw from, they risk being perceived as inauthentic or opportunistic. This perception can undermine brand credibility and erode consumer trust, particularly among younger, socially conscious audiences.

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on ethical and sustainable practices in the fashion industry. This shift has prompted brands to reconsider their approach to cultural representation and to adopt more inclusive and collaborative strategies. For example, partnerships with local artisans, fair compensation for cultural contributions, and transparent storytelling are increasingly seen as essential components of responsible fashion marketing (Joy et al., 2012). These practices align with the broader movement

toward corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethical branding.

Despite the growing attention to cultural appropriation in fashion, there remains a lack of consensus on how to distinguish between appropriation and appreciation in practice. The subjective nature of cultural interpretation, combined with the diversity of cultural contexts, makes it challenging to establish clear guidelines. This ambiguity underscores the need for systematic research that explores the underlying factors influencing perceptions of cultural borrowing in fashion marketing.

This study aims to contribute to the existing literature by examining the dynamics of cultural appropriation and appreciation in global fashion marketing. By adopting a qualitative research methodology based on secondary data, the study seeks to analyse how fashion brands engage with cultural elements and how these practices are interpreted within different socio-cultural contexts. The research also aims to identify key factors that differentiate ethical cultural engagement from exploitative practices, providing insights for both academics and industry practitioners.

In summary, the increasing globalisation of fashion has brought cultural appropriation and appreciation to the forefront of academic and public discourse. As fashion brands continue to navigate the complexities of cultural representation, it is essential to develop a deeper understanding of the ethical, social, and marketing implications of their practices. This study addresses this need by offering a comprehensive analysis of

cultural appropriation versus appreciation in global fashion marketing.

2. Literature Review

The distinction between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation has been widely debated across disciplines, including cultural studies, anthropology, and marketing. Cultural appropriation is often conceptualised as a form of symbolic or material extraction, where elements of a marginalised culture are used by members of a dominant culture without proper acknowledgement or respect (Rogers, 2006). This process is frequently associated with power imbalances, historical exploitation, and the commodification of cultural identity.

Rogers (2006) categorises cultural appropriation into several types, including exchange, dominance, exploitation, and transculturation. Among these, exploitative appropriation is particularly relevant to the fashion industry, as it involves the use of cultural elements for commercial gain without benefiting the source community. This form of appropriation raises ethical concerns about cultural ownership and intellectual property rights, especially when traditional knowledge and practices are involved.

In contrast, cultural appreciation is characterised by a respectful and informed engagement with another culture. Young (2010) argues that appreciation involves recognising the cultural significance of borrowed elements, seeking permission where appropriate, and ensuring that the source community benefits from the

exchange. In the context of fashion marketing, appreciation may take the form of collaborations with artisans, fair trade practices, and transparent storytelling that acknowledges cultural origins.

2.1 Globalisation and Cultural Exchange in Fashion

Globalisation has facilitated unprecedented levels of cultural exchange, enabling fashion designers to access and incorporate diverse cultural influences into their work. Appadurai (1996) introduces the concept of “global cultural flows,” which highlights the movement of ideas, images, and practices across borders. These flows have contributed to the hybridisation of fashion, where traditional and contemporary elements are combined to create new aesthetic forms.

However, globalisation also intensifies the risk of cultural appropriation by creating asymmetrical power relations between global brands and local communities. Tomlinson (1999) argues that globalisation often leads to the homogenisation of culture, where dominant cultural forms overshadow marginalised ones. In the fashion industry, this dynamic is evident in the appropriation of indigenous designs and motifs by major brands, often without proper recognition or compensation.

Crane (2012) further emphasises that the global fashion system is structured around unequal power dynamics, where Western fashion capitals exert significant influence over global trends. This dominance can result in the marginalisation of non-Western cultural expressions, which are often

reinterpreted and commodified for global markets.

