



# DIALEKTIKA

Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Budaya

ISSN: 2338-2635; e-ISSN: 2798-1371

## SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS: MUSIC GENRES AND FASHION EXPRESSION AMONG ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITAS SUMATERA UTARA

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### Abstract

This study used Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory to analyze the influence of music genre on the fashion expression of English Literature students at the Universitas Sumatera Utara. This research used a descriptive qualitative method. Data was obtained through structured interviews with three informants who have preferences in punk, alternative rock, and K-pop music genres. The results show that each music genre influences different fashion elements regarding colors, accessories, and clothing styles. The punk genre reflects the values of freedom and resistance through dark colors and distinctive accessories, alternative rock highlights self-expression through edgy fashion elements, while K-pop carries modernity and femininity with pastel colors and styles inspired by Korean popular culture. The environment of USU's Faculty of Cultural Sciences also plays a vital role in supporting the diversity of student fashion expressions to interact with music subcultures and social identities. Thus, fashion is not only a visual representation of musical preferences but also functions as a sign system that communicates the identity, values, and affiliations of the student community on campus.

**Keywords:** Fashion, Music Genre, Semiotic

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini menggunakan teori semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce untuk menganalisis pengaruh genre musik terhadap ekspresi fashion mahasiswa Sastra Inggris di Universitas Sumatera Utara. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara terstruktur dengan tiga orang informan yang memiliki preferensi pada genre musik punk, alternative rock, dan K-pop. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa setiap genre musik memberikan pengaruh yang berbeda terhadap elemen fesyen terkait warna, aksesoris, dan gaya pakaian. Genre punk merefleksikan nilai-nilai kebebasan dan perlawanan melalui warna-warna gelap dan aksesoris yang khas, alternative rock menonjolkan ekspresi diri melalui elemen fesyen yang edgy, sedangkan K-pop mengusung modernitas dan femininitas dengan warna-warna pastel dan gaya yang terinspirasi dari budaya populer Korea. Lingkungan Fakultas Ilmu Budaya USU juga berperan penting dalam mendukung keberagaman ekspresi fashion mahasiswa untuk berinteraksi dengan subkultur musik dan identitas sosial. Dengan demikian, fashion tidak hanya menjadi representasi visual dari preferensi musik tetapi juga berfungsi sebagai sistem tanda yang mengkomunikasikan identitas, nilai, dan afiliasi komunitas mahasiswa di kampus.

**Kata kunci:** Fesyen, Genre Musik, Semiotika

## 1. Introduction

Music has been a part of cultural expression that has been present since the past and continues to develop following the changing times. Music is a science and art that combines the rhythm of various tones, both through vocal and instrumental sounds, including melody and harmony as a form of expression, especially in expressing emotional aspects (Bahari, 2008 as cited in Khoiriyah & Sinaga, 2017). Music as a work of art can be understood as a symbol of communication, where one of its functions is to express the listener's personality through fashion choices (Fakhrunnisa, 2016). Through music, individuals can convey feelings, thoughts, and specific values.

Fashion, according to Sakinah et al. (2022), etymologically comes from the Latin "factio" which means "to do," and developed in English as a term describing a popular style in culture, which includes various aspects of appearance such as shoes, bags, accessories, hairstyles, and makeup that reflect a person's lifestyle. Historically, fashion has been shaped by factors such as socioeconomic status, religion, and geography. As reported by *prufritz.com* for example, the elaborate clothing styles of European aristocracy during the Renaissance reflected wealth and power, while traditional clothing in many regions signified cultural heritage. Fashion reflects a person's character, where individuals can express themselves to the public through the clothes they wear. Apart from being a form of self-expression, fashion also pays attention to comfort and can increase the wearer's self-confidence (Muhaditia et al., 2022). Cultural, social, economic, and even political aspects often influence fashion. Therefore, fashion serves as an aesthetic marker and reflects social change and shared identity in society.

