

Implications of a Social Movement against Racism for a More Inclusive Global Fashion Industry

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ABSTRACT

Fashion and racism are complex issues with pressure for the industry to be more inclusive of racial differences. The Black Lives Matter movement has drawn attention to the issue of racism in the fashion industry and inspired social efforts to address it. Increased support for this cause has resulted in more entities contributing to eliminating racism in the industry through actions such as black model matter campaigns and the founding of The Kelly Initiative, which advocates for the diversity and inclusivity of the fashion industry. This research aims to examine the impact of social movements in combating racism and promoting equality in the global fashion industry. Qualitative methods are used with several theoretical frameworks, including racism, to show neglect, which results in discrimination, as well as global social movements, which are used to show forms of collective action in the form of protests that seek inclusive change in fashion. The results show that social movements can transform the fashion industry through rapid advances in diversity and inclusion through collective action. The implication is that it allows all parties to contribute to fashion without facing racial discrimination, thereby achieving diversity and inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry has been a concern because it prefers black culture as an inspiration but despises the presence of black people (Tso, 2020). Black models, including Grace Jones, Naomi Campbell, and Tyra Banks have broken barriers and established successful careers in the fashion industry. However, these people have gone through daunting experiences and discrimination as color models (Champlin, 2021). Supermodel Bella Hadid was also concerned that the fashion industry should provide equal opportunities for expression. However, much discrimination still occurs due to racial differences, where many colored models are mistreated when doing make-up, on runways, and in photo shoots (Russo, 2020). Models acknowledge that racism has greatly influenced the development of the fashion industry, causing difficulties regarding inclusivity and diversity.

Racism has become ingrained in the global fashion industry, slowing the progress towards racial difference inclusivity. This industry often uses beauty and trend parameters based on white societal standards, promoting white supremacy. The most visible problem of racism is the lack of opportunities for people of color to participate in fashion activities. White people have more opportunities because their appearance is considered suitable for fashion activities such as commercial and haute couture needs. In more severe cases, certain blackface activities are performed on whites to replace black people in fashion activities related to brand promotion. Blackface misrepresents race and black identity (Byrne, 2016), and is a form of racism that suppresses the black race in the global fashion industry.

In recent decades, opportunities for black models to work in the fashion industry have become increasingly visible. Unfortunately, the presence of black models is still underrepresented in the fashion industry due to their facial features, hair, and skin color compared to white standards (Gaugele & Titton, 2019). Data shows that about 85% of the models appearing in fashion are white, and the remaining 15% are colored (Dillard, 2021). These conditions indicate that the dominance of white skin in the global fashion industry is enormous. Subsequently, this dominance affects models and makes fashion designers victims of racist practices. The victims encounter difficulties landing employment opportunities due to their skin color. Fashion and racism have become complex problems that compel the industry to be more inclusive of racial differences. The presence and representation of colored and black races should not be challenged based on the formality that black skin does not convey fashion aesthetics (Newman, 2017). Therefore, the global fashion industry must not exploit the racial culture and discriminate against the parties due to racial and skin color differences.

Attention to racism is increasingly widespread with the existence of the Black Lives Matter movement. BLM is a movement that was formed as a concern about the problem of racism, which makes black people victims of police brutality. This movement began in 2013 in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, who was the perpetrator of the murder of an unarmed black teenager named Trayvon Martin. This movement quickly grew and received attention again in 2020 with the death of George Floyd (Osborne and Cooke, 2020). This movement encourages social efforts to deal with problems of racism, including those occurring in the global fashion industry. The movement provides the global community with an overview of systemic racism, which has become a parasite in people's lives. The racism problem has the potential to harm various parties in case it is continuously underestimated. This also applies to the global fashion industry characterized by the rise of public attention to racism. Subsequently, activists and influencers in the fashion world utilized this opportunity to voice that racism in the global fashion industry must also be considered to overcome the problem. This is because the problem has become an open secret in the world of fashion. Through the Black Lives Matter movement, global community solidarity is increasingly providing supporting the current global problem of racism (Kellett, 2020). This support has compelled more parties to contribute to overcoming racism in the global fashion industry. Subsequently, massive social movement actions have been taken to address racism in this industry. Examples include the black models matter campaign and the birth of the Kelly Initiative which supports diversity in an inclusive fashion world (Horne, 2020).