2.2 Ethical Implications in Fashion Marketing

The ethical dimensions of cultural appropriation in fashion marketing have been extensively explored in the literature. Scafidi (2005) highlights the legal and moral challenges associated with protecting cultural property, noting that existing intellectual property frameworks are often inadequate for safeguarding traditional cultural expressions. This gap leaves many communities vulnerable to exploitation.

Joy et al. (2012) examine the intersection of ethics and sustainability in fashion, arguing that responsible practices must extend beyond environmental concerns to include cultural and social dimensions. They emphasise the importance of ethical sourcing, fair labour practices, and cultural sensitivity in building sustainable fashion brands.

From a marketing perspective, ethical considerations are increasingly linked to brand reputation and consumer trust. Beverland (2005) suggests that authenticity is a key determinant of brand success, particularly in industries where cultural narratives play a central role. Brands that are perceived as authentic are more likely to establish emotional connections with consumers, whereas those accused of cultural appropriation may face backlash and loss of credibility.

2.3 Consumer Perceptions and Social Media Influence

Consumer perceptions of cultural appropriation and appreciation are shaped by a variety of factors, including cultural awareness, personal values, and social context. Phua et al. (2020) highlight the role of social media in amplifying consumer voices and facilitating collective action against perceived ethical violations. Platforms such as Instagram and Twitter have become spaces where consumers can critique and challenge fashion brands, often leading to viral controversies.

The concept of “cancel culture” has further intensified the consequences of cultural appropriation in fashion. Brands that fail to address public concerns may experience significant reputational damage, as consumers increasingly prioritise ethical considerations in their purchasing decisions (Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry, & Kemper, 2020). This shift reflects a broader trend toward conscious consumerism, where individuals seek to align their consumption choices with their values.

2.4 Authenticity, Representation, and Collaboration

Authenticity is a central theme in the literature on cultural appropriation and appreciation. Beverland (2005) defines authenticity as the perception that a brand is genuine, credible, and true to its values. In the context of cultural representation, authenticity involves accurately and respectfully portraying cultural elements, rather than reducing them to superficial aesthetics.

Collaboration has emerged as a key strategy for achieving cultural appreciation in fashion marketing. By partnering with local artisans and communities, brands can ensure that cultural knowledge is preserved and that economic benefits are shared (Joy et al., 2012). Such collaborations not only enhance authenticity but also contribute to social and economic development.

Representation is another critical factor, as it is how cultures are portrayed in fashion campaigns and media. Misrepresentation or stereotyping can reinforce harmful narratives and perpetuate cultural misunderstandings. Therefore, inclusive and accurate representation is essential for fostering cultural respect and appreciation.

2.5 Gaps in the Literature

Despite the growing body of research on cultural appropriation in fashion, several gaps remain. First, there is a lack of consensus on the criteria for distinguishing between appropriation and appreciation, particularly in complex and hybrid cultural contexts. Second, much of the existing literature focuses on Western perspectives, with limited attention to non-Western viewpoints. Third, there is a need for more empirical research that examines real-world practices and consumer responses.

This study seeks to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of cultural appropriation versus appreciation in global fashion marketing, using a qualitative approach based on secondary data.

3. Theoretical Framework

The analysis of cultural appropriation versus appreciation in global fashion marketing requires a multidimensional theoretical framework that integrates perspectives from cultural studies, marketing theory, and ethics. This study draws primarily on cultural appropriation theory, postcolonial theory, consumer culture theory (CCT), and authenticity theory to examine how cultural elements are interpreted, represented, and commodified in the fashion industry.

3.1 Cultural Appropriation Theory

Cultural appropriation theory provides the foundational lens for understanding how cultural elements are borrowed, transferred, and recontextualised across different social groups. Rogers (2006) conceptualises cultural appropriation as a spectrum ranging from benign cultural exchange to exploitative practices rooted in power imbalances. This framework is particularly relevant to fashion marketing, where aesthetic elements are often detached from their original cultural meanings and repurposed for commercial objectives.