The connection between fashion and music genres is always present, which can be seen simply in how a type of music influences how someone dresses (Fakhrunnisa, 2016). The connection between music and fashion has become more intricate in the age of digital media, with social platforms amplifying the impact of both industries. In essence, the influence of music on fashion is an ongoing narrative, a harmonious dialogue that affects our clothing choices and cultural styles, illustrating how rhythm and melody play a crucial role in the constantly evolving landscape of fashion (R and Nag, 2024). Each music genre is usually accompanied by a specific subculture and lifestyle that includes fashion as one aspect of group identity. For example, people who listen to rock music are typically associated with an outfit that is more casual, dark, and edgy, but people who love hip-hop prefer to dress in a more striking, street-style, and loose way. Therefore, a person's preferred genre of music can reveal a lot about their identity and way of life, including their sense of style.

Strübel (2015) stated some of the most significant ways music and fashion intersected emerged during the 1970s, particularly with the rise of punk in the late 1970s, when British youth, frustrated by the social climate, used both music and fashion as forms of rebellion. Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren's boutique, Sex, became the heart of the movement, with McLaren also forming the iconic punk band, the Sex Pistols. The band promoted Westwood's designs by wearing her clothes during performances. Punk fashion visually represented their anger and sense of deprivation, incorporating working-class elements and shocking styles to reject mainstream society. Ripped clothes, outrageous makeup, and safety pins symbolized rebellion and mockery of conventional respectability. According to Dick Hebdige, punk fashion was a visual expression of anger and frustration, much like punk music.

Music and fashion are two cultural elements that often go hand in hand in shaping young people's identities. Music is a medium of self-expression and shapes one's worldview and personality. Music genres like indie, punk, hip-hop, rock, and K-pop have unique visual aesthetics that translate into their fans' dressing styles. Music influences fashion choices and creates a community where individuals feel connected to others who share similar interests. As research conducted by Septian and Hendrastomo (2020) shows that indie music becomes an identity for young indie music fans in Yogyakarta, research shows that the relationship between fashion and music has always existed. The style of music influences the style of dress; each person, with their style of clothing, communicates the style of music and the identity of the band. Indie music has its own identity, and musicians create an image that people can easily recognize. Therefore, music and fashion can be an identity for young people.

Music and fashion serve as a means for young people to communicate, to show affiliation with a community, and to convey a confident attitude. Combining these two allows them to express their individuality and showcase their differences. Fashion styles from favorite musicians or music genres help create bonds with other fans, forming communities with similar values and tastes. Thus, music and fashion are more than just a way of dressing or entertainment; they are also a means to build solidarity and express and seek self-identity.

In this study, a semiotic approach is used as the theoretical framework to analyze the relationship between music genres and fashion. Semiotic theory, particularly Charles Sanders Peirce's approach, can be applied to analyze the connection between music and fashion. Peirce proposed three categories of signs: index, icon, and symbol. In this research, the signs that emerge in the fashion of English literature students can be analyzed using these three categories to understand the meanings contained within them.

Previous research has examined the relationship between music and fashion. The study by Amna and Kalaloi (2023) aimed to analyze how hardcore music fashion shapes the identity of individuals and fan communities in Bandung by utilizing music as a source of self-identity. This research was conducted using a qualitative method through a phenomenological approach. The concepts and theories used in this research are fashion and identity, subculture conceptualization, fandom and identity, and finally supported by stimulus-organism-response theory. The study by Fakhrunnisa (2016) aimed to understand how the band White Shoes and The Couples Company use vintage fashion as part of their musical identity. By employing George Herbert Mead's symbolic interaction theory, this research demonstrated that nonverbal symbols such as vintage clothing shape the band's musical identity, reflecting the style of the 1970s.

