



CULTURAL IMPERIALISM THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA: INFLUENCE OF WESTERN DRESSING THROUGH FACEBOOK IN URBAN AREAS OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Social media is not only mode of transmission of information and interaction but also a source of penetration of cultures from dominant countries to under developing countries. It is an act of overall imperialism, but urban areas are more under influence of cultural imperialism. Although social media is playing significant role for integration that associates to indigenization and cultural diversity, but flow of social relations and cultural values is unidirectional that is from socio-economical powerful societies to financially poor societies. In order to investigate objective of cultural influence on urban areas of third world countries through Facebook, contents are analyzed through analytic approach in which existing material on role of Facebook for cultural imperialism in third world countries has been reviewed to write this research paper. By keeping research limitation in view, topic of this research is narrowed down to urban areas culture in context of Pakistan. Thus, different sources are reviewed to conduct this research paper which include online journals, articles, reports and publication on current



trends. In contrast to imperial colonization, which was force invasion of power countries, cultural imperialism is something deliberate adaptation customs, values and fashion by under developing countries. In context of theoretical framework of diffusion theory and one way flow of information, cultural penetration through Facebook has more effects on elite and educated urban areas population as compared to rural areas of Pakistan. The main reasons behind this are low literacy level, economic constraints, and lack of facilities of internet in rural dialects of Pakistan.

Keywords: culture, social media, Imperialism, developing countries, dressing

Cultural Imperialism

Imperialism means to invade the country by forces of military action by powerful countries to rule over other suppressed nations like colonization in third world countries by British Empire. In this modern age of social media, imperialism is not only invasion of military forces by powerful country but also domination of culture through Facebook. Such exploitation of socio- economic has linkage with penetration of western culture in third world countries. This change in trends of lives and adaptation of superiors' culture is cultural imperialism by strong countries. Cultural imperialism is an influence of one powerful and dominant culture on other cultures. So, in context of third world countries like Pakistan, cultural imperialism can be defined as domination and penetration of western powerful culture for reshaping of norms, values and individual identities of these deprived societies according to their own political benefits. Main objective of cultural imperialism is to root out exiting traditional norms and cultural values and establish publicity of commodities for benefits of political and economic marketing in suppressed cultures areas. Through Social media campaigns, needs of changed contents are created to dissociate from solidarity and replacing it with hegemony of popular cognizance. In order to separate individual bonds, alienate from class identity and isolate from community socio-political effects are produced through social media (Petras, 2014). The most vulnerable class in third world countries is youth that can easily be socio-economically exploited by west propaganda through social media. This is like cultural colonization in which national identity is ruptured in order to promote cult of modernism. For building up conformity with external symbols, solidarity and individual personality is reshaped through message of social media. Social bonds among people of society are attacked to get desired results. Facebook has been embraced in numerous countries with over eighty percent of its user-base being outside of the US and Canada. Yet, despite this global dominance, not much is implicit of Facebook practice by individuals in non-western cultures (Peters, Winschiers & Mennecke, 2015).



West Culture Penetration through Facebook

According to Huang & Park (2013), East Asians from collectivistic and mutually dependent sociocultural coordination are more complex to related evidence than Westerners, whereas Westerners with unique and sovereign depiction have a inclination to procedure important and distinct characteristics of the setting. Dominant powers impose their culture through intimacy of images, illusions of social bonds and cross culture for alienation to third world countries. Strategy of de-sensitization of traditions and beliefs to public is applied to accept the new activities established by west. Countries those are economically and politically strong always glorify their modernity while third world countries are presented as terrorists, aggressors, and faceless societies. Elite and powerful commercial markets are emphasized for their sophistication while third world generations old cultures are displaced as oppressed and backward traditions. Local cultures are destroyed for seeking of mobility and freedom of expression that is like preying of psychological and socially weak cultures of third world nations. This is sort of cultural terrorism which corporates to target the deep anxiety of poor vulnerable societies. These oppressed societies are fearful to be traditional expression rather than they are seduced by images through media for manipulation of modernity. In this way they are forced to be modern on name of free marketing because they are rigid to their fundamental relations therefore that are considered as tough obstacle for modernized west cultural imperialism Blanks, (1998).