In IR studies, the problem of racism that occurs in the global fashion industry is a form of violence that threatens personal dignity and well-being as a result of discrimination that is contrary to human rights and humanitarian values as well as human security. The problem of racism has become a representation of the failure to create positive peace whose basis is social justice. If racist practices are left unchecked, they will continue to develop and threaten certain groups as a result of the oppression and oppression that arises. Therefore, it is essential to seek to resolve this problem through social movements that can produce changes in society regarding inclusion in the global fashion industry, which is no longer characterized by racist practices. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the implications of social movements in overcoming racism toward equality in the global fashion industry.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used qualitative methods, which describe the techniques and processes of non-statistical investigations used to collect data on social phenomena (McNabb, 2015). Qualitative

methods describe the ability of social movements to create a more inclusive and equal global fashion industry. In this qualitative study, data were obtained from books, journals, and articles related to racism in the global fashion industry, as well as social movements that have brought changes to a more inclusive fashion. The data were analyzed and described accurately to form conclusions that answer the study questions.

Racism

Racism is a view that racial biological differences determine cultural or individual abilities, leading to the notion that one race is superior to another. In this case, *race* is a socially constructed concept that does not correlate physical differences with abilities or behavior (Clair and Denis, 2015). Each race has its differences not mapped in a hierarchical structure. Unfortunately, the practice of racism believes in morality more exclusive of one race than another. Races must be separated because of a difference in their status. In this regard, racism could lead to hatred and distrust, making it considered a wrong principle (Smedley, 2020). Therefore, this perception should not develop in society because the actual difference is always present.

Racism transcends words or discriminatory actions but includes all things preventing people from enjoying their dignity and equality (Soutphommasane, 2014). Cases of racism could occur anywhere and in various forms, including prejudice, discrimination, or hatred due to racial differences through violence or intimidation. Nevertheless, racism could also occur through limiting opportunities or participation, jokes with racial elements, and exclusion by one group against another. These discriminatory practices have made systemic racism increasingly rooted in a global society. Systemic racism results from a colonialist society created by white people (Elias & Feagin, 2016). Consequently, the white race is placed in a higher order while other races are normalized.

In the global fashion industry, racism has become a fundamental issue that complements various problems. The fashion industry endangers people of color because it is vulnerable to racism. People of color often receive unsatisfactory treatment and experience discrimination for their work. Although global fashion companies do not create racism, their designs or behavior reinforce racism (Horne, 2020). In this context, the concept of racism that occurs in the global fashion industry is a representation of the concepts of "neglect" and "denial". Racism becomes a practice that avoids moral accountability so that prejudice, discrimination and racial injustice are ignored. In the end, this practice became a momentum for the formation of a hierarchical system that oppresses, dominates, exploits and discriminates against people of colour (Elias, 2023). This problem must be addressed because it could negatively impact the victims. Therefore, this study analyzed the inclusivity framework in fighting the social construction attached to white domination that racism is inevitable.

Social movement

Various social problems have triggered actions performed to achieve better change. Social movements are crucial elements capable of realizing social change to tolerate various issues. These movements include organized and ongoing campaigns to support specific social goals by implementing collective action (Turner, et al., 2020). According to Richard Flacks, a social movement is a condition where humans want the freedom to act (Brunsma, et al., 2016). This means that a social movement is a response to a problem that needs resolution through joint community action, significantly influencing an issue.