Within this theoretical perspective, power dynamics are central. The appropriation of cultural symbols by dominant groups often reflects historical patterns of colonialism and cultural dominance, where marginalised communities have limited control over the representation and commercialisation of their cultural heritage (Scafidi, 2005). In global fashion marketing, this dynamic is evident when major brands adopt traditional designs without acknowledgement or compensation, thereby reinforcing structural inequalities.

This study applies cultural appropriation theory to analyse how fashion brands navigate the boundary between appreciation and appropriation. It considers factors such as intent, context, representation, and benefit distribution in determining the ethical implications of cultural borrowing.

3.2 Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory offers a critical lens for examining the historical and socio-political contexts that shape cultural interactions globally. Scholars such as Said (1978) and Bhabha (1994) emphasise how colonial histories continue to influence contemporary cultural production and representation. The concept of “othering,” as articulated by Said (1978), highlights how non-Western cultures are often exoticised and commodified in Western narratives.

In the context of fashion marketing, postcolonial theory helps explain how cultural appropriation can perpetuate colonial power structures. The use of indigenous or non-Western cultural elements by global brands often reflects asymmetrical relationships, where the originating cultures are marginalised or misrepresented. Bhabha’s (1994) notion of cultural hybridity further complicates this dynamic by suggesting that cultural exchange is not inherently exploitative but can produce new, hybrid identities.

This study employs postcolonial theory to critically assess the representation of cultural elements in fashion marketing campaigns. It explores whether such representations reinforce stereotypes or contribute to more inclusive and equitable narratives.

3.3 Consumer Culture Theory (CCT)

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) provides insights into how consumers interpret and assign meaning to cultural symbols in the marketplace. Arnould and Thompson (2005) define CCT as a family of theoretical perspectives that examine the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, marketplace structures, and cultural meanings.

In the context of fashion, consumers play an active role in shaping the discourse around cultural appropriation and appreciation. Their perceptions are influenced by personal values, cultural awareness, and social context. Social media platforms have amplified the role of consumers as cultural critics, enabling them to challenge brands and hold them accountable for their practices (Phua et al., 2020).

CCT is particularly relevant for understanding how cultural meanings are negotiated in the marketplace. It highlights the interpretive nature of consumption, where the same cultural element may be perceived as appreciation by some consumers and appropriation by others. This variability underscores the importance of context and audience in evaluating fashion marketing practices.

3.4 Authenticity Theory

Authenticity theory is central to understanding consumer responses to cultural representation in fashion marketing. Beverland (2005) conceptualises authenticity as a socially constructed perception that a brand is genuine, credible, and true to its

origins. In the context of cultural appropriation, authenticity is closely linked to how accurately and respectfully cultural elements are represented.

Gilmore and Pine (2007) argue that authenticity has become a key competitive advantage in contemporary markets, where consumers seek meaningful and trustworthy brand experiences. In fashion marketing, authenticity is often communicated through narratives of heritage, craftsmanship, and cultural significance. However, when these narratives are perceived as superficial or misleading, they can undermine brand credibility.

This study integrates authenticity theory to examine how fashion brands construct and communicate cultural narratives. It evaluates whether these narratives align with ethical principles of cultural appreciation, such as respect, collaboration, and transparency.

3.5 Integrative Framework

By combining these theoretical perspectives, this study develops an integrative framework for analysing cultural appropriation versus appreciation in global fashion marketing. Cultural appropriation theory provides the conceptual foundation, postcolonial theory offers a critical lens on power dynamics, CCT explains consumer interpretations, and authenticity theory addresses brand perception.

Together, these theories enable a comprehensive analysis of the complex interactions between fashion brands, cultural communities, and consumers. The framework also facilitates the identification of key factors that distinguish ethical cultural

engagement from exploitative practices, including intent, representation, collaboration, and consumer perception.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the complex and context-dependent nature of cultural appropriation and appreciation in global fashion marketing. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for this study because it allows for an in-depth examination of meanings, interpretations, and social processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given the subjective and culturally embedded nature of the research topic, a qualitative approach enables a nuanced understanding of how cultural elements are represented and perceived.