Hegemony of Virtual/Pseudo Communities

Social media like Facebook, websites, YouTube, Skype, Wikipedia, and twitter provide platform for promotion of culture transformation and established collective efforts for sharing photographs and images which associate to socio cultural practices. Social media is source for connectivity for intercultural activities, but its forceful flow is from economically strong nation towards developing nations (Dijck, 2010). When cultures overlap each other across border those form virtual culture. Such virtual communities are composed of homogenous participants, but it reinforces the foreign dominant society instead of supporting pre-existing cultures as west cultures are presented with high values to impress the suppressed societies like third world countries. It looks like colour blind ideology dynamics and tactics by powerful cultures. These virtual communities are also called pseudo communities through which unclear and unfolded hybrid identities may emerge because social media provides intimacy and engage them free from space and time. Dominant cultures are always propagated through social media where individual identity is marginalized. Sometime these intercultural connectivity becomes source of direct dialogue and collaborative discourse for remote and distant individuals through social media usage which provides a unique style of collectivism where elements of mutual understanding and empathy are discovered all over the world. In this way it develops not only a fusion among



cultures but also an environment of harmonization that gives opportunities for interaction and mutual assimilation among two cultures.

Emergence Of 3rd Cultural Identity from Two Different Cultures

Social media builds an ideal and supportive climate for convergence of third culture from mutual acceptance and cooperation of two different cultures. According to McEwan & Denton (2011), social media has increased the probabilities of developing third culture because of easiness in new technological use it has become socio-economical cost effective all around the globe. For immediate opportunities of intellectuals' engagement, culture is driven through various ways of social media use all over the world. This generates cross cultural information in shape of digital contents which leads to innovations which further pave the ways for international cultures institutions for implications of new digital social media practices. Users of social media individuals post the contents on different websites and links, tag others to search and enable others social media users to make relationships in this way cultural values transfer from one place to other. Photographs and images sharing on social media is constructing feasible conditions to transfer culture place to place. These exchanges of pictures and experiences are indulging new generation in daily routine lives. Such personal information and pictures sharing on digital media sites is growing an ideology of culture interaction and connectivity among nations. All these social activities on new digital media sites change the behaviors of individuals to accept the distant cultures.

By uploading pictures and self-representation on social media is giving way to enter in social community. In this social community dominance culture is always of the people who are socio-economically strong. Developing societies follow the norms and values of powerful west cultures.

Literature Review

Social media is transforming cultural values across the world. One culture has impacts on other culture because of communication through social media. According to Warlaumont, (2010), Information communication technology is increasing as intercultural communication in new media age. Different groups and individuals have built strong connection through internet social networks of various sites, face and blogs. Cultures are expanded across the geo-political boundaries and forming as hybrid culture due to excessive migrations as well as time and space immediacy. Elmasry, (2014) presented an analysis through comparison and contrast of Facebook of USA and Egypt. After connected to Facebook group of friends share identity and construct intimacy among one another. Similarities and differences are there that Facebook users in Middle East are



focused on political matters as Qatar and Egypt are more conservative and traditional in their Facebook profiles while American emphasis on social issues.

Facebook users post pictures on wall papers and stay in contact with one another. They project their identity through self-disclosure to strangers. They make groups and stay in touch with them. Middle East countries are socially more conservative than west those are trend setters via media technology (Papaioannou & Olivos, 2013). Products of American culture are exported by launching advertisements on Facebook which provides free promotion platform to whole world. People spend their time on Facebook to fill the gap of loneliness and boring life. Products of dominant cultures are always appealing to underdeveloped countries. Although developing countries have their own traditions and customs but they cannot promote their culture only because they are weak in their socio-economic matters all around the world. Third world countries are having high poverty and illiteracy rate therefore they are socially more conservative than the western countries those are having modernity and appealing social value to dominate other suppressed cultures. Financially powerful countries have dominancy on international marketing therefore they introduce the things relevant to their own culture, but these products become trends and fashion for economically deprived societies. Range of spreading west products have been widen through online sale and purchase by utilizing latest technologies.