A social uprising could be a combination of impromptu webs determined by reliance and camaraderie to initiate confrontational matters using many demonstrations (Porta, 2016). This manifestation is a technique to generate more definite union exertion in crusading for distinct matters. The concept of informed collective action to reconstruct society materialized during the Enlightenment era. This demonstrates that social uprisings are a current event essential to social advance (Buechler, 2016). Subsequently, the ensuing fundamental predicament is the need to participate in collective action to attain desired objectives. Another issue is the social movements' eagerness to accomplish ambitions or negotiate to produce change (Martin, 2015). Therefore, the movements become strategies that produce constructive variations on subjects without much past consideration.

Social movements are essential in addressing human rights problems and social discrimination. They support social struggles by providing theoretical and practical knowledge for effective action (Brunsma, et al., 2016). Therefore, social movements within daily life offer alternative ways of understanding the formation of new subjectivity on specific issues (Vanden, et al., 2017). They are an action and a solution to social problems through collective efforts, fostering a deeper understanding of the issue. In this way, the community is made aware of the urgency of a particular social problem to prevent potential complications.

Related to the problem of racism in the global fashion industry, social movements exist in various forms to change the way of thinking about systematic problems. Social movements provide organized campaigns on racism in the fashion industry to ensure that the understanding of diversity is more open. In this regard, diversity and inclusion are the two main goals to be realized by social movements for progress in the fashion industry (Hamar, 2020). The industry has received various praises because it is considered to have provided wider diversity in recent years. However, racial inclusion is still a problem far from successful due to much discrimination. This becomes a gap theory and a strong foundation for social movements fighting for fashion equality.

From the explanation above, social movements have become a momentum for protests against racial discrimination in the global fashion industry, thereby encouraging the birth of collective action demanding equality in the global fashion industry. The social movement in response to these problems was initiated by the black lives matter movement, which later developed into black model matters and black-owned fashion matters. Black models matter as a response to acts of racism, and there is an urgent call for greater attention to diversity in the fashion industry (Moore-Karim, 2016). The Black Models Matter action as a collective action in the form of protest increased during the 2017 Paris Fashion Week, where there were only four models of colour out of 47 models who showed clothes from the Balenciaga brand. A few days earlier, there were only 17 models of colour out of 119 models who participated in the Gucci fashion show (Feldman, 2017). The Black Models Matter movement marks a social struggle to overcome racist practices in order to create an inclusive global fashion industry.

Social movements as a form of protest against the problem of racism in the global fashion industry are also represented through the Black-owned Fashion atters movement. The change that this movement wants to bring about is that society no longer treats the achievements of non-white people as something outside the norm. The lack of representation of black designers who are drowned out by a white worldview centred on Europe and America must be addressed, considering that the diversity of ethnicities in the world does not make them inferior or vice versa (Sebode, 2020). Through this movement, collective action is used not only to voice protests against racial injustice

but also to create momentum in realizing freedom for every individual to work in the global fashion industry without worrying about racial discrimination.

Global fashion industry

The global fashion industry encompasses various clothing production aspects, including design, manufacture, distribution, marketing, and retail, as well as advertising and promotion of high-end and everyday fashion. The industry employs millions of people worldwide, including fashion designers, models, photographers, and garment workers. Its existence is driven by technological advancements, such as sewing machines, and the rise of global capitalism and retail developments (Steele & Major, 2020). However, working in the fashion industry comes with risks and challenges, such as the need to stay ahead of social trends, meet intense competition, and maintain a perfect image (Hunter, 2018). The industry's biggest challenge is to achieve equality and eliminate racial discrimination.

Fashion represents modernity, innovation, and technology, which draw people's attention (Reilly, 2014). However, the global fashion industry transcends generating public interest and often reinforces stereotypes through its actions. As a result, fashion has become a central hub for shaping people's views on appearance based on global aesthetic standards. This necessitates re-evaluating aesthetic values and making fashion a more inclusive and non-discriminatory industry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response to racism in the global fashion industry

Racism in the fashion industry is a concern for those seeking social equality. The industry faces significant challenges related to racial discrimination. In response to this systemic racism, the Black Lives Matter movement advocates for racial equality and the elimination of discriminatory practices. The movement gained attention in 2013 through social media posts by Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi. These leaders spoke out against injustice and violence towards black people. Originally focused on discriminatory policing, the movement has since expanded its campaigns to address racist practices that harm people of color, challenging the notion of black people as criminals and a wasted society. Additionally, the movement highlights the contributions and fight for humanity of black people.