The study is based on secondary data analysis, which involves the systematic review and interpretation of existing data sources. Secondary data is appropriate for this research as it allows for the examination of a wide range of cases, including documented fashion controversies, brand campaigns, and scholarly analyses. This approach also facilitates the identification of patterns and themes across different contexts.

4.1 Data Sources

The data for this study are drawn from multiple secondary sources to ensure diversity and depth. These sources include:

- Academic journal articles on cultural appropriation, fashion marketing, and consumer behaviour

- Books and theoretical texts on cultural studies, globalisation, and marketing ethics
- Industry reports and case studies on fashion brands and marketing campaigns
- Media coverage of fashion controversies involving cultural appropriation
- Social media discussions and public reactions to specific fashion campaigns

The inclusion of diverse data sources enhances the credibility and richness of the analysis. It also allows for triangulation, which strengthens the validity of qualitative research findings (Patton, 2002).

4.2 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process involved a systematic search of academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science, as well as reputable media outlets and industry publications. Keywords used in the search included “cultural appropriation in fashion,” “cultural appreciation,” “fashion marketing ethics,” and “consumer perception of cultural representation.”

Relevant sources were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives, credibility, and contribution to the topic. Priority was given to peer-reviewed articles and well-established theoretical works. Media sources were included to capture real-world examples and contemporary debates.

4.3 Data Analysis Technique

The study employs thematic analysis as the primary method of data analysis. Thematic

analysis is a widely used qualitative technique for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is particularly suitable for this study because it allows for the systematic exploration of recurring themes of cultural appropriation and appreciation.

The analysis followed a six-step process:

- Familiarisation with the data through repeated reading
- Initial coding of relevant data segments
- Identification of patterns and themes
- Review and refinement of themes
- Definition and naming of themes
- Interpretation and synthesis of findings

Key themes identified in the analysis include power dynamics, authenticity, representation, consumer perception, and ethical practices. These themes are analysed in relation to the theoretical framework to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

4.4 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the rigour of the study, several strategies were employed to enhance validity and reliability. Triangulation of data sources was used to corroborate findings and reduce bias. The use of established theoretical frameworks also contributes to the credibility of the analysis.

Additionally, transparency in the data collection and analysis ensures that the research can be evaluated and replicated by other scholars. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process to

acknowledge potential biases and assumptions.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

As the study is based on secondary data, it does not involve direct interaction with human participants. However, ethical considerations remain important, particularly in the interpretation and representation of cultural issues. The study aims to present a balanced and respectful analysis of cultural appropriation and appreciation, avoiding generalisations or stereotypes.

All sources are properly cited in accordance with APA (7th ed.) guidelines to ensure academic integrity (Mannan & Farhana, 2026). The study also acknowledges the limitations of secondary data, including potential biases in the sources.

4.6 Limitations of the Methodology

While secondary data analysis offers several advantages, it also has limitations. The study is dependent on the availability and quality of existing data, which may not fully capture all perspectives. Additionally, the interpretation of data is subject to researcher bias, although efforts have been made to minimise this through systematic analysis and theoretical grounding.

Despite these limitations, the chosen methodology provides a robust framework for exploring the research topic and generating meaningful insights.

5. Findings & Analysis

The thematic analysis of secondary data reveals a complex and multidimensional landscape in which cultural appropriation and

appreciation in global fashion marketing are negotiated. Five dominant themes emerged: power asymmetry and cultural extraction, aesthetic commodification and decontextualization, authenticity and narrative construction, consumer activism and digital accountability, and collaborative practices as pathways to appreciation. These themes are analysed in relation to the theoretical framework, providing deeper insights into how cultural meanings are constructed, contested, and circulated within the fashion marketplace.