According to Dunch (2002), Cultural imperialism is based on concept of colonization of consciousness. Such transformation of cultures through social media brought new trends and dynamics in globalization. Shao (2018) talks about selection of vocabulary items used on Facebook shows the background of people whether they are educated, illiterate or influenced by others language. Vocabulary, semantics, syntax and abbreviations or fragments of west countries languages are mostly used on Facebook because English is the language of people who are socio-economically strong all around the globe. Products carry same jargons and terminologies those are frequently used in western countries therefore other societies have to use those linguistics features on Facebook during discussion. So mosaics have effects on contents of culture. Changing impacts of mosaics are the example of cultural imperialism. It is beyond the gate-keeping process to control the flow of mosaics through internet. In this age of digital era, fragmented messages are invaded to other societies via mass communication. USA has fully developed, and modified culture and they shape audience mind through mass media communication for invading these cultures to other parts of world. Facebook is faster and easier medium than press and cinema for penetration of cultures. Audience of Facebook can have easy access to information and receiving messages from various types of cultures. Pop culture of USA is influencing the fashion of girls and boys of third world countries. This foreign influence of culture is changing the local culture. Facebook is promoting



hegemony of culture. Users of Facebook have diversity of cultures, but they always follow trends of dominant societies because these societies have innovative and modern products. Cultures are merging and shrinking on Facebook. This tendency is making faded cultural diversity.

Cultures are interwoven to one another through Facebook. It became source of connectivity and fabrication of cultures. Advancement in technology is making strong ties among cultures including literature as well as cultural contents like painting, pictures and songs, while interaction on Facebook people actually share their cultural contents through on line communication (Dijck, 2012). Facebook is framing different values and norms. Moreover, it is mediating wiring among groups and societies through digital information communication.

As per Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs, people want to fulfill the need of belongingness as mentioned in theory hierarchy of needs (Lester, D, 2013). In this modern era, Facebook is playing important role for accomplishing such human need. According to same theory, psychological third need which is being stratified by Facebook. In addition to this Facebook is helping in progress of interdependence of various diverse cultures. Interconnectivity of people interaction is evident on Facebook usage. Moreover, Facebook is providing chances to satisfy safety social needs through communication on Facebook. People build relationships and feel contentment on securing their favorite people and liked contents. Facebook is the forum where people have conversations on different topics. During such dialogues, they become confident and get vast knowledge of social norms and values of different cultures. They become willing to adopt their cultures when they feel oneness. Facebook is socializing the world. People participate in discussion on numerous topics through Facebook. They debate online communication and mold their linguistics features of language according to their needs. In this way, they accept and polish their language which is an important tool for communication in any culture. Facebook allows participating in groups in order to gain variety of opinions. Everyone discusses issues in perspectives of their own socio-cultural values. In this way people understand cultural ethics and obtain new trends of living in society. Facebook users become moderate to accept other cultures easily. People understand cultures of one another and accept their norms through online discussion on Facebook. Such inclination of people towards other cultures coincides the diffusion theory of communication. Facebook shapes the behavior of youth about various dimensions of different cultures around the globe. Such intercultural acceptance of people is a process of way for living lives with pattern to adjust in new cultures. Such cultural adaptation is interwoven the societies all over the world. But the point of concern is about supremacy of cultures because socio-economical strong nations are always dominant over the poor and suppressed nations Kroes, (1999). It is



experienced that superior cultures like west is intertwined other cultures because of control on new technology and modern products.

