Communication of Gender through Personal Grooming and adornment in Different Cultures and different Times

Chang'orok Joel and Clariss Kasamba

Abstract- In the Concise Oxford Dictionary, image is described as "the character or reputation of a person or thing as generally perceived". A first impression based on non-verbal communication goes a long way in influencing this perception and within seconds of meeting someone for the first time, your appearance, body language and non-verbal communication will create a lasting first impression, and that person will assume to know everything about you. Like it or not, it's true and the work world demands making a great first impression and keeping it. This paper looks at how communication of gender is manifested through personal grooming and adornment in different cultures and in fact different times in the world. It goes further to delve on whether really women -a times "dress to kill" as well as youth and the popular culture today. All this in an effort to check on whether - indeed people dress to communicate, entertain or just cover their nakedness. Specifically, the people looks at how a person's gender determines how they dress as well as how cultures determine the way we dress.

Index Terms- dressing for communication, culture and dressing, communicating through personal grooming.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Image vs. Perception; Well, as they "light travels faster than sound" thus you are seen before you are heard ad before even uttering a word your visual image will say a multitude about you as an individual. Michener (2003) posed that your perceived level of intelligence, competence, affability, self-esteem, confidence, power, beliefs and success and in respect about the organization you represent (its philosophy, culture, and standard of service). We constantly send out *silent messages* providing clues to both existing and potential clients and colleagues. Based on these; the paper critically looks at how persons, organizations or groups and even a community take these *clues or cue*s to . consider you for a job or promotion (in the case of an interview), consider buying your organization's products and services, formation of attitudes about you, how to think and treat you as you interact in a communication or social situation in your day-in day-out interaction. The paper highlights how people, groups, organizations or communities are affected by your appearance, whether or not they realize it, and whether or not they think appearance is important. In short, your visual presentation has consequences.

Hallo Effect Theory

Edward Thorndike, (1920) known for his contributions to educational psychology, coined the phrase "halo effect" in his 1920 article "The Constant Error in Psychological Ratings". He had noted in a previous study made in 1915 that estimates of traits in the same person were very highly and evenly correlated. The psychological concept 'halo effect' has stood the test of time; it states that if we know certain positive things about a person, we tend to have a generally positive impression of that person, sometimes even in spite of evidence to the contrary i.e. in the Kenyan case of Waititu beating up a Masai man and inciting his people against. Whether the young man had stolen or not, people sympathized with him simply because the community has been known for being polite and probably Kenyan trademark.

The halo effect also extends to a person's dressing and appearance that is why a positive first visual impression is so important. If someone is nicely dressed and looks well put-together, we have greater confidence in his or her abilities even before he or she has said a word. In Kenya for example, the pastors have to dress and dress and behave in a way to create an impression they have been inspired by Holy Spirit.

On the contrary, the devil effect, also known as the reverse halo effect, is when people allow an undesirable trait to influence their evaluation of other traits. The Guardian wrote of the devil effect in relation to Hugo Chavez: "Some leaders can become so demonized that it's impossible to assess their ach achievements and failures in a balanced way

Gender differences and the Hallo Effect

Kaplan's (1978) study yielded much of the same results as are seen in other studies focusing on the halo effect—attractive individuals were rated high in qualities such as creativity, intelligence, and sensitivity than unattractive individuals. However, in addition to these results Kaplan found that women were influenced by the halo effect on attractiveness only when presented with members of the opposite sex. When presented with an attractive member of the same sex, women actually tended to rate the individual lower on socially desirable qualities. Dermer and Thiel (1975) continue this line of research, going on to demonstrate that jealousy of an attractive individual could be a major factor in evaluation of that person. Their work shows this to be more prevalent among females than males, with females describing physically attractive women as having socially undesirable traits like in the case of Lupita Nyongo where women posted more negative comments than men.

