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Macro trend The Evolution Of Streetwear

Streetwear is defined as “casual clothing of style worn especially by members of various youth subcultures.” Becoming global in the 1990s, streetwear evolved from various youth subcultures around the world; hip hop in the Bronx, surf and skate culture in California, sportswear, and trends in Asia’s Fashion Capitals; Tokyo and Seoul. Streetwear is still highly connected to its roots in hip hop but continues to evolve to be inclusive of the changing youth-led culture. Streetwear is considered not just as a style of dress, but an attitude of rebellion from the previous generation. Streetwear enthusiasts love to ‘sample’ styles from other subcultures & give it their personal stamp, thus configuring multiple markets for a new generation of multi-ethnic, streetwear-savvy millennials, giving new opportunities to fashion brands, designers and labels across the globe.

Comprehending the political, economic, social, technology and environmental shifts within America, South Korea and Japan’s cultures is vital to understanding the development of streetwear and its subcultures, and predicting how street’s trend will manifest in tomorrow’s fashion world.

American streetwear is the lead influence of street style around the world. Hip-Hop. In the article *The Birth of Cool*, by Carol Tulloch, she talks about how the T-Shirt is a symbol of modernity and post-modernity and the ways it can be used as a tool. T-shirts have been implemented into streetwear whether that be dressed up with a blazer and trousers or dressed down with joggers and sneakers. One thing that also became a borderline worldwide

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phenomenon is sneakerheads. A sneakerhead/sneaker culture is a sub-category within street style that focuses on sneakers and the latest style. One subculture of street wear is called “hypebeasts”. According to Bustle, a hypebeast is someone who follows trends to be considered “cool” or “in style” another definition is someone who collects clothing, accessories, and shoes for impressing others. A brand that’s almost become the face of hypebeasts is the brand “Supreme”. Supreme is a streetwear brand that was founded in 1994 in New York.

Over the past couple of years, the narrative of what it meant to be a “sneakerhead” shifted from one taking care of their shoes and have them almost be sacred to kids asking their parents to buy them the newest pair of ‘Yeezys’ and boasting about how much their outfit costs. In American shoe culture, sneakers dominate the market and sales. Sneakerheads originated in the 70’s and 80’s, when Hip Hop made its way into mainstream culture. There was no one specific incident that created the sneaker culture but it was the increase of interest in hip-hop, basketball and sneakers themselves. During the early years of Hip-Hop, two brands were big in the market, those brands being Nike and Adidas. Around the mid-80s, another brand joined the game, and it was Nike’s Jordan Brand.

As the years go by sneakers have implemented their way into athleisure wear and athletic looks along with the ability of athletic wear and shoes being associated with streetstyle. According to Statistas research on people’s “current workout wardrobe transitions

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easily into streetwear”, it shows that 28% of the respondents have 25-50% of their wardrobe that can be implemented into their wardrobe.

The thing that brings “sneakerheads” together is the mutual interest in original, exclusive and classic sneakers. Although anyone can participate in streetwear and the shoe game is very much dominated by males (with the exception of a few women such as Aleali May, a columbia alum, Sophia Chang, and Melody Ehsani. Some girls bring up the fact that they too, like sneakers and the culture that comes with it but they can’t participate in it because brands such as Nike or Adidas don’t make shoes sizes available for women. Or if they do, there are limited quantities, preventing potential customers who have smaller feet from being able to purchase.

Western clothing first appeared in Japan first appeared during the mid-nineteenth century during the Meiji era (1868-1912). During this period of radical economic, social and political reform, the government’s new slogan was “Civilization and Enlightenment”. After a long period of isolation from foreign and neighboring countries, Japan quickly found fascination in Western dress. It sparked a cultural phenomenon; a shift from Kimonos to Western styles, seen as a sign of sophistication and membership of the upper class. After World War II, fashion information from the United States and Europe began to spread throughout Japan. People in metropolitan centers in Japan-especially Tokyo- began to consume Western fashion at a rapid pace in the 1950s and 1960s; whatever trend was popular in the West was imported to Japan, or exact copies were reproduced locally. Tokyo was not considered a market where fashion was produced locally. The idea of fashion was still