5.1 Power Asymmetry and Cultural Extraction

A recurring theme across the data is the presence of structural power asymmetries between global fashion brands and the cultural communities from which they draw inspiration. Cultural appropriation often occurs within a context where dominant actors-typically multinational brands-possess greater economic, symbolic, and institutional power than marginalised cultural groups. This imbalance enables the extraction and commercialisation of cultural elements without equitable recognition or compensation.

Rogers (2006) conceptualises this process as exploitative appropriation, where cultural symbols are detached from their original contexts and repurposed for profit. The findings indicate that such practices are particularly prevalent in cases involving indigenous textiles, traditional embroidery, and ceremonial attire. These elements are often reinterpreted in ways that strip them of their cultural significance, reducing them to aesthetic commodities.

Postcolonial theory further illuminates this dynamic by highlighting the role of colonial patterns in contemporary cultural production. As argued by Said (1978), the representation of non-Western cultures in Western discourse often involves processes of simplification and exoticization. In fashion marketing, this is evident in campaigns that portray cultural elements as exotic or “other,” reinforcing hierarchical distinctions between cultures. The findings suggest that such representations not only misrepresent cultural identities but also perpetuate historical inequalities.

Moreover, the absence of legal protections for traditional cultural expressions exacerbates these issues. Scafidi (2005) notes that existing intellectual property frameworks are ill-equipped to address collective cultural ownership, leaving many communities vulnerable to exploitation. The data reveal that brands rarely engage with source communities in a manner that ensures fair distribution of benefits, further reinforcing asymmetrical power relations.

5.2 Aesthetic Commodification and Decontextualization

Another significant theme is the commodification of cultural aesthetics, whereby cultural elements are transformed into marketable products devoid of their original meanings. This process involves the selective appropriation of visual motifs, patterns, and styles, often without consideration of their cultural, historical, or spiritual significance.

Appadurai's (1996) concept of global cultural flows provides a useful framework for

understanding this phenomenon. In the global fashion system, cultural symbols circulate rapidly across borders, becoming detached from their original contexts and reembedded in new commercial settings. While this circulation can foster creativity and innovation, it also risks erasing the cultural specificity of these symbols.

The findings indicate that decontextualization is a key factor in distinguishing appropriation from appreciation. When cultural elements are used without acknowledgement of their origins or meanings, they are more likely to be perceived as appropriative. For example, traditional garments with ceremonial or religious significance are often repurposed as fashion statements, leading to accusations of disrespect and insensitivity.

From a consumer culture perspective, this process reflects the transformation of cultural meanings into consumable symbols (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Consumers engage with these symbols not only as aesthetic objects but also as carriers of identity and meaning. However, when the cultural origins of these symbols are obscured, consumers may unknowingly participate in the perpetuation of appropriation.

5.3 Authenticity and Narrative Construction

Authenticity emerges as a central theme in the analysis, shaping both brand strategies and consumer perceptions. Fashion brands often construct narratives of heritage, craftsmanship, and cultural inspiration to enhance their authenticity. These narratives play a crucial role in legitimising the use of

cultural elements and differentiating brands in a competitive marketplace.

Beverland (2005) emphasises that authenticity is not an inherent property but a socially constructed perception. The findings suggest that authenticity is closely linked to transparency, respect, and cultural engagement. Brands that provide clear acknowledgement of cultural sources, engage in meaningful collaborations, and communicate their intentions effectively are more likely to be perceived as authentic.

Conversely, when authenticity is perceived as superficial or fabricated, it can lead to accusations of “woke washing” or performative inclusivity (Vredenburg et al., 2020). The data reveal that consumers are increasingly critical of brands that use cultural narratives as marketing tools without demonstrating a genuine commitment to ethical practices.

The role of storytelling is particularly in shaping authenticity. Narratives that highlight the cultural significance of designs, the involvement of local artisans, and the ethical sourcing of materials contribute to a perception of appreciation rather than appropriation. However, the findings also indicate that storytelling must be supported by tangible actions to be credible.