Appearance and Interview Success

During interviews, most employers are severely irritated by inappropriate dress, mumbling and even poor handshakes by job applicants during interviews. However, Myer D (2003) in their book *Social Psychology*, Dressing in a professional yet stylish manner can give you a tremendous feeling of confidence that is exhibited to others through your attitude and actions." Recent studies conducted on interview habits they found that over a

quarter were upset by unsuitable clothing or appearance. It is therefore clear that how u dress matter.

Looking at the following excerpt: Pamela Monticelli, a senior recruiter for Sovereign Bank in Tom's River, New Jersey, believes, "Especially in the financial industry, which tends to be a more conservative environment, what a lot of the younger people don't understand is that we are looking for someone to represent the company. So your appearance is not just representative of you; you will also be representing the company the way we want it to be represented." She adds, "I have raised four teenagers and every one of them has, at some point, gotten a piercing or tattoo and has said that 'if I am are going to work for XYZ Company they need to accept me for who I am.' My children need to understand that at some point they might have to modify their appearance to fit into a professional environment. While companies believe in a diverse environment, you also don't want to offend your customers."

Dressing code

Dress codes are written and, more often, unwritten rules with regard to clothing. Clothing like other aspects of human physical appearance has a social significance, with different rules and expectations being valid depending on circumstance and occasion. Even within a single day an individual may need to navigate between two or more dress codes, at a minimum these are those that apply at their place of work and those at home, usually this ability is a result of cultural acclimatization. Different societies and cultures will have different dress norms although Western styles are commonly accepted as valid most cases.

The dress code has built in rules or signals indicating the message being given by a person's clothing and how it is worn. This message may include indications of the person's gender, income, occupation and social class, political, ethnic and religious affiliation, attitude and attitude towards comfort, fashion, traditions, gender expression, marital status, sexual availability, and sexual orientation, etc. Clothes convey other social messages including the stating or claiming personal or cultural identity, the establishing, maintaining, or defying social group norms, and appreciating comfort and functionality. For example, wearing expensive clothes can communicate wealth, the image of wealth, or cheaper access to quality clothing. All factors apply inversely to the wearing of inexpensive clothing and similar goods. The observer sees the resultant, expensive clothes, but may incorrectly perceive the extent to which these factors apply to the person observed. Clothing can convey a social message, even if none is intended.

If the receiver's code of interpretation differs from the sender's code of communication, misinterpretation follows. In every culture, current fashion governs the manner of consciously constructing, assembling, and wearing clothing to convey a social message. The rate of change of fashion varies, and so modifies the style in wearing clothes and its accessories within months or days, especially in small social groups or in communications media-influenced modern societies. More extensive changes, requiring more time, money, and effort to effect, may span generations. When fashion changes, the messages communicated by clothing change.

Fashion

Not only can particular styles of clothes define a person as an individual, but also as a part of a group. According to Thomas (2007) "Fashion is a language of signs, symbols and iconography that non-verbally communicate meanings about individuals and groups." Depending on the context clothes and other defining objects can mean very different things, Fred (1994) discusses the way that clothes and fashion can represent identity through the semiotic notion of code.

Davis (1994). Adds, although you can give meaning to semiotics signs can change and this applies to trends as well. Fashion design and symbolic adornments can have very definitive symbols, but depending on the time and place those symbols can be constantly shifting and changing. Even though they may change they are still held to their symbolic meaning by the collective culture.

Gender and Dressing code

In some traditions, certain types of clothing are worn exclusively or predominantly by either men or women. For example, the wearing of a skirt tends to be associated with female dress, while trousers are associated with male dress. Hairdressing in some societies may also conform to a dress code, such as long hair for women and short hair for men. Some headgear are usually geared towards women, such as hair-clips, hairpins, and barrettes.

