

The thing about TASTE

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The role of the mother in fashion is similar to that of salt in soup: she enhances taste. And no-one can escape her influence.

No doubt you have never even asked yourself where your good taste comes from. How, out of all the colours in the world, was your favourite colour able to become your favourite? That's completely normal, because in reality in hardly any other area are people so affected by outside influences as they are in the fashion sector. Only it hardly ever occurs to you, because it all happens subconsciously. There is nothing which has moulded the fashion taste of each individual as much as their own mother. It is therefore also one of the biggest mistakes in all things fashion to think that you could have any kind of influence on what you go round looking like. Of course, after getting dressed, when you throw a last, satisfied glance in the mirror to check, you may pat yourself on the back. But not for your sense of style, rather for the fact that your subconscious is functioning OK. Because while you have been selecting your wardrobe, you have actually been remembering apparently long forgotten statements from your childhood: "Red really suits you, it makes your eyes look beautiful!" or "Mini skirts only suit tall, slim women." Or you are remembering the secret preference for hairstyles that Mummy would like to stroke. In general the whole wardrobe is already filled with such things. Sounds exaggerated? The most effective form of heteronomy is that which disguises itself as self-determination. The new international study carried out by the personal care brand Dove has recently delivered the black and white proof. Not quite 70 percent of the 15- to 17-year-old girls interviewed not only put their mother's influence right up there, but also think it clearly more crucial than that of their girlfriends. A clever fashion philosopher explained the phenomenon like this: "First of all the mother's clothing is of particular interest for the child for one reason. Her body is hidden behind it, and that means in the first instance food – even a bottle-fed baby senses that. In this perception, clothing functions like a banana skin or a pizza box. The anticipation of the food does not just come into being when the banana is removed from its skin and the box is opened, but at first sight of the packaging. This is the beginning of an absolute partiality. This is why from the start the mother's packaging always appears attractive, irrespective of what fashion atrocities we later accuse her of." This attitude is being reinforced. There is still no benchmark; you only know your mother. Your own taste is oriented towards hers. Not without reason do little girls love to dress up as their mothers in things that are still much too big. And that remains the case, even if they deny it. The apple does not fall far from the tree, even less far from the regular customer, and if the mother loved the Otto catalogue above everything else, then at some time the daughter will as well.

From outside, the maternal influence cannot in most cases be seen immediately. Very few girls go round as younger copies of their mothers. The influence on likes and dislikes is more subtle. The convergence takes place in stages: if one imagines the mother as the x-axis and one's own taste as the curve, then over time it ends up against the x-axis – no matter how far away it once had been. While some have always been conscious of a tendency to three-quarter length trousers or blond upswept hairstyles, others attempt to distance themselves from the maternal taste, at least for the time being. Sometimes you see one of these unequal generational couples out strolling around town: the mother in a colourful flower print, the daughter all in black.

With Karl Lagerfeld this desire even goes to the point that he prefers to drink only Coca Cola Light, as the red brown colour reminds him of his youth – "Mother didn't like my hair colour, which was dark



red like cola." But the protest is futile at the end of the day: after 35 the hair is shortened to a bob, because it's so nice and practical. From there it's only a tiny step to a short hairstyle, because that's so much more practical; a remark that you must also have heard a few times from your mother, before the deed actually takes place. Why it should be the mother who has this influence and not the father is quite obvious, by the way: he too is a victim. Well, the mother did choose him as well once upon a time.