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considered a Western concept, as Japanese society believes inhomogeneity and conformity; fashion and clothing are the means to indicate those slight differences (Kawamura 21)

In 1970, Kenzo Takada emerged as the first Japanese designer to show in the biannual ready-to-wear Paris fashion collections. He was famous for mixing plaids, flowers, checks, and stripes, but his identity as a Japanese designer was the focal point of his career in Paris. Western fashion professionals were provoked with an interest in Tokyo as a mysterious city with exotic, creative designers. Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons rocked Paris with a Japanese avant-garde fashion phenomenon in the the early 70s. (Kawamura 23)

Japanese design influence partially redrew the boundaries of fashion away from Western ideals of the body, body-space relations, and conventions of clothing. The principles of Western fashion increasingly incorporated non-European influences, traditions, and forms into mainstream practice, and Western appreciation for Japanese fashion, which many believed to have originated in Tokyo, quickly intensified. (Kawamura 23)

The 1980s were the decade when Tokyo was believed to be included in the order of major fashion cities and became economically powerful. Both corporations and individual consumers were wealthy. In 1989 Mitsubishi Estate Company, a Japanese real estate developer of the Mitsubishi Group, bought control of the Rockefeller Group, and the Sony Corporation bought Columbia Pictures. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law was implemented in 1986, which prohibited gender discrimination with respect to vocational training, fringe benefits, job assignment, promotion, retirement and dismissal.

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After the economic prosperity of the 1980s, economic bubbles burst after real estates and stock prices peaked in 1992, followed by a stock market crash. This led to a massive debt and the start of Japan's current economic recession.

Before the crash, working for a major corporation in Japan was believed to guarantee a permanent job, and thus lifetime stability and prosperity. The lifetime employment system was central to people's beliefs, values, norms and ideologies. The downturn in Japanese economy led to the collapse of the lifetime employment system and had countless repercussions on society such as an increase in unemployment and part-time employment; growing suicide rate among middle-aged men, declining marriage and fertility rates and growing divorce rates and single-mother households (Kawamura 40).

Japanese youth have very little hope for their future in Japan, and a widespread feeling of disillusionment, alienation uncertainty and anger permeate Japanese society among both adults and children. The youths' value system is changing. The previous generation believed in selfless devotion to employers, respect for seniors, and perseverance, but the systems that held those beliefs in place are gone. Today's Japanese teens see the assertion of individual identity as more important and meaning than that of family or company identity (Kawamura 42). Such attitudes are reflected in Japanese street fashions and subcultures.

The capital and largest city in South Korea: Seoul. "Of all the fledgling fashion weeks out there, Seoul Fashion Week – which was last held from October 16 to 21 – has attracted the most international praise. Since its inception in 2015, the South Korean capital's biannual sartorial spectacle has garnered a sizeable roster of attendees spanning editors, buyers, photographers and influencers from all over the globe. Marked by promising design talent,

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glittering street style and a genuine interest in all things style-related, Seoul's reputation as

South Asia's leading fashion capital doesn't seem to waning anytime soon." (Hypebeast)

"The fashion in Seoul moves fast and is incredibly trend-driven. It's true that designers are

good at picking up on trends, which can be both good and bad. They get criticised for

following trends too much, both at home and overseas. The other thing you hear is that the

domestic market is quite young (once you have money, you tend to shop for international

brands), and so the clothes are generally young and more commercial. It's why you see a lot

of logo hoodies, statement T-shirts, fun denim ... things like that. It's also why designers

usually have secondary diffusion lines that are purely commercial – those turn the profit,

allowing them to be a little more fashion-forward with their main label. Right now, you'll see

more young designers, many of whom studied overseas and have a lot of promise. With more

support from organisations like Seoul Fashion Week, a few of them are growing beautifully.