Transporting pictures and images through social media is step forward to build connectivity with others (Dijck, 2011). Participants on Facebook communication obtain information about demographic values. By using social media sights and Facebook users become well aware about stereotype culture and seek adjustment in global world. So, social media and culture cannot be separated from each other. Both of these have strong relationships at high complex levels.

In historical perspective of communication, it is gradual process of advancement in technology (Miller, 1998). Initially it starts from oral communication to print, electronic media, social media and now a days digital communication. In same pattern cultures also developed from traditional cultures to modern pseudo cultures. Communication remained disseminating cultural value for reducing distance among the diversified societies. But firsthand influenced people by the culture are those who use the social media. Mostly social media affects the mind of new generation because they are soft target and trend setters. Accordingly, youth is using Facebook excessively. Therefore, businessmen prefer social media for advertising the new products. Social media provides forum for freedom of expression and liberty of sharing of contents. Facebook is also popular for such activities for promotion of cultural contents. Facebook is an interactive platform where people produce contents. Media is convenient to reproduce information for easy understanding and available for controlling the function of information (weick, 1983). After assessing the level of fitness for cultural penetration, new cultural environment is integrated on social media by west societies. People attempt to maintain connection with host culture because they have tendency to be part of new global world. They are influenced by foreign cultures and further they want to impress the local circles of their own community. Media has influence on people to behave in context of cultural values, expression pattern and thinking style (Chen & Starosta, 2005). Culture competition, drift of social connectivity and cross boundary cultures are being accelerated via social media. It is swift transformation and rapid changes in geographical significances, time and space immediacy, function of professions, values and beliefs through social media. In this age of e-economic communication, Facebook is communicating cultural values are being penetrated from west nations towards developing countries.

RQ: How western dress codes are being promoted in urban Pakistan through Facebook posts by Pakistani actresses?

Methodology



Social media is one of sources for transfer of culture from one region or dialect to another. Social media include Facebook, twitter, YouTube, Whatsapp, and many other applications those are playing their role for transformation of culture. Facebook is one of the most important media in this regard because it is open platform for promotion of culture. Facebook users are in excess of majority of social media users. In order to measure influence of western culture on urban area of Pakistan, population of research includes Facebook users from Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi prominent cities of Pakistan. Four top actresses from show biz industry of Pakistan are taken as sample because these female actresses are trend setters in urban area Pakistan. Aesha Umar, Mehwish Hayat, Mahira Khan and Saba Qamar are frequent users and introducers of western culture in Pakistan through posts on their Facebook pages. Urban female population is following new trends of these popular celebrities.

Culture is the depiction of any civilization. A culture of any society means its norms, ethnic values, customs, language, dress and many other features. But dress designs are the first impression of any cultural appearance. People are recognized through their outlooks and outfitters they wear which are the traditional and symbolic identity of their culture. So, dresses are the index to judge any culture for estimating what type of norms, values and customs these people might have in their lifestyle. Even within one society there is diversity of dresses for easy location and recognition of one community or profession. For instant, a military dress is very different from school or college uniform. So, in this research, western dress designs posted on Facebook pages of Pakistani celebrities is taken as one of the constructs which is an indicator telling influence of western culture in urban area of Pakistan. Last two years posts from selected celebrities Facebook pages containing wears would be taken as best fitting western dress designs.

There are always chances of influence by one culture over others because of mutual socio-economic and political interests of people living together on common places. People share the cultures because of trade, commercial and educational activities with one another. Nations those are strong in their political, economic and military affairs have always cultural dominance over other nations. In addition to that dialects sharing border are more easily influenced because of easy physical and visual interaction of people. Neighbor societies can frequently exchange their thoughts, ideas and expressions because of close proximity to one another therefore they unintentionally adapt cultural values of each other. Social media is the source that breaks the restriction of time, space and border. Social media brings societies close together. From social media, Facebook is the platform where people can share their knowledge, experience and opinions without constraints of time and borders. On Facebook one can find all suitable aspects of two way communication, freedom of expression, timeliness. Proximity or nearness for understanding of others