The study by Na and Agnhage (2013) aimed to analyze the relationship between music preferences and fashion among consumers and to find similarities in aesthetic sensibilities between the two. This research used theories regarding the relationship between aesthetic and sensory preferences. The study by Shabrina (2021) aimed to describe the relationship between metal music and women's fashion and to see the influence of social and demographic aspects on fashion style. It used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection methods through observation, interviews, documentation, and visual studies. The focus of the research was on Bandung, which is a fashion center and has a dominant metal music community. The theories used include the influence of music on fashion culture and symbolism in clothing. The study by Umar et al. (2024) aimed to understand and analyze the artifactual communication reflected in the dressing style of Hardcore music fans among students of Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya. It used a qualitative method with a non-verbal and artifactual communication theory approach. It involved students who are fans of Hardcore music and express their identity through daily fashion.

This study differs from the previous five studies in several aspects. Amna and Kalaloi's (2023) research focuses on the identity of individuals and communities of hardcore music fans in Bandung using a phenomenological approach, while this research uses Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory to analyze the influence of music genres on the fashion expression of English Literature students at the Universitas Sumatera Utara. Fakhrunnisa's (2016) research emphasized the use of vintage fashion by White Shoes and The Couples Company as their musical identity using symbolic interaction theory, while this research highlights the relationship between music genres and students' fashion elements using a semiotic approach. Na and Agnhage's (2013) research focused on aesthetic preferences between music and fashion

in general without reviewing specific groups, in contrast to this study which examines college students with musical preferences for punk, alternative rock, and K-pop.

Shabrina (2021) examines the relationship between metal music and women's fashion in Bandung using a descriptive qualitative approach, while this study examines three more diverse music genres in the fashion expression of USU students using the same method. Research by Umar et al. (2024) analyzed artifactual communication in the dressing style of hardcore music fans at the Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, in contrast to this study which emphasizes the influence of music genres on fashion as a sign system that reflects the social identity of students. Thus, this study offers a new contribution by linking the semiotics of music and fashion in a more diverse campus community.

This research chose English literature students at Universitas Sumatera Utara as the object of research because, based on the researcher's observations, there are English literature students whose fashion is influenced by the music genres they listen to. Therefore, the researcher is interested in examining this phenomenon using a semiotic approach. This study aims to analyze the meanings or signs of fashion among English literature students at Universitas Sumatera Utara that are influenced by the music genres they listen to, utilizing semiotic theory by Charles Sanders Peirce. Understanding this relationship between music preferences and fashion choices is crucial as it provides insights into how youth construct and express their identity through cultural consumption.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Music Genres**

Musical genres are categories people create to organize and describe the variety of music. These genres don't have clear definitions or fixed limits because they develop through a mix of public opinion, marketing, history, and culture (Tzanetakis & Cook, 2002). Despite this lack of clear definitions, music genres can still be understood as categories or types of music distinguished by characteristics such as rhythm, melody, lyrics, or the instruments used. Young people, including students, are enthusiastic about the following musical genres:

Young people, particularly students, are drawn to several popular music genres. Pop music is known for its simplicity and accessibility, often dominating mainstream media due to its easy listening appeal. Rock music features strong rhythms and emphasizes the use of electric guitars and drums, making it a powerful and energetic genre. Hip-hop, on the other hand, highlights urban experiences through its lyrics and has a profound influence

on fashion trends. Korean pop (K-pop), is celebrated for its combination of energetic choreography, vivid visuals, and innovative fashion.

Each music genre is often associated with a particular lifestyle or values. For example, rock music fans may prefer a rebellious and masculine dress style, while K-pop fans might be more interested in colorful and bold trends.

## **2.2. Fashion Expression**

Fashion allows individuals to express themselves through clothing, accessories, and style. The study of fashion encompasses more than just clothing; it also reflects the roles and meanings of attire within a social context, functioning as a social skin that conveys messages and lifestyles of a community while reflecting specific aspects of social life (Fakhrunnisa, 2016). For students, fashion can reflect personal or group identity and is often influenced by their interests, including the music genres they enjoy.