The black lives matter movement became a topic of conversation in 2013 with the posts of Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi on social media voicing concern for overcoming the problems of injustice and violence experienced by black people (Jr, 2019). The black lives matter movement initially focused on racially discriminatory policing (Bordonaro and Willits, 2018). However, the movement continues to grow to other campaigns to cease racist practices that harm certain races. The movement is mainly to stop the view attached to the black race as a criminal and a wasted society (Clayton, 2018). Furthermore, this movement also emphasizes the contribution of black people in society and how they try to fight for humanity and freedom from the oppression they have experienced (Maraj, Prasad and Roundtree, 2019). As we know, the presence of a movement that cares about the problem of racism will undoubtedly open the eyes of various parties in the fashion industry, including fashion brands, so that they can pay more attention to this problem (Alleyne, 2020). The Black Lives Matter movement could inspire various parties in the fashion industry, including brands, to take action against systemic racism. It is crucial for various parties to come together and solve racism in the fashion industry.

Fashion companies sometimes respond to racism but could also perpetuate it. Major fashion houses such as Gucci, Balenciaga, and Saint Laurent show support for people of color and oppose racism through donations to organizations fighting racial discrimination. Therefore, these companies must end unjust and discriminatory practices in the fashion industry and strive for a more diverse and inclusive industry free of racism (Martinez, 2020). The fashion industry is dominated by white supremacists, though companies must acknowledge and actively address racism to create positive change. This industry must work towards building a diverse and non-discriminatory environment.

Black social activists have called for significant changes in the global fashion industry to combat racism. Despite some efforts to address the issue, activists state that the response has been inadequate. Therefore, there is a need for increased recruitment and promotion of black professionals, as well as equal opportunities in creative and executive roles in the industry (Smith & Gallagher, 2020). This aim to promote diversity and eliminate racial discrimination in an ever-changing world where inclusiveness is increasingly important. The goal is to create a more equitable industry, without favoring certain racial or skin color groups.

Racial discrimination in the fashion industry has resulted in under-representation of black people in areas such as design, production, and journalism. This reinforces the notion of white culture being the standard for beauty and desire, leading to a perception of other cultures as inferior. In response, initiatives and social movements fueled by the Black Lives Matter protests have emerged to combat systemic racism and advocate for diversity and inclusiveness in the fashion industry. These efforts aim to bring awareness to the issue and create a more inclusive environment that values all cultures equally.

Implications of social movements against racism for racial equality in the fashion industry

The death of George Floyd sparked widespread outrage and brought attention to the issue of racism. In response, the racial equality movement gained traction and inspired people of color to advocate for their rights (Vilaca, 2021). This movement significantly impacts the fashion industry by promoting racial equality. The Black Lives Matter movement has encouraged the birth of similar movements in the global fashion industry, such as Black Model Matters and Black-owned Fashion Matters, whose main aim is to realize equality in the global fashion industry. These various social movements have proven capable of bringing about change under various pressures through protest actions. This social movement has changed society's trend towards fashion representation so that it no longer places superiority on white skin. Social movements contribute to public awareness of the meaning of diversity and inclusion in the global fashion industry. Therefore, the public is voicing support for expanding the representation of people of colour in the fashion industry, which is no longer segmented only by the exclusive representation of white people (Dreska, 2023). Apart from changing society's views, social movements such as Black Lives Matter also encourage business people in the fashion industry to renew their focus on realizing ethnic diversity. In other words, diversity and inclusion are top priorities in today's global fashion industry (British Fashion Council, 2022). The aim is none other than to overcome the problem of racism so that it does not develop again as a practice of oppression and discrimination that threatens freedom and participation in society.