cultural norms and promotion of own cultural values. Among all, the element of prominence matters a lot on Facebook. From all corners of Facebook, people like to choose as friend, follower, and comment on prominent political leaders, social workers, business men, sports persons and show biz celebrities' pages. All these prominent personalities are considered as ambassadors of any nation. But as for culture is concern show biz celebrities are more suitable for transfer of cultural values especially for promotion of new fashion or trends of dress designs. According to media and advertising strategy of sales, one can take help of prominent personality to catch the attraction of people if a product has less worth in any area because people like to follow these celebrities. Same phenomena are being applied by western think tank for promotion of their cultures. They hire the show biz celebrities to launch their fashion related product as western dress designs are being introduced in Pakistan through this technique on the Facebook. In other words, it can be said that Facebook pages of Pakistani actresses are sources of introducing and promoting western dresses among females of urban areas of Pakistan because majority of ladies are interested to follow the new trends of wears used by actresses.

Thematic and visual analysis is used as a tool for data collection. Facebook insights that allows measuring the performance of page. Facebook tracks likes, page views, reach, followers and many others. With over 1.4 billion active daily users, Facebook provides priority of contents from family and friends. Facebook insight gives Facebook page's metrics information which is needed and helps Facebook's algorithm.

To explore each key area Facebook analytics measures each metric is measured thoroughly. The post reach section gives an overview of how many people saw the content from page and how they interacted with it. This information is broken down into 04 main metrics:

(1) Post Reach: The total number of people who were shown a specific post.

(a) Likes, Comments, and Shares: How much positive engagement of page got and how many people in number are shown.

(b) ide, Report as Spam, and Unlikes: How many people engaged negatively with page. High levels of negative engagement will decrease the number of people who see your posts in the future.

(2) Posts: This section is divided into three metrics:

(a) When Your Fans are Online: When the people who like the page are on Facebook viewing content.

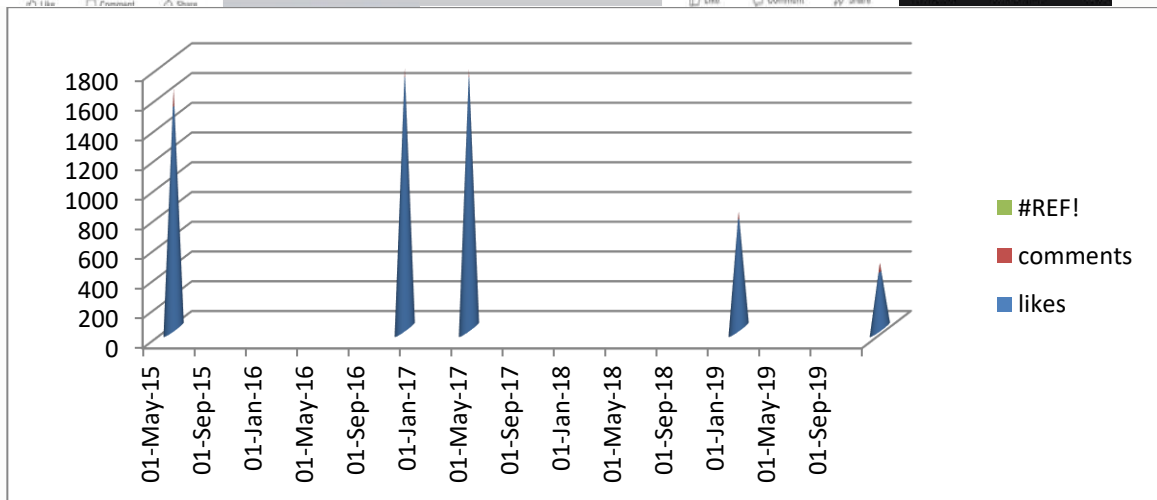
(b) Post Type: How successful different types of posts were based on the average reach and audience engagement.