The relationship between music genres and fashion is evident in the styles adopted by fans. Hip-hop enthusiasts, for example, gravitate toward oversized clothing, sneakers, and gold accessories, drawing inspiration from street culture. Punk rock fans, on the other hand, embrace a rebellious aesthetic characterized by leather jackets, ripped clothing, and accessories like chains or pins, symbolizing their anti-authority stance. Meanwhile, K-pop fans often emulate the fashion of their favorite artists, adopting vibrant colors, stylish outfits, and cute accessories that mirror the visual appeal of the genre.

Beyond its aesthetic value, fashion serves as a means of expressing a person's commitment to or loyalty to a specific culture or subculture, such as music. Mandal and Kumar (2022) discussed the significance of fashion as a vital means of self-expression for individuals. Clothing represents identity, personality, character, mood, and personal style. Fashion influences the identity of individuals in various ways, such as through the colors they prefer and the stores they shop at. People utilize fashion as a method of self-expression, which positively impacts their mood, functionality, cognition, and behavior. The color, comfort, fit, and style of our garments can directly affect our confidence levels. Fashion embodies values of liberalism, individualism, and an open culture. It serves as an expression of a person's character and symbolizes freedom. Thus, fashion not only acts as a medium for self-expression but also plays a crucial role in forming and communicating the values and identity of an individual or group.

### 2.3. Semiotic Theory of Charles Sanders Peirce

Charles Sanders Peirce's (1931) theory defines how signs work to convey meaning, categorizing them into three primary types: icon, index, and symbol. Each type plays a distinct role in connecting signs to their meanings within cultural and social contexts.

An icon is a sign that physically resembles the object it represents. In fashion, icons can be items of clothing or accessories that are strongly linked to a particular music genre. For example, a leather jacket is often associated with rock music because it is a visual representation of the style and culture tied to that genre. An index is a sign that shows a direct connection or cause-and-effect relationship with the object. In fashion, a band t-shirt serves as an index—it directly indicates that the person wearing it is a fan of a specific band or music genre. It connects the person to the music through this visible sign. A symbol is a sign whose meaning is based on cultural or social conventions. Unlike icons and indexes, symbols do not resemble or directly cause the object they represent. Instead, their meaning is understood through shared cultural associations. For example, black is often used in fashion to symbolize metal or punk music, as it is widely seen as representing rebellion or a darker, deeper attitude in those musical cultures.

In *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* Peirce said that an Icon is a representation that signifies the object it represents purely based on its characteristics, which remain the same regardless of whether the object exists or not. While it is true that the Icon cannot function as a sign without the existence of such an Object, this does not influence its nature as a sign. Anything, whether it be a quality, a specific individual, or a law, serves as an Icon for something else as long as it resembles that entity and is utilized as a sign for it.

An Index is a representation that signifies the object it denotes by being influenced by that object. For this reason, it cannot be classified as a Qualisign since qualities exist independently of other entities. As the Index is impacted by the object, it must share some Quality with it, and it is these common qualities that lead it to refer to the object. Hence, it does involve a kind of Icon; however, this type of Icon is distinct, and it is not merely the resemblance to its object that makes it a sign but rather the actual change it undergoes due to the object.

A symbol is a representation that indicates the object it denotes through a system of laws. It typically consists of an association of general concepts that lead to the symbol being interpreted as relating to that object. Consequently, it embodies a general kind of law, referred to as a Legisign. In this capacity, it operates through a Replica. The symbol

is inherently general, and the object it signifies is also general. Thus, what is general derives its existence from the examples it will define. Therefore, instances of what the symbol represents must exist, although it is important to note that "existent" refers to those instances within the potentially imaginary realm the symbol represents. Through associative connections or other laws, those instances will indirectly influence the symbols; however, the minor impact those instances have on the symbol does not fully explain the symbol's significant nature.

