

How Lululemon Has Killed An Entire Generation Of Fashion

As I look around me writing this, I see nothing but neutral draped over everyone. My eyes lust for any sense of color I can find, yet the cones in my eyes stay hungry. Nike, Adidas, and Puma. These brands tag every discolored outfit, every tattered pair of pajamas, and every sloppy look that graces the hallways of all high schools. And while every sweatpant has a different logo, and every pajama pant has a different plaid pattern, the notorious LuluLemon legging longs for originality and personality. Sure, my baggy pair of corduroy pants and extremely oversized vintage BMW t-shirt isn't nearly as comfortable as the simple Lululemon pullover and leggings look - but do I care about making a statement about who I am or sacrificing that for comfort? In the end, I would rather save a hundred dollars and keep my sense of self in exchange for knowing that Lululemon has killed my generation's creativity in fashion and embracing themselves. But why is it so important that we keep our sense of style?

Dig up an old photograph of your parents – is it from the 70s? Look at your mom sporting those giant, obnoxious shoulder pads with a dreadful blue floral dress and burnt, teased hair. Now take a gander at your dad. Do you see his long shaggy hair he matched with a horrific pair of massive denim bell bottoms and chukka leather boots? As goofy and imbecilic as they both look - their looks say something about them whether we like what they're saying or not. It may be a cliché, but the older generations used to dress for the life that they wanted. Nowadays, Gen Z dresses for the life they've come to expect – more of the same. Just as a cluttered desk equates to a cluttered mind, a cohesive look equates to a cohesive sense of self. This is something the previous generations lived by. Enter LuluLemon, the athletic wear company that took Gen Z by storm. The company capitalized on the fact that Gen Z as a whole does not particularly care about making a statement about themselves through their clothing. In fact,

comfort and practicality are the main focus. LuluLemon took advantage of this growing mindset and turned its athletic wear into athleisure, the athletic clothing that can be worn every day and in virtually any setting. LuluLemon became so popular that dupe brands permeated the markets, creating one dominant market hyper-focused on athleisure. As a result, we now have a generation that is a sea of sweatpants, leggings, and hoodies designed for comfort but very little else.

Take a couple in their thirties dining on the Upper East Side. The man is dressed in dark slim-tapered jeans, a casual button-down matched with a Patagonia vest, with a pair of minimalist sneakers to finish his look. His partner is wearing a pair of skinny jeans with a bit of fringe coming off the bottoms, a flowy blouse with a structured cardigan, and combat boots that scream “I’m edgy.” They’ve come to this laid-back artisan restaurant at a time when the manager is profusely sweating at the sight of a line out the door. Onto that line comes a group of loud private school girls from Marymount, each identical to one other. They’re all carrying a flavored nicotine stick with a Starbucks refresher to hopefully hold it down, a baggy Montauk hoodie with numerous coffee stains, mandated skirts that the church forces them to wear, a pair of worn-down slides with more cracks in them than the sidewalk, and of course under it they each sport a pair of black LuluLemon leggings no different from one another. They dress like an afterthought; as a result, the manager treats them like an afterthought. What the manager doesn’t understand is that under that unimpressive pile, there lies a girl who boasts an impressive TikTok following of over one million followers. The man in the young couple’s relationship, however, proudly boasts a Facebook account of one hundred and two dedicated friends. And yet, the man will be welcomed by the manager while the dressed-down girl will get an eye roll at best and be shown to a table at the back. While the couple happily enjoys their food in a nice outdoor seating area, the girls are making a TikTok in the bathroom about how crappy the restaurant and service are – bringing the manager a year of desperation. All of the

interactions in this scenario are driven by the way each person commands respect through their clothing. LuluLemon has brought with it a culture of outward laziness and a stigma that punishes self-respect and self-expression.

Fitting in has become the currency of the modern world. I mean, why would you want to be the only one wearing a pink satin button-down in a sea of leggings and shirts? Why do we always find ourselves wandering into the Lululemon store on Greenwich Ave? It filters down to a simple, primal human biological standard – following the herd. Look at the person's phone next to you – what brand is it? Gaze at the coffee cup in the hands of the nearest pedestrian you see – who brewed it? Are your answers Apple and Starbucks? The main point is this: we all desperately want to fit into this toxic, digital modern world – even if that means sacrificing our sense of self. We all strive to look like the perfect, 5'6, athletic, blonde girl on the poster who mocks us through the window of the Lululemon store – even the guys.

What do we stand to gain in the end from sacrificing our self-worth? It's certainly not comfort, but even more insecurity. We seek a nonexistent normal and the consequences of not fitting in are only amplified by that social media. Why is it so important that we keep our sense of style? Comfort in our own bodies, rather than crying in front of a mirror for thirty minutes before going out; passionate freedom of expression in a world of neutral colors; the need to stand out, rather than to fit in; and most importantly, self-respect for choosing what we want to do with ourselves rather than letting whichever Kardashian on Instagram is telling us to in a slurred valley girl accent. The world has slowly become one big social experiment. It's no longer survival of the fittest - but the survival of the quietest that dominates the human mindset. I'm not saying we need to burn all Lululemon leggings - there is always a time and place for athleisure wear such as on an airplane or at the gym - but maybe it's time to trade them in for a braver statement about who we are.