That said, it's also very tough to succeed here without money or celebrity interest (which is

why celebrities are such a focus at shows)." (Monica Kim)

South Korea is a strange blend of capitalism, socialism, and communism. "In 1947, the emerging Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, combined with political differences between Koreans of the two occupation zones and the policies of the occupation forces on the ground, led to a breakdown in negotiations over a unified government of Korea. On August 15, 1948, a pro-U.S. government was established in Seoul, and three weeks later a pro-Soviet government in Pyongyang. Both governments claimed to

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legitimately represent the entire Korean people, creating a situation of extreme tension across the 38th parallel. On June 25, 1950, North Korea, backed by the U.S.S.R., invaded the South and attempted to unify the peninsula by force. Under the flag of the United Nations, a U.S.-led coalition of countries came to the assistance of South Korea. The Soviet Union backed North Korea with weapons and air support, while the People's Republic of China intervened on the side of North Korea with hundreds of thousands of combat troops. In July 1953, after millions of deaths and enormous physical destruction, the war ended approximately where it began, with North and South Korea divided into roughly equal territories by the cease-fire line, a Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that still forms the boundary between North and South Korea today.” (Center for Global Education) South Korea has a civil law legal system that was influenced largely by Europe. This was established after the split between the North and South. However the US law has influenced more recent legislations, this makes it a friendly business environment. The Korean government has had enough financial resources to support economic growth. considered the biggest economy and world's 12th purchasing power. It's capitalistic policies supports strong economic growth. Korea is a technology-driven country with headquarters of several tech giants. E commerce, subscriptions services, and personalized services to customers comprise it's current retail environment. In addition it has the highest standard of living in Asia. “South Korea has excellent medical care with state-of-the-art equipment and high-quality service, especially in the larger cities such as Busan and Seoul. In fact, South Korea is becoming an increasingly

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important medical tourism destination. Both public and private healthcare are available. The National Health Insurance (NHI) is a mandatory, universal national health insurance program operated by Korean Ministry of Health. Foreign nationals must enroll in the program unless they have equal coverage from the national insurance in their home country or by insurance provided by an employer. To participate in the NHI system, foreign nationals must first have an Alien Registration Card (ARC).” (GoinGlobal).

Although South Korea is advanced in terms of technology and academic competitiveness, Koreans tend to be more conservative in their values. For example, “in 2017, the library of Seoul National University was the biggest academic library in South Korea, planning to spend over ten billion South Korean won on book purchases” (Statista). The youth of South Korea are driving the changes in social norms and greater acceptance of diversity. The first Pride parade was held in 2017 in the streets of Seoul, amidst both supporters and protesters. According to NQAPIA, (National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance) South Korea doesn't recognize same-sex marriage or legal unions although they don't explicitly prohibit homosexual relations. Same-sex couples are denied rights enjoyed by heterosexual couples, such as medical determinations, pensions, and inheritance. Most Koreans dislike the rich and privilege desire social justice. They however secretly aspire to become rich and powerful themselves (South et al).

In recent years, South Korea has become much more recognized and talked about worldwide. On the pop culture front, K-pop group BTS, performing at the American Awards

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Shows was a big first. Their first time to perform at the AMAs' were in 2017. However their first win and nomination was in 2019 when they one the First Social Artist. Of course, there's the political news involving the strained relationship between North and South Korea, coupled with the visit of Donald Trump with Kim Jung-Un. The Korean War dates back to 1950-1953 howere after the war lasting 3 years, 2days, and 1 month North & South Korea singed an Armistice Agreement. (never a peace treaty) Fast forward since them, North Korea has promised to abandon the Armistice Agreement at least six times and four time within the last decade. Although after a long-standing crisi North Korea was able to "trade" their nuclear program for economic aid and trade concessions. A similar stand-off took palce during George W. Bush's Presidency. But, for President Obama, there is one key difference in his approach to North Korea: the leadership has changed in Pyongyang. Not much is known about Kim Jong-un's intentions but there is a combination of old goals and a new leader that has and the situation in Korea peninsula difficult to predict. Tensions have always been high between both Korea's however in the last year they have come to an agreement of peace. Finally, after years of being on guard with one another.

Street fashion and high fashion have completely different diffusion professes. High fashion is created by qualified fashion designers and is spread by major fashion magazines that feature semi-annual fashion shows in Paris, London, New York and Milan. Street fashion is initiated by youth and is spread by word of mouth. The industries come into the game afterward, they are one step behind.