(c) **Top Posts from Pages:** Engagement stats of posts made by the pages viewers are watching.

Findings and Analysis

This research work discovers the data from Facebook where it is exposed that influence of western dress codes is being promoted through Facebook pages of show biz celebrities. In findings of data here, most of the likes, comments and following are got by such contents on Facebook Pages. For sake of analysis, data is collected from official Facebook pages of sampled celebrities.

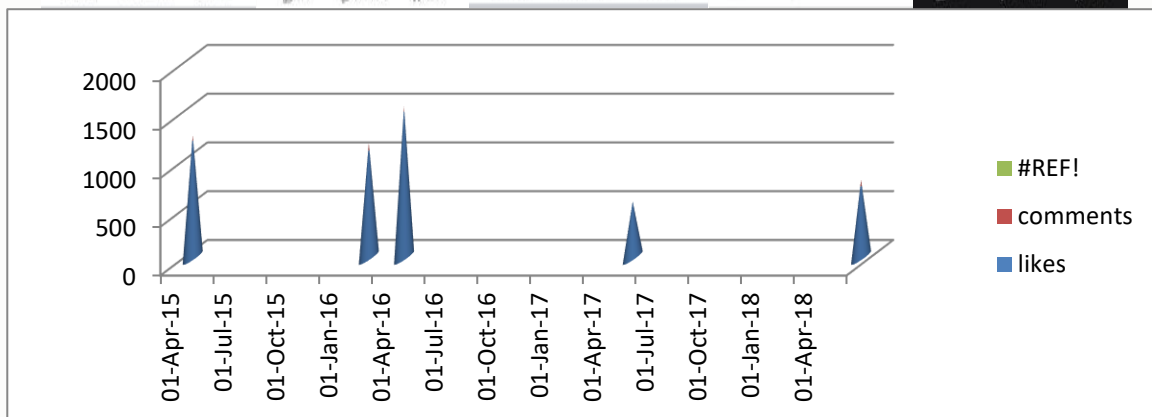
1. Aesha Omar (Pakistani Actress, Singer & Host)



Graph-1, chronically representation of “likes and comments” on Facebook

In above mentioned Facebook page posts of Aesha Omer, she wears western dresses. In very first post (May 27, 2017) on left side she is in sleeveless kameez and got 577 appraisals in form of likes. In second picture (April 5, 2015) from left, she is wearing Kameex without shoulder covers and got 1.2k likes and 61 comments. In third post (April 9, 2016) she has 1.5K likes and 51 people gave comments to this post of her Facebook page. In fourth post (February 2, 2016) out of taken sample from her Facebook page she got 1.1K likes with 77 comments. In last picture (June 3, 2018), she received 736 likes and 62 comments by followers. It can be seen these dress codes are copy of western style of dressing which is being liked by public.

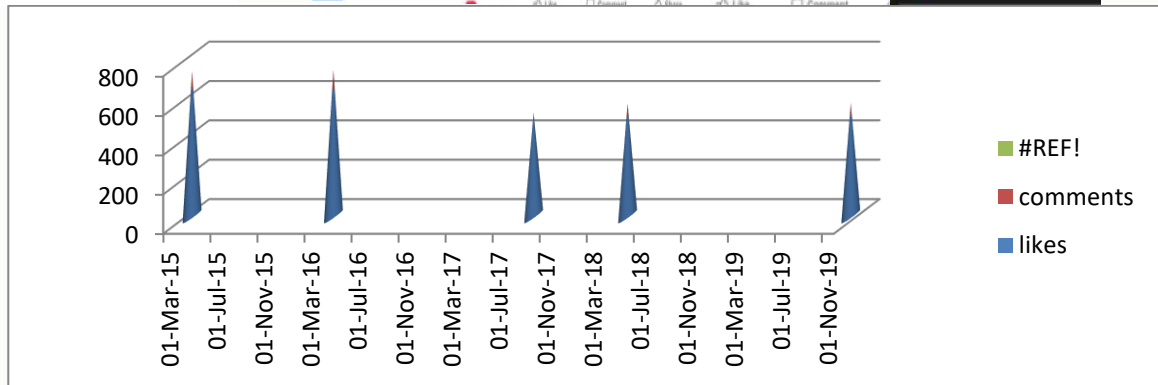
2. Mehwish Hayat (Model, Film & Actress)