In this research, Peirce's theory helps analyze the meanings or signs indicated by the fashion choices of students based on the music genres they listen to.

#### **2.4. Social Identity**

The concept of identity is intimately connected to human existence, as it gives each individual a unique personality (Husein and Tanjung, 2022). White et al. (2012) in Wibisono and Sasia (2020) state that social identity is how individuals define themselves, encompassing self-concept and involvement in a group. Social identity also reflects how someone perceives themselves as part of a particular group or community. Adetya (2020) further explains that social identity is developed through a person's engagement, concern, and sense of pride in their belonging to a social group. Music often plays a role in shaping social identity, especially among young people. For instance, it could be easier for a student who considers themselves a hip-hop enthusiast to socialize with other community members who share their taste in music and fashion. Students could employ music and costumes on campus to express who they are and identify with particular groups.

Fashion influenced by music can also function as a non-verbal communication tool that conveys who they are, what they like, and the values they uphold. Thus, the interaction between music and fashion contributes to the formation of students' social identity within a broader cultural context. This combination allows students to express their individuality, align with like-minded groups, and communicate their values through visual and auditory signals, further solidifying their place within specific social circles.

### **3. Research Method**

This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method. The process describes the results of observations using data collected from the field. The data collected are words, observation notes, pictures, and not numbers (Moleong, 2006). The data source comprised students from the Universitas Sumatera Utara (USU) English Literature Department. Participants were selected purposively, focusing on those actively following



fashion trends and whose music preferences reflect diverse genres, such as punk, alternative rock, and K-pop. This purposive sampling ensured that the participants represent a broader population of English Literature students at USU who are influenced by music genres in their fashion expressions, thus providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Data were collected through structured interviews. This approach involved a set of pre-determined questions that were asked uniformly to all participants, ensuring consistency in the topics discussed while allowing for comparison across responses. Each interview lasted approximately 5 minutes and was conducted in a comfortable setting. The interviews were recorded with the participants' consent, ensuring the accuracy of the data. Afterward, the recordings were transcribed verbatim for thorough analysis.

A semiotic approach, guided by Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of signs, was used to analyze the data. The concepts of icon, index, and symbol were applied to identify the meanings or signs in participants' fashion choices influenced by their preferred music genres. These semiotic concepts facilitated an analysis of how specific fashion elements represent musical influences among the students.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

This study found that music genres significantly influence the fashion expression of English Literature students at Universitas Sumatera Utara. Based on interviews with three informants, it was found that each music genre they like influences their fashion choices, both in terms of colors, accessories, and clothing styles. Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis identifies these fashion expressions through signs divided into icons, indexes, and symbols unique to each music genre.

##### 4.1. Punk Genre: Resistance and Freedom

Based on the first informant, who likes the punk music genre, it shows how fashion has become a representation of punk ideology. In Peirce's semiotic analysis, several signs were found which are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Fashion Semiotics in the Punk Genre

Semiotic Category	Signs	Explanation
Icon	Punk band t-shirt	Represents visual elements strongly tied to punk aesthetics and culture.
	DocMart	
	Jeans pants	
Index	Dominance of dark/black colors	Dark colors signify resistance.

	Simple dressing style	The simple style reflects freedom.
	Use of accessories	Accessories highlight subcultural identity.
<b>Symbol</b>	Bracelets and necklaces	Accessories signify community membership
	All-black clothing	Black symbolizes rebellion and anti-establishment values.

Based on Table 1, in the punk genre, favored by the first informant, it was found that fashion expresses punk ideology that prioritizes the value of freedom and resistance to mainstream rules. In Peirce's concept, an icon is a sign that has a physical resemblance to the object it represents. Some of the iconic signs that emerge are the use of punk band T-shirts, DocMart shoes, and jeans that reflect the typical punk aesthetic. These three elements are considered icons that identify fans of the punk genre, reinforcing their subcultural affiliation.