In June 2020, over 250 black fashion creatives signed the Kelly Initiative, calling on the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) to provide data on racial representation and create more opportunities for black professionals (Brain, 2020). The Kelly Initiative accused the CFDA of perpetuating exploitative prejudice, tokenism, and job discrimination. Chase Marshall, a black fashion professional, highlighted that the initiative allowed the fashion industry to discuss diversity

and equality. Without active efforts, the industry may not realize meaningful change towards inclusiveness and diversity (Phelps, 2020). Therefore, the Kelly Initiative is a continuation of the social movement to end systemic racism in the fashion industry.

Through the Kelly Initiative, the primary demand conveyed is an effort to realize the active inclusion of black parties in various sectors and strata of fashion in order to enrich representation in the global fashion industry. The Kelly Initiative aims to disrupt the notion that places and questions the importance of diversity in the global fashion industry by encouraging the active role of each party without racial discrimination that suppresses the participation of groups of colour. In order to realize its commitment, the Kelly Initiative has launched four main points representing accountability, objectivity, information and visibility (Kelly Initiative, 2020). These points are used to create transparency and accountability in an inclusive global fashion industry so that the problem of racism can be resolved as a whole.

The establishment of the Black Fashion Council resulted from racial liberation movements in the fashion industry. The rise of the Black Lives Matter protests and the media's attention to the issue of systemic racism have made it a crucial discussion topic. However, action rather than words is needed from fashion brands and organizations to promote diversity. The Black in Fashion Council, founded by Lindsay Peoples Wagner and Sandrine Charles, aims to lead and monitor inclusive changes in the industry (Liao, 2020). The council is an NGO seeking to eliminate discrimination in the fashion industry by advocating for equal opportunities for people of color and promoting inclusive structural and internal actions (Petrarca, 2020). The council was launched in June 2020 to advocate for black progress in fashion and encourage structural and internal action in more inclusive fashion industry (Peters, 2021). The birth of the council was influenced by social movements in response to systemic racism in the fashion industry. This effort has the following implications in overcoming racism.

1. Diversity and inclusiveness in fashion

The global fashion industry has been shaped by a post-colonial perspective dominated by the standards of white nations, resulting in challenges for diversity and inclusiveness. This post-colonial outlook has perpetuated racism and discrimination based on skin color. To address this issue, social movements advocate for greater diversity and inclusion in the industry by raising awareness and pushing for change. However, non-white models and designers often face unequal opportunities compared to their white counterparts, leading to a lack of representation in the industry. Social movements aim to increase representation of black individuals in the fashion industry through activism and protest.

Social movements are crucial in promoting diversity and inclusion in the fashion industry to combat racism. The industry has a history of exclusion and lack of diversity, necessitating these efforts. The goals of these movements, campaigns, and protests are to ensure equal opportunities for all individuals to work in the fashion industry without racial discrimination. The fashion industry encompasses areas such as clothing, textiles, design, self-expression, and art. Therefore, the industry must undergo reforms to achieve diversity and inclusion (Spearman, 2021). This will require a sustained effort over time to bring about meaningful change.

Diversity involves the inclusion of individuals with different social backgrounds, ethnicity, gender, and religion. Despite the growing presence of diverse models in fashion shows, the fashion industry's embrace of diversity is often viewed skeptically as a publicity stunt (Spearman, 2021).

However, the influence of social movements advocating for racial equality is driving greater diversity in the industry. An example is seen at New York Fashion Week in spring 2018, where 36.9% and 63.1% of the models were black and white people, respectively (Mcdowell, 2019). The representation of models of color in fashion campaigns has also increased in recent years. The data shows that 47% models of color participated in New York Fashion Week in spring and summer 2020, a significant increase from 2015 (Spearman, 2021). This demonstrates that social movements and efforts to promote diversity and racial equality in the fashion industry are making progress, as more black individuals are being given opportunities in fashion campaigns.

