



# THE YIN AND YANG OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY

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For the longest time, there has been a discussion about the dark side of the fashion industry versus the idealized version we see on runways, films, and social media. The truth is, when it comes to how the fashion industry makes us feel about ourselves, it's not as simple as "good" and "bad." Instead, it is like yin and yang, in which seemingly opposite forces actually work together to create a whole. In this context, the darker side exists within the hopeful side and vice versa.

When it comes to how fashion makes us feel, the obvious dark side has to do with body image. There's been substantial debate over the years in the past about the risks that models, actresses, musicians and others in the public eye take to fit certain social standards.

The most recent celebrity to find herself subjected to discrimination was Bebe Rexha, who spoke out about designers refusing to dress her for the 2019 Grammy Awards because she is a size eight, which is deemed "too big" by their standards. Melissa McCarthy, who faced similar rejection from designers when attending the Oscars, said, "When you go above a size twelve, you don't lose your love for fashion."

Even celebrities like Kim Kardashian West, Khloe Kardashian, Beyoncé, and Ashley Graham have had trouble getting designers to dress them in the past. Yet designers would kill to see them in their clothing today as their fame levels eclipse their body types.

The models in fashion shows are chosen to represent how the clothes would look on a clothes hanger, hence most fashion models being very thin. The history of eating disorders both in and inspired by this aesthetic is well known. However, while a thin model such as Bella Hadid may model clothing, Kim Kardashian West will wear that same outfit in real life. Having these two exaggeratedly opposite body types creates unrealistic body expectations, especially in this social media-run world, to create unattainable goals and unhealthy standards.

While it may be easy to give example after example of the dark side of the industry, there is a positive and progressive side as well that a light must be shined on. Fashion provokes creativity and creates a desire to belong or even stand out.

It cannot go unsaid that fashion and creativity seamlessly blend into each other. The designing and production process includes a tremendous amount of innovation, imagination, and originality. Taking direction from trend forecasters and even sparking new concepts, brands in turn inspire and influence consumers.

Creativity does not just come from the back-end of the industry, though. Fashion allows individuals to express themselves in a tangible way. Fashion faux pas are meant to be broken, and this freedom allows consumers to choose how they want to feel on a daily basis and how they want to portray themselves to the rest of the world. Strangeness and difference are celebrated and encouraged.

Fashion is a unifying element that connects us to one another. As Balmain's Creative Director, Olivier Rousteing, concisely yet eloquently put it, "fashion should be about diversity, about representing the world as it is."

From LGBTQ+ parades to #MeToo marches, the masses spoke and the industry responded in the form of Cara Delevingne's rainbow Burberry runway coat and the solemn yet powerful all-black attire during the 2018 award show season. Rihanna's spectrum of 40 Fenty Beauty foundation shades and inclusive Savage x Fenty lingerie show brought a sense of responsibility as a fashion icon to the forefront. #ImNoAngel campaigns with diverse plus-size models called out Victoria's Secret.

As consumers, we are the final verdict. We speak, and the industry listens to our likes, dislikes, opinions, and desires in order to produce clothing that we are proud to incorporate as aspects of our identities.