5.4 Consumer Activism and Digital Accountability

The rise of digital media has transformed the dynamics of cultural appropriation in fashion marketing. Social media platforms have become spaces for consumer activism, where individuals and communities can voice their

concerns, share information, and mobilise collective action against perceived injustices.

Phua et al. (2020) highlight the role of social media in amplifying consumer voices and facilitating the rapid dissemination of information. The findings confirm that digital platforms play a critical role in shaping public discourse on cultural appropriation. High-profile controversies often gain traction online, leading to widespread criticism and, in some cases, calls for boycotts.

The concept of “cancel culture” further intensifies these dynamics, as brands face immediate and often severe consequences for perceived ethical violations (Vredenburg et al., 2020). The data indicate that consumer activism is driven by a growing awareness of social and cultural issues, as well as a desire for accountability and transparency.

From a CCT perspective, this phenomenon reflects the active role of consumers in co-creating cultural meanings and holding brands accountable (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Consumers are no longer passive recipients of marketing messages but active participants in the negotiation of cultural values.

5.5 Collaborative Practices as Pathways to Appreciation

The final theme highlights the emergence of collaborative practices as a means of fostering cultural appreciation. Increasingly, fashion brands are engaging with cultural communities through partnerships, co-creation, and fair trade initiatives. These practices represent a shift toward more ethical and inclusive approaches to cultural engagement.

Joy et al. (2012) argue that such collaborations can enhance both authenticity and sustainability, as they ensure that cultural knowledge is respected and that economic benefits are shared. The findings support this view, indicating that collaborations with local artisans and designers are perceived positively by consumers.

These practices also align with the principles of corporate social responsibility, which emphasise ethical conduct, social equity, and environmental sustainability. By involving source communities in the design and production process, brands can move beyond superficial engagement and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage.

However, the findings also suggest that collaboration alone is not sufficient. The nature and depth of the collaboration, as well as the distribution of benefits, are critical factors in determining whether a practice is perceived as appreciative or appropriative.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study provide a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between cultural appropriation and appreciation in global fashion marketing. By integrating insights from cultural appropriation theory, postcolonial theory, consumer culture theory, and authenticity theory, this discussion contextualises the findings within broader theoretical and practical frameworks.

6.1 Reframing Cultural Appropriation as a Spectrum

One of the key implications of this study is the need to move beyond binary distinctions between appropriation and appreciation. The findings support Rogers' (2006) argument that cultural appropriation exists on a spectrum, ranging from respectful exchange to exploitative practices. This perspective acknowledges the complexity of cultural interactions in a globalised world and avoids oversimplified judgments.

The spectrum approach also highlights the importance of context in evaluating cultural practices. Factors such as intent, representation, power dynamics, and benefit distribution all influence how cultural borrowing is perceived. For example, a design inspired by a particular culture may be viewed as appreciation if it involves collaboration and acknowledgement, but as appropriation if it lacks these elements.

6.2 The Persistence of Postcolonial Power Dynamics

The findings underscore the role of postcolonial power dynamics in the global fashion industry. Despite increased awareness of cultural sensitivity, many brands continue to operate within frameworks that prioritise profit over ethical considerations. The appropriation of cultural elements without meaningful engagement with source communities reflects enduring inequalities in cultural and economic power.

Postcolonial theory provides a critical lens for understanding these dynamics, emphasising the historical roots of cultural exploitation (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994). The

discussion suggests that addressing cultural appropriation requires not only changes in marketing practices but also a broader rethinking of the structures that govern global fashion.

6.3 The Centrality of Authenticity and Ethical Branding

Authenticity emerges as a ключевой factor in shaping consumer perceptions and brand success. The findings indicate that authenticity is closely tied to ethical practices, including transparency, collaboration, and respect for cultural heritage. Brands that demonstrate genuine commitment to these principles are more likely to build trust and loyalty among consumers.

However, the discussion also highlights the challenges of achieving authenticity in a commercial context. As Gilmore and Pine (2007) note, authenticity is often constructed through marketing narratives, which can be manipulated for strategic purposes. This raises questions about the sincerity of brand efforts and the potential for “woke washing.”