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Subculture fashion emerges from street subcultures, with street fashion magazines using amateur models. Its consumers are the producers, and social medias are used as diffusion tools. Fashion is produced from the bottom-up and street fashion is ultimately used as a symbolic group identity. In comparison, high fashion emerges from professional designers, with high fashion magazines using professional models. The producers are not the same as its consumers, and there are structured diffusion mechanisms in places, with established journalists and public relations specialists. High fashion produces fashion from the top and is used as a status symbol.

However, the influence of streetwear on the luxury goods sector cannot be underestimated. Take for instance tennis, which is traditionally seen as a sport exclusive to white country club preps. But “thanks to top players like African American sisters Serena and Venus Williams, and the now-retired Li Na, one of China’s most popular sports women, tennis has become more inclusive. And while the likes of Ralph Lauren have long aligned themselves with the world’s fourth most popular sport, the shift is starting to show in the growing union of tennis and streetwear ” (CORDERO).

Supreme launched tennis-related collaborations with Fila in 2007, with Nike in 2011, 2013 and 2015, with Lacoste in 2017 and 2018. They also released actual tennis balls with sporting good player Wilson in 2018, indicating the shift of sport to street. Wilson also worked with Japanese streetwear pioneer BAPE to produce tennis racquets with the label’s signature camouflage print as well as limited-edition tennis balls, to be released Spring 2019. At September’s US Open, Serena Williams stepped onto the court in a ballerina-inspired Nike outfit designed by none other than Virgil Abloh, founder of luxe streetwear label

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Off-White. These collaborations within the cultures of street, sport and youth are quick to diffuse into the mainstream markets. 40% of consumers between the ages of 18-60 who participate in athletic activities multiple times a week say that at least a quarter of their workout wardrobe easily translates from sport to street wear (Statista). But to understand the what's next within streetwear, one needs to understand the streetwear's global subcultures and trends.

Aside from streetwear being a somewhat representation of a fashion culture, before streetwear, there were punks, hippies, and more. Punks are a subculture that includes a diverse amount of fashion, ideologies and other forms of self-expression and it submerged mid 1970s. There is a wide range of punk fashion that include combat boots, lots of leather, ambitious hairstyles and colors, piercings, body modifications and tattoos, and the women who participated in the scene often had masculine qualities infused into their looks.

Hippies, were people who were apart of a counterculture that rejected the mainstream American life during the 1960s and 1970's. They usually liked long having long hair and they dressed in unconventional, casual colors. Women wore lots of flowy clothing and men wore things that challenged masculinity in a way. They both wore sandals, beads and rimless glasses.

There have been many Japanese fashion subculture trends as early as 1979, and form through the trickle-up theory of fashion. Japanese street fashion trends that have gained popularity in Western culture are going to be the examples of a most successful diffusion. Tokyo's fashion subcultures are maintained and expanded on by institutional involvement within their environment. Some subculture groups are supported by entire fashion shopping

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districts, with retailers and the media collaborating to sustain the subculture phenomenon because it helps their business. As of April 2010, Tokyo reached a population of approximately thirteen million which provides beneficial to the development of a variety of subculturalization. Japanese youth subcultures are geographically and stylistically defined, by the different fashion landmarks in various districts.

Shibuya is where one of the first distinct subcultural phenomena in Japan appeared in the 1990s. Japanese youth are drawn to a landmark known as Shibuya 109, a major shopping center with eight upper-level floors and two basement floors. Although the stores in Shibuya 109 sold conventional women's wear from its opening in 1979-1995, the entire building changed its customer target to the younger market in 1996. All the 116 tenant/stores within Shibuya 109 target young girls and women in their teens and earlier twenties, and their upward trend in sales was definitely due to the Gyarū or Ko-gyarū phenomenon which began to appear in Shibuya around the same time as 109's rebranding.