Personal Grooming and Social status

In many societies, particular clothing may indicate social status, reserved or affordable to people of high rank. For example, in Ancient Rome only senators were permitted to wear garments dyed with *Tyrian* purple; and, in traditional Hawaiian society, only high-ranking chiefs could wear feather cloaks and *palaoa* or carved whale teeth. In China before the establishment of the republic, only the emperor could wear yellow. Just like in Nigerian where dressing distinguishes the social and gender roles. In Kenya Masai's are famous for the red *shukas etc.*

The school uniform came about because of bullying tha become a major problem in school systems amongst all ages. It led to social issues, self-doubt, depression and even suicide attempts amongst students. In 1996, former President Bill Clinton announced his support for the idea of school uniforms stated, "School uniforms are one step that may help break the cycle of violence, truancy and disorder by helping young students understand what really counts is what kind of people they are." It did not take much more than this presidential approval to get many school districts across the country on board. By requiring students to wear a school uniform they are less likely to have something to make fun of other students for. This would cause the students to get to know one another by their personality and who they really are rather than the clothes they wear.

Occupation and Dressing

Military, police, and firefighters usually wear uniforms, as do workers in many industries. School children often wear school uniforms, while college and university students sometimes wear particular kind of dress i.e. during special occasions members of religious orders may also wear uniforms or sometimes a single

item of clothing or a single accessory can declare one's occupation or rank within a profession.

Ethnic and political affiliation

In many regions of the world, national costumes and styles in clothing and ornament declare membership in a certain village, caste, religion, etc. A Scotsman declares his clan with his tartan. A French peasant woman identified her village with her cap or coif. A Palestinian woman identifies her village with the pattern of embroidery on her dress, coastal women have a particular way of dressing and so are the pastoralist and other groups.

Clothes can also proclaim dissent from cultural norms and mainstream beliefs, as well as political affiliation. As u may have witnessed of late in Kenya, every party has its colour resonating their various political manifestos like the orange colour for ODM and Red for Jubillee etc.

Religious affiliation

A Sikh or Muslim man may display his religious affiliation by wearing a turban and other traditional clothing. Many Muslim women wear head or body coverings hijab, that proclaim their status as respectable women and cover the so-called intimate parts. A Jewish man may indicate his observance of Judaism by wearing a yarmulke. In Kenya, Different denominations can be distinguished by their unique outfits i.e. Catholics-cross, veils and rosary etc.

Marital status

Visual markers of marital status- Traditionally, Hindu women wear **sindoor**, a red powder, in the parting of their hair to indicate their married status; if widowed, they abandon sindoor and jewelry and wear simple white clothing. However, this is not true of all Hindu women; in the modern world this is not a norm and women without sindoor may not necessarily be unmarried.
In many Orthodox Jewish circles, married women wear head coverings such as a hat, snood, or wig. Additionally, after their marriage, Jewish men ofAshkenazi descent begin to wear a Tallit during prayer. Men and women of the Western world may wear wedding rings to indicate their married status, and women may also wear engagement rings when they are engaged.

Besides communicating about a person's beliefs and nationality, clothing can be used as a non-verbal outlet to attract others. Men and women might adorn themselves with accessories and keep up with the latest fashion trends to attract partners they are interested in. In this case, clothing becomes a means of self-expression, and people can sense power, wealth, sex appeal, personality, or creativity just by looking at what a person is wearing.

Most recently at the New York Fashion Week that took place last month in New York City, we saw that clothing can even reflect a society's state of economy. Since our economy is still on the road to recovery, designers focused on less expensive fabrics and more wearable, practical designs when creating clothing for this season.

II. Summary

Personal grooming and dressing modes are determined by a number of factors ranging from social, political economic factors. The variation and discrepancies in dressing and grooming are further influenced by other social cultural issues like religion, race, tribe, values etc. However, cross-cutting issues like climatic variations influence the outfits one puts on, a good example seen in those traveling abroad (Kenyans attending ICC cases) are seen heavy woolen outfits immediately they land in the Hague and other places and vice-versa when tourist are at the coast, they dress "scantly" probably to adapt to the hot weather. Therefore, for one to appreciate how people dress, one has to look at a number of issues though gender still remains the most universal determinant of how people dress.

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AUTHORS

First Author – Chang'orok Joel email: akopajj@yahoo.com
Second Author – Clariss Kasamba