The fashion industry has made some progress towards diversity, though inclusion has lagged. Inclusion involves empowering individuals to fully participate and contribute based on their backgrounds and beliefs. Although many fashion brands have hired people of diverse races for fashion campaigns. However, this does not equate to true inclusion which transcends simple diversity and recognizes the influence of various individuals in the fashion industry. There have been recent promising signs of progress towards inclusion, such as the appointment of Virgil Abloh as Artistic Director of Menswear at Louis Vuitton and Edward Enninful as Editor-In-Chief of British Vogue (Hamar, 2020). The Black in Fashion Council has also signed agreements with 70 companies to increase the representation of black individuals in leadership and junior positions in the fashion industry. This organization aims to achieve a truly inclusive fashion industry within the next three years (Samaha, 2020).

Even though the global fashion industry still has not fully realized inclusion, with representation figures for coloured communities only reaching 10% of board roles, 11% of executive committee roles, and 6% of direct report roles, there has been a significant increase in 60% for the proportion of people of colour on the executive committee from 2022 according to the British Fashion Council report. Apart from that, the report also explains that the proportion of people of colour involved in the global fashion industry continues to increase, reaching 18% in 2021 and continues to increase (British Fashion Council, 2023). These figures show that although inclusion in the fashion industry is still not perfect, the presence of social movements has encouraged change to realize inclusion that can overcome the problem of discrimination, which has been entrenched and caused violations of the right to be free from discrimination. Efforts to create a diverse and inclusive fashion industry show improvement compared to previous years and indicate that racism is increasingly being minimized through the promotion of racial equality.

2. *ChangeFashion* initiative

The most potential implication of the racial equality movement in the fashion industry is the presence of *change* initiative. This initiative focuses on fighting systemic racism in the fashion industry (Lockwood, 2021). The primary objective is to map the direction of change and partner with executives, influencers, and talents throughout the fashion industry. The end goal is to make the global fashion industry more inclusive and diverse, while not ignoring the existence of systemic racism. Additionally, *change* represents the success of social movements to increase collective action in campaigning for inclusive changes in the fashion industry.

The overcoming of racism in the fashion industry must involve making it a force for positive change accessible and open to all (Goldstone, 2021). This initiative represents a movement aimed at promoting social change through collective action on specific issues. In this case, the goal is to create a fashion industry free from racism and discrimination, promoting racial equality and diversity. The ultimate objective is to establish a more diverse and inclusive industry, where individuals from all

backgrounds have equal opportunities to participate and contribute. This change has become increasingly visible through more attention to racial equality and the opening up of opportunities for people of color. The rapid progress towards diversity and inclusion demonstrates the positive impact of the movement for racial equality on attitudes and perceptions within the fashion world. The result is the creation of an industry free from racial discrimination, with no dominant or standardized views. This social movement has had a positive effect on the fashion industry, eliminating white standardization and promoting equality. Social movements become a momentum for collective action carried out through protests against racial inequality in the global fashion industry to realize changes in the fashion industry then so that it is no longer a practice that is discriminatory and excludes people of colour.

CONCLUSION

Social movements against racism have implications for a more diverse and inclusive fashion industry. Active implementation efforts are necessary for this change to materialize. As such, the Kelly Initiative provides a platform and responsibility for professionals to achieve diversity and equality in the global fashion industry. This initiative was formed in response to the social movements calling for the elimination of systemic racism. Furthermore, the social movement led to the creation of the Black Fashion Council, which advocates for inclusivity and equal employment opportunities for people of color in the fashion industry.

The various protests and campaigns on racism have led to greater diversity in the fashion industry. This is reflected in the increasing participation of black people in fashion campaigns in recent years. Moreover, social movements have the potential to bring about changes in the fashion industry. The rapid progress of diversity and inclusion suggests that the racial equality movement has positively influenced perceptions on the fashion sphere. This has created opportunities for all individuals to contribute to fashion without racial discrimination. Additionally, social movements against racism have strengthened collective efforts towards realizing an inclusive global fashion industry through initiatives like the #changeofashion initiative.

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