The word gyaru comes from the English word gal. Gyarū and ko-gyarū were initially generally associated with a minority of social dropouts and deviants, but their effects and influence extend far beyond the confines of a particular subculture. The gyaru phenomenon consequently redefined Japan's sartorial and sexual norms. One of the first and most prominent fashion subcultures that evolved from the Gyarū phenomenon in the mid 1990s is known as Ganguro (face black). Ganguro girls artificially tanned their face and bodies, dyed their hair and wore very heavy makeup. They wore bright colors and short short skirts with dangerously high platform shoes or boots with no socks or stockings.

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The male counterpart of Gyararu is called Gyararu-O, where young men have tanned skin, brightly colored hair and flamboyant outfits. These youth want to express overtly that they are not normal people and that is an important part of their identity. The Shibuya shopping district supports Gyararu and Gyararu-o directly opening malls with brands that directly cater to these subcultures, thus expanding and promoting the subculture more widely. In Gyararu and Gyararu-o subculture, deviance is seen as a virtue, and being in a gang is seen as being cool. Behaviors like promiscuity, drinking and dancing, and staying out all night are part of a lifestyle that is encouraged and respected as socially deviant. Unlike many other subcultural groups, Gyararu and Gyararu-o eventually retire from the group at a certain age because they are well aware of what is expected for a normal individual.

Just as Shibuya is considered a major landmark for Gyararu subculture, Harajuku, only a few train stops away, is considered sacred territory for Lolitas. Lolitas portray the image of Victorian dolls, with dresses full of ruffles and frills, bonnets and ribbons, flat shoes, feminine handbags and parasols. They flock to Harajuku to shop on Takeshita Street where small stores sell Lolita brands as well as La Foret, a department store. While many Westerners may mistakenly associate the Lolita subculture with the novel *Lolita*, written in 1955 by Vladimir Nabokov, the Japanese Lolita subculture has nothing to do with these references. In fact, Lolita empowers those who wear it by giving them a sense of self-expression and self-satisfaction. The lolita's distinctive style is for her pure enjoyment. They don't want to rebel in the formal and traditional ways, but would rather dress in Lolita because they want to stand out and be noticed. There are many variations of Lolita style. Sweet Lolita is considered typical, with lots of lace, ruffles, and frills, with a soft color palette

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of whites and pastels like blue and pink. Gothic Lolita combines elements of gothic and lolita fashion with a monochromatic palette that's often black and white. Ouji, also known as Prince Lolita, is considered a male version of the style for the male who would like to accompany a lolita.

Each lolita variation has its own distinctive style and rules that followers adhere to. The Lolita subculture lifestyle has spread worldwide among teens in the United States, Europe and Asia. While some belong to a specific Lolita category, others enjoy choosing a style depend on different occasions. Some Lolita impose strict rules as to what is considered authentic Lolita, but that does not speak for the majority. The general consensus of the community is that Lolita Fashion is not a costume, nor is it a cosplay or a reference to the novel by Nabokov.

Within recent years, the community has moved away from messaging boards into facebook groups, where everyone with a facebook account can gain access into the frilly world of Lolita fashion, including those who stray from the community's general consensus.

On Youtube, a segment by the name of Last Week Lolita News runs a weekly segment reporting the heated discussions that take place within Lolita fashion online community messaging boards. Tyler Willis, creator of the channel Scarfing Scarves and producer/host of Last Week Lolita news is frequently quoted of her segment's opening line where "It (the story) All Began on Rufflechat..."

Japanese streetwear trends and tribes have seen a rise and decline in their popularity since the mid-1990s, but continue to inspire rebellion of all shades, from out loud and

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outspoken, to silent and frillful, each community pushing the social boundaries of what is considered acceptable for all genders and shade of human.

Several YouTubers that are based in the “trendsetting” neighborhoods in Korea (Seoul, Busan, Ulsan, Gangnam etc.) For example, Gangnam means ‘South of the River,’ and is the district that lies along South Korea’s Han River. It’s considered one of the busiest areas, packed with high end shops, malls, restaurants, and cafes. It’s an affluent neighborhood also home to the COEX mall. (the largest underground shopping center in Asia) Matthew Vilanueva is currently a fashion student studying at Columbia College Chicago and an avid follower of Streetwear trends, including its presence in Asian countries. He is a firm believer in Streetwear, more so American styles but because he’s informed more globally, he is also a follower of Asian Streetwear looks. He has a specific interest in Korea’s fashion trend/styles/designers more than any other Asian country. Matthew actually went to South Korea a few years ago and stayed there for a couple of months. In an interview, he mentioned how “Asian fashion as a whole has very different niche styles. Within Streetwear there are so many subcategories whereas American streetwear likes to stick with all similar brands/looks.”

