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11 Sustainability in Contemporary Kink Fashion

Abstract: Authored by an expert in research methods and external validity, namely Dr. Anne-Kirstine Dyrvig, a swinger who earned a PhD in epidemiology, this chapter discusses kink fashion, worn in the sex-positive movement. The chapter concludes with recommendations for increased sustainability in kink fashion.

Keywords: Kink fashion, swinging, materials, sustainability, fashion

Introduction

Kink fashion in itself is a niche that seems to be affected only to a limited extent by other trends in the world. Nevertheless, it is not exempt from the contemporary demands on sustainability and there is plenty of room for improvement.

In this chapter, kink fashion should be understood as distinct from any other type of fashion that may be sexy. As a rule of thumb, it can be said that a kinky outfit for use in e.g., a swingers' club is anything that is too sexy to wear in any other club or setting. The same definition will be used here. What will not be addressed in this chapter is fetish outfits such as outfits for BDSM purposes, full-body-latex outfits, costumes (i.e., nurse), etc.

Kinky outfits are characterised by being tightly fitted to the body and having easy access to genitalia (through strategically placed holes or zippers) so that it is mostly possible to conduct penetrative sex without removing the clothes. A typically used fabric is see-through nylon. Also, it is frequent to have breasts or genitalia showing through holes in the fabric.

Sometimes kinky outfits have certain features to them that are aimed at sexual pleasure or teasing, e.g., a string of pearls that touches the clitoris, so that the person wearing the clothes experiences slight physical stimulation from them.

Within the field of contemporary kink fashion, there are noteworthy differences between female and male fashion. This is seen particularly across country boundaries. It is noteworthy that the only two genders discussed here are male and female. That is due to the fact that they constitute the majority and consequently the main weight of the fashion trends. This is not to imply that other genders do not exist.

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Male Fashion

Generally, there are three types of male fashion within the kink community. The least amount of clothing is used in clubs that have underwear as dress code. In those, men wear boxers, mainly tightly fitting and black. For the more fashionably aware, an expensive brand is used or, in rare instances, tights with print.

In other kink cultures, male fashion is more flamboyant with wet look boxers, or trousers alongside net shirts normally in black colour. Finally, the remaining male dress code is business pants, long sleeved shirt with a collar (no T-shirts) and shoes that are not sneakers.

Female Fashion

Correspondingly, at locations that require underwear, females are expected to wear lingerie and lace, sometimes with a kimono on top. In other cultures, women wear short, tight dresses that would be suitable for a dance club and high heels. Or finally, the swingers' fashion includes slutty outfits, i.e., dresses that are shorter than normal, more likely to be see-through or with strategically placed holes. High heels are mandatory in clubs where men wear business clothes and women wear slutty outfits. In a few clubs, the dress code for males and females is to be naked, and consequently perhaps the most sustainable?

Another aspect that denotes the field of kink fashion is that the general consumption culture is present in kink as well as in other aspects of consumption. Thus, in Western cultures such as Europe and in the USA, there is a tendency towards products aimed at one-time use, e.g., cheap, low-quality nylon stockings or outfits that will lose too much quality to be reused after being washed.

Increasing Sustainability in Kink Fashion

Cases of lingerie are not addressed here. For other types of clothing, this section covers the choice of materials, production countries, shopping options and the so-called one-size-problem, which constitute the main challenges of sustainable production of kink fashion.

Materials

Most kink fashion is produced in materials that allow stretching to accommodate the wish for tight-fit. Consequently, popular materials include plastic and are mixes be-

tween types of fabric. Plastic is mainly produced in China and leads to transportation that emits CO₂. Furthermore, fabrics that consist of combinations of fibers reduce the ease of recycling.

Production

Kink fashion is mass-produced, mainly in China. As stated above, this implies that the clothes need transportation, which is not sustainable.

Shopping Options

The field of kink fashion is a niche, indicating that the availability of such clothes is limited. Furthermore, the use of kink fashion is subject to a certain amount of shame or shyness in terms of the sexual signals that are related to going to a kink shop or sex shop.

Consequently, much of the shopping happens online with no option to try on the clothes and check the fit beforehand. It is no surprise that this increases waste as many people will not get to return clothes that do not fit. Thus, clothes lie unused in a closet until disposed of. The kink fashion field is only rarely considered as second-hand-worthy. It is unclear if the reason is that the clothes tend to be close to genitalia and thus deemed not reusable, or if it is the shame or shyness that is related not only to buying such clothes but also to reselling.

One-Size-Problem

Although the fashion is tight-fit aiming at emphasising the attractive parts of the human body, it is never tailor-made and only in cases of lingerie more or less designed to fit different bodies and body types. The failure to produce clothes that are well suited for the individual leads people to compromise and thus be likely to use the clothes less than if they felt comfortable. Furthermore, the one-size outfits are more likely to be of the type that are used as one-time-outfits in the Western consumption culture.

Recommendations

One aspect that would add to the sustainability of kink fashion would be to change the materials used. A previous chapter discusses leather. Leather has sustainable advantages compared to synthetic leather-look-materials. A relatively large part of the indus-

try is based on materials that are supposed to look like leather, and replacing these with real leather would improve sustainability in several ways. If meat is eaten anyway, no cow needs to be killed for its leather. Local production of leather would decrease the need for transportation from China, while catering to local tastes. In southern Europe and in Mexico, female kink fashion includes metal-chains draped decoratively on the body.

One relatively sustainable material, which is currently only used in the Mexican kink community, is tape. Tape designed for use on the body is low-use in terms of resources and quantity. Although it can be used only once in the original form, tape is recyclable.

Finally, the currently most rarely used item, which is sustainable, is glass pearls. Alongside either tape/glue or metal chains, glass pearls can be used to decorate bodies. Glass is well-suited for reuse and thus highly sustainable.

Sources

The people behind www.secretswingerlust.com who travel the world to rate swinger clubs have contributed information on materials used throughout the world.