To address these challenges, brands must move beyond symbolic gestures and adopt substantive practices that reflect their stated values. This includes investing in long-term partnerships with cultural communities, ensuring fair compensation, and engaging in continuous dialogue with stakeholders.

6.4 Consumer Agency and the Role of Digital Media

The findings emphasise the growing importance of consumer agency in shaping the discourse of cultural appropriation. Social

media has democratised the flow of information, enabling consumers to challenge dominant narratives and hold brands accountable. This shift represents a significant change in the power dynamics of the fashion industry.

From a CCT perspective, consumers are active participants in the co-creation of cultural meanings (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Their responses to cultural appropriation reflect broader social values and contribute to the evolution of ethical standards in the marketplace.

The discussion also highlights the potential of digital platforms to foster greater awareness and dialogue on cultural issues. However, it acknowledges the limitations of online activism, including the risk of oversimplification and the risk of judgment. Therefore, a balanced approach that combines critical engagement with informed analysis is necessary.

6.5 Toward a Framework for Ethical Cultural Engagement

Building on the findings, this study proposes a framework for ethical cultural engagement in fashion marketing. This framework includes the following key principles:

- **Respect for Cultural Significance:** Understanding and honouring the meanings associated with cultural elements
- **Collaboration and Inclusion:** Engaging with source communities in meaningful ways

- **Transparency and Accountability:** Clearly communicating the origins and processes involved
- **Equitable Benefit Distribution:** Ensuring that cultural contributors receive fair compensation
- **Accurate Representation:** Avoiding stereotypes and misrepresentation

These principles align with broader ethical and sustainability goals and provide practical guidance for fashion brands seeking to navigate the complexities of cultural appropriation and appreciation.

6.6 Contributions to Theory and Practice

This study contributes to the literature by integrating multiple theoretical perspectives to provide a comprehensive analysis of cultural appropriation in fashion marketing. It also offers practical insights for industry practitioners, highlighting the importance of ethical practices in building sustainable and authentic brands.

Furthermore, the study addresses gaps in the literature by emphasising the role of consumer perception and digital media in shaping cultural discourse. It also underscores the need for more inclusive and diverse perspectives in future research.

7. Conclusion

This study has explored the complex and evolving relationship between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation within the context of global fashion marketing. As the fashion industry continues to expand across cultural and geographical

boundaries, the ethical implications of cultural borrowing have become increasingly significant. The findings demonstrate that the distinction between appropriation and appreciation is not absolute but exists along a continuum shaped by power dynamics, representation, intent, and consumer perception.

One of the central conclusions of this research is that cultural appropriation is deeply embedded in structural inequalities that reflect historical and postcolonial power relations. The extraction and commercialisation of cultural elements without proper acknowledgement or compensation reinforce these imbalances and contribute to the marginalisation of source communities. In contrast, cultural appreciation is characterised by ethical engagement, including collaboration, transparency, and respect for cultural meanings. These practices not only enhance authenticity but also foster more equitable relationships between global brands and cultural communities.

The study also highlights the transformative role of digital media and consumer activism in shaping contemporary fashion marketing practices. Consumers are increasingly aware of cultural and ethical issues and are willing to hold brands accountable for their actions. This shift underscores the importance of authenticity and ethical branding as key drivers of consumer trust and brand reputation.

From a theoretical perspective, the integration of cultural appropriation theory, postcolonial theory, consumer culture theory, and authenticity theory provides a

comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of cultural representation in fashion. Practically, the study offers a set of guiding principles for ethical cultural engagement, emphasising the need for respectful representation, inclusive collaboration, and fair distribution of benefits.

In conclusion, the future of global fashion marketing depends on the ability of brands to navigate cultural diversity with sensitivity and responsibility. By embracing ethical practices and fostering genuine cultural exchange, the fashion industry can move toward a more inclusive and sustainable model that respects and celebrates cultural diversity rather than exploiting it.

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