Fashion-wise, Seoul Fashion Week was considered one of the most anticipated events of the year and it never disappoints. Seoul started getting globally recognized by In 2019, several different designers were highlighted with some of them being interviewed by famous fashion media outlets. Prominent themes and messages from the designers were showcased, including political and social relevance. One designer was focused on utilizing her designs to instill confidence in women, which aligned with the #MeToo movement that has taken shape

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in Korea recently. The #MeToo movement was a marathon of public protest, where 193 women read out their testimonies nonstop for 2,018 minutes” Meanwhile, some other designers were male, and they drew on their government-mandatory military service to bring some shocking, yet beautiful, imagery to the runway with their models and garments. Specifically one designer Lee Kyuho made a fashion line pertaining to his time at the military. He recalls how awful it was to be trained to “have to kill someone”. From a review of the coverage, it was clear that the Streetwear trend is taking over the runway. According to Statista, the sales distribution of South Korean designer fashion enterprises in the domestic market as of November 2017, by distribution channel. During the survey period, South Korean designer fashion companies earned 41.2 percent of their revenue from the sales in indirect online stores” (Statista). One recurring theme was streetwear suits and ungendered outfits. Some designers names associated with these looks were Myoungsin Lee with her Low Classic collection, Madam Woo, Munn and Moho labels which are new menswear designers. The movement toward ungendered outfits has become popular and one example of this would be tailored suits.

There are a lack of design houses in Seoul and Tokyo. These fashion capitals are still quite young, and have yet to build the legacy to hold aspiring designers when they leave school, thus they take to the street. (Blatz ChicheMag).Luxury brands have noticed this new youth market and are hiring new designers who understand the preferences of young consumers who consume streetwear subcultures in a trickle-up diffusion. The French luxury brand Louis Vuitton co-branded with the Japanese street fashion brand Fragment Design in

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Spring 2017. Founded by Hiroshi Fujiwara in 1980, Fragment Design and Louis Vuitton produced a series of dark blue and black classic bags, small travel items and leather shoes. It cross over with brands that teenagers love so they just have to put the name on it and became part of the "street wear" fashion.

Subsequently, in 2018, Louis Vuitton partnered with the New York street brand Supreme. Louis Vuitton had success opening the youth market through the collaboration because of the popularity of Supreme among young people. Last year, LVMH group announced that the popular New York street fashion brand Off-White leader Virgil Abloh will take over the brand Louis Vuitton men's creative director. Louis Vuitton chairman Michael Burke said "he has always had a strong interest in Virgil Abloh, that he has the natural creativity and ability to subvert pop culture, He will inject new life into Louis Vuitton menswear."(Wei, Fang)

Louis Vuitton's 2018 third-quarter results show that the fashion leather division continued to rise, with an increase of 14 %, contributing 4.458 billion euros to the group, driven by the core brand Louis Vuitton, marking eight consecutive quarters of double-digit growth. In the first half of the year, sales at the division rose 25 % to 8.594 billion euros.(Fox, search.)

Cocorrently, the British luxury brand Burberry has also transformed. To continue to be close to the trend of the younger generation and street fashion Burberry has changed creative hands. The new creative director Riccardo Tisci, he safed Burberry by redesign all things, make it beloved by teenagers, further examples are down here.

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Riccardo Tisci designed a new limited edition B-series every month since 2018. Bring back consumers to the brand. Burberry said that "the B-series, which is mainly spread through social media, resonated with younger consumers." (Fox, search) If, social media is playing a key role in the fashion of streetwear becoming mainstream, which has attracted the cooperation of celebrities and well-known brands.

