SPICING IT UP

Boston's Rise to a Fashion Forward Future

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When one thinks of Boston, certain characteristics come to mind, such as the city's rich history and its winning sports teams. But, frankly, fashionable is just not one of the words that are often used to describe Beantown—until now. Slowly, Boston is transforming into a new hub for fashion.

Several factors have gone into this sudden surge of fashion and creativity in Boston, but most have to do with the increase of new stores and pop-up retailers in the city, as well as the rise of Instagram bloggers, making fashion ideas and inspiration more accessible to all people in different areas not traditionally known for fashion.

It has been apparent that more and more retailers are heading to Boston as a location for their stores. Last spring, Reformation opened its doors on Newbury Street. The store is best known for its appeal to millennials and its eco-friendly mission. It is also a favorite among many of those who are in high fashion, including Emily Ratajkowski, Karlie Kloss and Kaia Gerber. The different store locations are stationed in the most fashionable cities across the country, and it was a surprise to see one pop up in Boston's shopping district.

Kate Hadley, an employee at Reformation, said that she sees a rise in the changing style of Bostonians.

"People will come into the store looking for a new piece to spice up their wardrobe and they really want to push the limits," Hadley said. "Some of the pieces that we sell I would never see on people walking down the streets of Boston even just last year."

Other retailers are also seeing this shift to a more high-fashioned side of Boston and they are setting up shop as well. More trend focused brands such as LF, Brandy Melville and Uniqlo are all stores that might not have been seen in Boston a decade ago, but they are now thriving with a push towards stepping outside of a fashion comfort zone that has been associated with Boston natives. These retailers make Bostonians more accessible to new trends that may have already popped up in other cities.

In addition to traditional retail stores, there has also been a rise in thrift stores across the Boston area, which is beneficial for college students and those seeking more affordable and sustainable fashion. Thrive is a new store on Newbury Street that carefully curates a selection of used and thrifted pieces for their store. It appeals to the more street-style focused individual.

Keely Missinne (COM '21) believes that thrifting in Boston makes it easier for college students to find the clothing that they are looking for at an affordable price.

"Not many people think that Boston has great thrifting but you just have to look in the right places," Missinne said. "Thrive and The Garment District are both hidden gems in Boston where you can find great fashion forward pieces."

These stores aren't the only thing changing the landscape of Boston. Last year, two fashion-forward individuals, Erin Robertson and Nicole Fichera, opened a pop-up shop in Boston's Fenway area.

The pop-up was one-half a small boutique and one-half a small content studio where customers can take Instagram photos and experience the store as something more than a traditional shopping experience. Robertson was a contestant on Project Runway, and she wanted to bring her passion to Boston to show that it is an up-and-coming fashion hub that should not be overlooked.

The Instagram-worthy shop was so successful that it opened a second pop-up shop later in the year with the same concept. The goal: to show people that Boston can be a place where fashion and culture thrive.

Another array of pop-up stores, named The Current, has found a location in the Boston Seaport area. The idea is to have a rotating village of pop-up stores to inspire locals. The most recent pop-up village within The Current was She-Village, which are various pop-up shops of "female-founded" and "fashion-forward brands" with a mission of empowerment and passion.

This rise in creating a more fashion-forward culture in Boston exists right on our own campus, as well. Students are creating clubs and Instagram accounts to promote their own personal style as well as other styles they see around the Boston area.

Emilie Hibbard, Meghan Cronin and Luc Bleder, run an Instagram called @fashionatbu. The Instagram page showcases the unique style of different students around Boston University and just further proves the prevalence of fashion in the Boston community.

Emilie Hibbard (CGS '19, CAS '21) attributes the rise of fashion in Boston to the sheer number of students present in the city. These young adults often sport more experimental, trendy or alternative styles.

"With such a large chunk of the population [in Boston] lying in the 18 to 22 age group, you're bound to see a generally newer, riskier personal style," said Hibbard.

Hibbard explained that the large increase in fashion in Boston can also be attributed to the rise of social media, which is a place where all individuals can find and draw upon different outfit inspirations.

"The rise of social media, like with everything, has greatly increased the accessibility of street style and the outlets people can seek inspiration from," Hibbard said.

The increase in Boston-based fashion bloggers and Instagrammers has created more content for street style inspiration amongst younger people in the city. When a person sees someone posting several photos with bold outfits, they are probably more willing to do the same. This creates a domino effect within the area.

While there will always be the natives true to Boston with their casual get-ups, it is exciting to see the landscape of the city slowly changing towards a future of boundless fashion, which only encourages the strong and empowering personality of Boston.

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