Graph-2, chronically representation of “likes and comments” on Facebook

Above details about western dress codes are taken from official page of Pakistani Actress Mehwish Hayat. In 1st post (May 27, 2015) on left side, she puts on shirt without sleeves and naked beauty bones. In response to this post she received 1.5K appreciations in form of likes and 125 comments. While in 2nd picture (January 9, 2019) she has worn sleeveless seen through shirt so she won 743 likes with 52 comments by viewers. In 3rd post (April 5, 2017) of her Facebook page she in shirt without sleeves and naked beauty bones. Here she achieved 1.7K likes and 50 comments. In 4th pic from her Facebook page (November 4, 2016), 58 people left comments and with 1.7K appraisals whereas in last 5th post (December 30, 2019) she is in paint & sleeveless shirt. She scored 389 likes and 26 comments. In above all styles of dressing we can analyze these dress codes are contrary to native and traditional dresses of Pakistan. These dresses are more like western society.

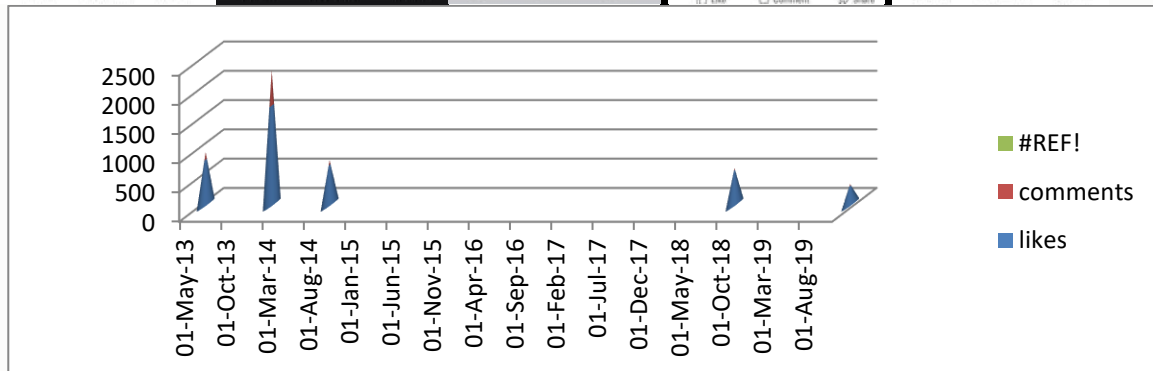
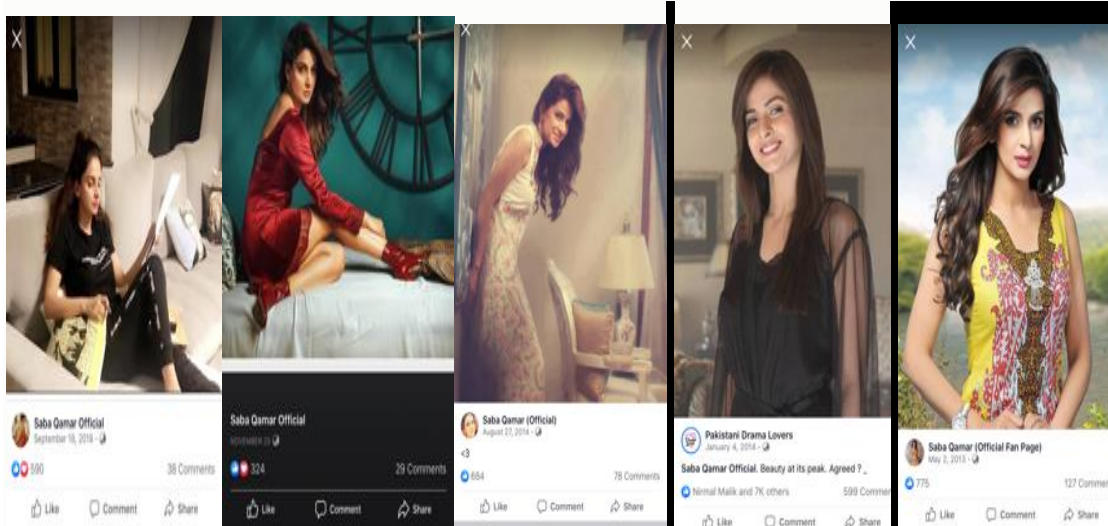
3. Mahira Khan