Influencers, or those who have a following beyond their personal network, play a vital role in diffusing streetwear into all levels of fashion. 54 percent of social media users follow accounts outside of their personal network (Poelking), and the size of that audience contributes to the abundant use of influencers collaborating with brands for advertising and product promotion opportunities.

Currently, some of the biggest brands are looking to micro-influencers (smaller accounts with dedicated followings) to convey and communicate messages across social media. A report published in December 2018 shows that US Instagram influencers with a profile size between one to five thousand were able to maintain an average engagement rate of 4.2 percent for the year. This was much higher compared to accounts with over a million followers, who maintained an average of 1.5 percent engagement rate during the same time frame. (HypeAuditor). Influencers drive traffic within their following when they share funny and entertaining content in their own authentic and honest voices.

Reebok, a brand balancing mainstream footwear and niche streetwear, has been tapping influencers to "match different facets of their brand to specific voices... emphasizing authentic alignment of brand and voice" (Mintel). In October 2018, Reebok tapped 20-year-old content creator and comedian Jay Versace to redesign its footwear from

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past decades. Using his authentic identity to drive the conversation, Jay was able to sell his 90s-inspired capsule collection to 4 million strong following on Instagram, as well as the over half million subscriber count on his youtube channel (Rines). Streetwear micro-influencers visually represent an authentic, raw and unfiltered approach to documenting style. Using Instagram as the “visual tool that grants a global audience of like-minded youth access to an ambiguous market”, social media’s impact on streetwear is sure to continue to move it towards mass-adoption (Napoli).

Global social media influencers were observed and interviewed to develop deeper insight into the trend.

“Q2Han” is a youtube channel produced by identical Korean American twin sisters Qwon and Qjin living in Korea. They started their channel in 2011 and are known for their DIY fashion, beauty related tutorials and style vlogs on where to find the most insta-worthy places in Korea. Although they were born in Korea, they completed the majority of their schooling in America, and completed their Associate’s for Fashion Design with 4.0 GPAs at FIDM in Los Angeles. After living in a decade of living in America, the twins moved back to their motherland of South Korea to be closer to their family in Seoul.

The share their perspective, a fusion of Western and Eastern fashion ideals, with their audience of over 415,000 subscribers and 114,000 followers on Instagram with a 10.8% engagement rate. Their fashion is overall very feminine, yet they don’t shy away from more masculine and street looks. In their older videos, they mention that many Asian designers take inspiration from American street style. Asian streetwear designers take what was originalized in California but still infuse their own style into their lines. For example, in one

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of their videos they went to GOTO underground mall and found quite a lot of streetwear. Although they didn't mention the names of each individual designers Q2HAN said they loved the infusion of Western/Asian styles. It's a mixture of original and classic designs blended with something completely new. Korea's designers and fashion influencers are evolving the fashion in their environment and the streetwear trends at the same time, focusing on open interpretation vs. a traditional view of what's right or wrong.

Natalia Natchan, aka PiNKII, is a content creator and artist hailing from the Midwest. She currently has over 15.6k followers on instagram with a 5.4% engagement rate; more than twice as large than the average rate in comparison to other influencers within her following size bracket. Natalia is a Youtuber with over 110,000 subscribers. Her primary channel is a mix of fashion hauls/lookbooks, musical covers, original songs, food, and travel vlogs as well as sit down discussions on differences between Japanese and American culture through her fluency in Japanese and English. She uses Japanese pop culture as inspiration for her music; a trap/lo-fi hip hop style she calls bubblegum trap, as well as her aesthetic style; known as bubblegum cyber. Natalia agreed to sit down to an interview over skype; offering her perspective on Japanese streetwear from the trends she saw during her four years living in Tokyo.

Natalia's lifelong interest in Japanese culture started when she was quite young, and her interest in Japanese street style was inspired by obtaining a copy of Fruits magazine at nine years old. Natalia wore gyaru style makeup with Harajuku fashion styles throughout high school and moved to Japan after she graduated in 2014.