In addition, several indices show the characteristics of punk as a resistance to mainstream culture. Index according to Peirce is a sign that shows a cause-and-effect relationship or direct relationship with its object. For example, the predominance of black in the first informant's clothing indicates a strong punk identity and is an index of defiance against establishment standards. This dark color, along with the simple, uncomplicated clothing style, serves as an index of freedom that is very important in punk culture. The first informant also uses accessories such as bracelets and necklaces that serve as fashion elements and as markers of subcultural identity within the punk community.

Regarding symbols, the first informant chooses certain accessories with deep meaning, such as bracelets and necklaces that symbolize membership in the punk community. A symbol is a sign whose meaning is based on cultural agreement, and in this case, bracelets and necklaces are widely recognized within the punk subculture as markers of affiliation and identity. Apart from being an index of resistance, all-black clothing also symbolizes the rebellious and anti-establishment values at the core of punk ideology. Thus, for the first informant, fashion is not just an aesthetic choice but a form of representation of the values and beliefs of punk music fans, conveying a sense of belonging and shared cultural understanding.

## 4.2. Alternative Rock Genre: Self-Expression and Uniqueness

Based on the second informant, with a preference for the alternative rock genre, several signs were found which are shown in the table below.

Table 2. Fashion Semiotics in the Alternative Rock Genre

Semiotic Category	Signs	Explanation
<b>Icon</b>	Piercing	Represents an edgy aesthetic tied to alternative rock and individuality.
	Skirt with fringe	
	Ripped pants	
<b>Index</b>	Dark colors (black, navy, maroon)	Dark colors reflect rock characteristics
	Makeup inspired by Amy Lee	Makeup indicates idolization.
<b>Symbol</b>	Clothing style	Clothing symbolizes self-expression and resistance to societal norms.
	Alternative dressing as resistance to stereotypes	

Based on Table 2, the second informant, who prefers the alternative rock genre, uses fashion to express individuality and personal uniqueness. Charles Sanders Peirce explains that an icon is a sign that has a physical resemblance to the object it represents. Some of the icons seen in the second informant's fashion include piercings, skirts with fringe, and "ripped" pants that highlight the edgy alternative rock aesthetic. These icons provide a distinctive feature that shows the second informant's musical preferences, which not only describe her appearance but also symbolize her independent personality.

Peirce describes an index as a sign that indicates a direct or causal connection to its object. The index in the second informant's dressing style can be seen in dark colors such as black, navy, and maroon, which indicate rock music's solid and bold characteristics. The makeup style inspired by Amy Lee, the lead singer of Evanescence, is an index of idolization that shows that figures heavily influence the second informant's fashion in the music genre she loves. By adopting these elements, the second informant shows her emotional attachment and admiration for her music idols.

According to Peirce, a symbol is a sign whose meaning is established through shared cultural conventions. In the symbolic aspect, fashion is a tool for the second informant to express self-identity. The choice of clothing that tends to be alternative and unique becomes a symbol of resistance to stereotypes or judgmental views from society. This style becomes a form of statement to express her personality, who is not afraid to be

different and maintain her identity in the social community. Thus, fashion in this context reflects a deeper meaning than just a dress style, namely as a symbol of freedom of expression.

### 4.3. The K-pop Genre: Modernity and Femininity

Based on the third informant with K-pop preferences, several signs were found which are shown in the table below.

Table 3. Fashion Semiotics in the K-pop Genre

Semiotic Category	Signs	Explanation
<b>Icon</b>	Flower pattern	Represents visual elements tied to K-pop's cheerful and feminine characteristics.
	Korean look makeup style	
	Clothes with soft and nude colors	
<b>Index</b>	A fresh style of dress	Fresh and girly styles reflect K-pop traits
	Girly look	
	Aespa-inspired style	Idol-inspired fashion indicates influence.
<b>Symbol</b>	Fashion as open-mindedness	Fashion signifies openness and creativity
	Dress style as creativity	
	Pastel-colored clothes as modernity	Pastel colors symbolize modernity and youth culture.