Graph-3, chronically representation of “likes and comments” on Facebook

In above photos there are posts of Facebook page of Mahira Khan wearing different kinds of dresses. Out of them very first post (March 12, 2015), she is in sleeveless vest she got 647 likes and 92 comments from followers. While In second post (March 26, 2016) she dresses sleeveless vest and she was commented by 101 people with 645 likes in appreciations. Next to it, in third picture (August 5, 2017) she is in short paint and she received 498 likes with 29 comments on this post. In same way fourth picture (April 4, 2018) is totally naked above the breasts. On this post she was appreciated with 507 likes and 68 comments. In addition to this fifth post (November 8, 2019) shows that she is wearing sleeveless shirt and seen through stuff. On this post she got 514 likes and 69 comments. According this data we can say these celebrities are portraying western culture through Facebook for their popularity.

4. Saba Qamar



Graph-4, chronically representation of “likes and comments” on Facebook



Above displayed pictures are picked from official Facebook page of Pakistani actress Saba Qamar. In first post (September 18, 2018) she is wearing sleeveless shirt and tight trousers because of this post she is admired by 590 likes and 38 comments are passed by people. In second post (November 25, 2019), she dressed herself without trousers and naked back bone. In response to this post she got 324 likes and 29 comments. In 3rd pic (August 27, 2014), she is in dress without sleeves. On same post she received 684 appraisal likes and 78 comments. In 4th Facebook post (January 4, 2014), she is seen through dress here she had more than 1.7K likes and 599 comments. Last in sample sequence 5th Post (May 2, 2013), she is in sleeveless shirt so she got 775 likes and 127 comments from Facebook followers. Here we can analyze that these western dress pattern became source of popular figure in return to it these trends became source of inspiration for Urban areas of Pakistan.

Conclusion and Discussion

Western dress codes are getting popularity through Facebook. In context of Pakistan such culture is being promoted by show biz celebrities' Facebook pages. Posts on the pages of females' actresses are mostly liked and commented whenever they show their pictures or videos in shorts, tights and seen through dresses. Apart from seducing male genders in Pakistan it becomes trendy for females in Pakistan especially in urban areas. They mostly get inspirations from the celebrities because they are considered trend setters and other are adopters of these fashions. In order to get appraisals in face to interaction or increase in followings on social media such western cultural imperialism is evident.

Recommendations and Limitations/ Delimitations

In this research paper culture in its fullest picture is not portrayed through eye of Facebook. Features like language, music, foods and other norms etc are not included however only western dress code is taken as an indicator of variable. In order to measure the data from Facebook, population of females from Pakistan are not taken in depth hence dresses of celebrity personalities are analyzed as source of influence from western culture. Data collected from Facebook pages are limited to respective websites only and digital statistical software is taken into use for analysis and computing samples. Moreover, these results can be generalized to all urban areas of region.



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