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Natalia faced a lot of obstacles evolving and expressing her style while living in Japan. During her time there she DJ'd in clubs, worked at Shibuya 109 and went to a beauty school for hair and makeup. As she navigated through Tokyo's high concentration of highly individualized style tribes, she experienced stigmas against kawaii aesthetics and otaku culture. Natalia commented that Harajuku girls are not social, welcoming or kind; there is competition to be considered the cutest and culturally, Japanese culture is not very vulnerable when it comes to mental health. Her desire to fit in only made it more difficult to make friends.

Natalia's current style began to develop once she decided two things: one; she didn't want to be "grouped in" and two; she wanted to move back to the United States by August 2018. She refers to her aesthetic as 'Bubblegum Cyber', a fusion of the 90s and y2k fashion, internet vapourware, space themes and kawaii. It's inspired by Paris Hilton, Raver Fashion and Bratz Dolls. In a Bubblegum Cyber lookbook for her youtube channel, Natalia is seen wearing a black oversized t-shirt with a graphic of sailor moon surrounded by guns and money. She paired this shirt with a pair of bubblegum pink pastel checkered joggers, a pair of pink holographic Dr. Marten boots and a pink plastic PVC choker. Natalia considers her favorite part of her fashion to be her extensive collection of shoes; the current highlight being a pair of pink Heelys.

While Natalia's sweet Bubblegum Cyber style is individual to her, she considers street fashion to be that which is composed of many different fashions. She defined mainstream western streetwear as the garments inspired by the style of hip hop; oversized hoodies and baggy clothing, while Japanese streetwear ranges in garments based on the style

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of the subculture; lolita, gyaru, decora, etc, or the mainstream trend. Natalia thinks American-style streetwear has become popular in Japan due to the technology factor. American popular culture and its current icon, Kylie Jenner, are an obsession for Japanese youth. Her final thought was that streetwear definition and meaning depend on the youth who are using the word.

Within street fashion, there has been a movement towards ungendered outfits has become popular and one example of this would be tailored suits. The issue of feminism is one of the hottest topics in the world in recent years. It is difficult to change the gender equality in the working environment and living environment at one time, but it can make silent protests through fashion. Oversize and stiff suit jacket, it is never a man's exclusive items, women's clothing lines can be as strong as men. With a stack of loose version, create a strong neutral shape, the same color luxury fabric with bright colors. The feminine femininity to classic suits and creates casual everyday outfits. Therefore, the style of gender-neutral has been popular, one style fits everyone.

Although every brand has its category says men shop women shop, the garments in both sections are pretty similar. There is a less and less obvious gap between women's and men's wear. The door is closing and it becomes a whole new trend for customers. The Italy luxury brand Gucci SS16 men's ready to wear used a lot of flower patterns and lace. In February 2017, Gucci first merged with men and women to the fashion show, Showing Gucci is not bound by the borders of him versus her(WGSN). This made it the most discussed brand on Instagram during Milan Fashion Week.

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Streetwear will continue its global growth as a trend within the next five years. It has yet to reach mass acceptance as multi-ethnic marginalized millennials have yet to reach mass acceptance within Western-minded societies. Women and LGBTQ+ communities are still fighting for their human rights around the world, but shifts are happening.

Those who currently live in Seoul have hope for more open mindedness in South Korea's future. Based on interviews with two Korean-born, twenty-year-old American adoptees who are living in Seoul currently Ashton Musielewicz and Clare Henke recently returned to Korea after a birth country trip a couple of years ago. They see Korea has changed from even their first visit, and they said it shows up on the streets and store windows with more gender-neutral fashion designs. Values are changing, and fashion designs are but one indication of such. Korean designers are becoming bolder and newer in their ideas, and yet draw upon their heritage. The fashion industry will be influenced to greater degrees by Asian and especially Korean design in the years to come, especially as they relate to streetwear.

America is seeing a shift in its political landscape as well, with six women formally announcing their candidacy for president as of February 2019. This is the first time This is the first time in history that more than two women competed in the same major party's presidential primary process. American streetwear and sneaker culture will be shifting to be more gender neutral or even genderless as more and more people begin to question what success looks like in streetwear fashion. Feminine aspects, like pastel colors and frilly notions will become more accepted for all genders, indicating strength in soft things.

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