Based on Table 3, the K-pop genre, which is the preference of the third informant, it was found that fashion is not just about following trends but also a means to show modernity and femininity. The third informant chose fashion that reflects K-pop's cheerful and fresh characteristics. Peirce explains that an icon is a sign that bears a physical similarity to the object it represents. Some of the icons that appear in her K-pop fashion include floral prints, Korean look makeup styles, and clothes with soft colors such as nude and pastel, which are often associated with the feminine style of K-pop. These choices show the influence of Korean popular culture in shaping the third informant's fashion preferences.

An index is a sign that has a direct relationship with the object it represents. The index of the third informant's K-pop fashion is seen in her "fresh" and "girly" style of dressing, representing the K-pop genre's characteristics. The third informant expresses the identity of K-poppers through a colorful but still soft appearance, with the main inspiration from the idol group Aespa. The presence of these idols in the K-pop world has greatly influenced her fashion style, which is an index to the community she belongs to.

According to Peirce, symbols are signs whose meaning is established through shared cultural agreements, making them deeply tied to collective understanding within a society. For the third informant, fashion is a way to look good and a symbol of openness and creativity. She uses pastel-colored clothes as a symbol of modernity and Korean youth culture, which is widely adopted by the K-pop community worldwide. For the third informant, fashion is a medium to show her openness in experimenting and expressing her uniqueness in the social sphere. Clothes with soft colors also reflect Korea's dynamic and innovative youth culture, symbolizing modernity in a global cultural context.

This research also found that the campus environment, especially the Faculty of Cultural Sciences (FIB) USU, is vital in shaping students' fashion expression. FIB USU is considered a "cultured faculty" that allows a diversity of fashion expressions and becomes a place for interaction of various music subcultures, thus supporting freedom in expressing identity through fashion. In addition, forming communities based on musical preferences, such as the K-pop community, also influences students' dressing styles through sharing fashion inspiration between members and peer group influence.

Semiotic analysis shows that fashion for USU English Literature students is a medium of self-expression, community marker, and means of resistance. Fashion has become a way to communicate personal identity, experiment with creativity, and represent values. On the other hand, fashion also helps identify membership in certain music communities, signifies affiliation with specific music genres, and forms collective symbols through accessories and fashion elements. Fashion is a form of resistance to stereotypes and judgment, an expression of freedom of thought, and a tool for negotiating social norms.

These findings suggest that the relationship between music genre and fashion among USU English Literature students is complex and multidimensional. Fashion is not only a visual representation of musical preferences but also functions as a sign system that communicates students' identity, values, and social position in campus life.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study concludes that music genres play an essential role in shaping the fashion expression of English Literature students at the Universitas Sumatera Utara, where diverse musical preferences create various fashion styles that reflect ideological values and individual identities. Using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis, it was found that each music genre produces unique signs, including icons, indexes, and symbols that represent identity, values, and community affiliation. The punk genre represents resistance and freedom through dark

colors and accessories typical of the subculture, the alternative rock genre shows self-expression and uniqueness through edgy fashion elements, while the K-pop genre reflects modernity and femininity with pastel colors and fashion styles inspired by Korean popular culture. In addition, USU's Faculty of Cultural Sciences, as a "cultured faculty," also supports the diversity of fashion expressions, serves as an interaction space for various music subcultures, and forms communities based on musical preferences. Thus, the relationship between music genre and fashion among USU English Literature students is not only a visual representation of their musical preferences but also a sign system that communicates students' identity, values, and social position in campus life.

This research can be further developed by expanding the number of participants or including comparisons from other study programs. In addition, examining the influence of social media and popular culture on the integration of music and fashion among university students could enrich the results and provide a more comprehensive perspective on the interaction between music culture, fashion, and identity in the academic environment.

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