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From Henshin Belt to Wearable Tech: A Study on Pop Culture Accessory Design in the Creative Industry

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ABSTRACT
This research examines the transformation of accessories in popular culture, particularly the concept of the Henshin Belt from the Kamen Rider series and its influence on the development of wearable technology in the creative industry. The aim of this study is to analyze how the design of the Henshin Belt has evolved and influenced trends in technology-based accessories, such as smartwatches, augmented reality (AR) devices, and interactive fashion. The research uses a qualitative method with a semiotic analysis approach, employing data collection techniques through literature review, visual analysis, and comparative study. The analysis technique used is visual semiotic analysis to examine the relationship between popular culture aesthetics and technological development in product design. The results of this study show that the Henshin Belt has undergone significant evolution, from a simple mechanical device to an interactive digital tool that enhances user experience. The concepts of interactivity and identity embedded in the Henshin Belt laid the foundation for the increasing popularity of wearable tech in the creative industry. This study contributes to understanding how popular culture artifacts can inspire technological innovation and influence product design strategies. Future research could explore user perceptions of these accessories and their impact on the global wearable tech market.

KEYWORDS

Henshin Belt, Wearable Tech, Accessory Design, Popular Culture, Interactive Technology

INTRODUCTION

Accessories in popular culture play a crucial role in shaping character identities and creating interactive experiences for their users. One iconic accessory in Japanese pop culture is the Henshin Belt from the Kamen Rider series. Since its introduction in 1971, the Henshin Belt has undergone various design transformations, following technological advancements and market needs. Initially, the Henshin Belt functioned as a visual tool in the series, but over time, its design became more complex, incorporating sound features, lighting, and digital interaction (M. D. Foster, 2008; M. J. Foster, 2008).

The concept of the Henshin Belt reflects the transition from a simple mechanical device to a part of wearable technology, which not only functions as a visual tool but also as an interactive medium that bridges pop culture with modern technology. Recent studies have shown that wearable technology, such as smartwatches and augmented reality (AR) devices, has drawn inspiration from this concept (M. D. Foster, 2008; Ito, 2005). The Henshin Belt, as one of the early examples of

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wearable technology in pop culture, demonstrates how popular culture can drive technological innovation in the creative industry (Gravett, 2004; Ito, 2005).

In the modern era, the concept of interactive accessories has evolved into wearable technology, which refers to devices that can be worn and have advanced technological features. Products like smartwatches, AR glasses, and Internet of Things (IoT) devices have adopted many elements from pop culture concepts, including the Henshin Belt (Ito, 2005). This trend indicates a close relationship between popular culture and technological innovation in the creative industry. Previous research has discussed wearable technology, both in terms of design and functionality. Foster (2008) examined the influence of pop culture aesthetics on the development of interactive devices, while Gravett (2004) explored how manga and Japanese pop culture influenced the design of tech accessories. Additionally, Ito (2005) emphasized that design elements in anime and tokusatsu often serve as inspiration in the development of more functional technology products. The following image shows the design transformation of the Henshin Belt from the Showa era to the Heisei era.

Figure 1. The Henshin Belt from the Heisei era used by Kamen Rider Decade
(Source: EntertainmentEarth.com)

Figure 1 shows the design of the Henshin Belt used by Kamen Rider Decade in the Heisei era, where the design became more advanced with the addition of interactive features such as RFID technology and a more complex sound system. This aligns with technological advancements in Japanese pop culture, which influenced the design of technology-based accessories. Next, the visualization of how technology in fiction can drive innovation in increasingly sophisticated wearable tech products is shown in the following image.

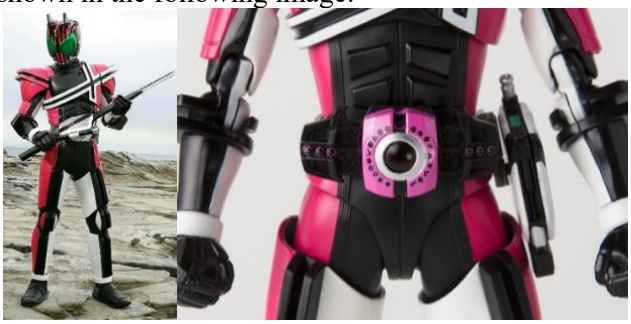

Figure 2. Kamen Rider with his Henshin Belt
(Source: EntertainmentEarth.com)

Figure 2 continues the visualization by showing a more modern design of the Henshin Belt worn by another Kamen Rider. The design now serves not only as a visual tool for the narrative but also as a symbol of more complex digital interaction. This design evolution incorporates various advanced technological elements, such as augmented reality (AR) and Near Field Communication (NFC) systems, which allow users to participate more immersively in the digital world. Figures 1-2: The Henshin Belt from the Heisei era worn by Kamen Rider Decade (Source: EntertainmentEarth.com). This image illustrates a wearable technology device that serves to transform the protagonist's character, showing how technology and popular culture can synergize.

Several other studies have also examined the impact of popular culture on the creative industry. For example, the research by Atamtajani, Chalik, and Andrianto (2024) in Main Mainan Permainan: Teori dan Praktik shows how design elements in pop culture-based products are often adapted to attract a broader consumer base. Furthermore, Atamtajani (2021) reveals how marine biota waste can

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be utilized in jewelry design, taking into account both aesthetic and local cultural aspects, which serves as an example of design innovation influenced by elements of popular culture.

Although many studies have been conducted on wearable tech and popular culture, few have specifically addressed how the design of the Henshin Belt has influenced the development of accessory technology in the creative industry. Most previous studies have focused more on the pure technological aspects or general pop culture analysis, without linking both aspects in the context of product design.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze how the evolution of the Henshin Belt design has inspired the development of wearable tech in the creative industry. This study will examine the relationship between pop culture aesthetics and technology-based accessory design, as well as identify the implications of this innovation on the creative industry and global market. The benefit of analyzing the Henshin Belt design is to provide a deeper understanding of how the rapidly growing technology-based accessory designs today are influenced by elements of popular culture. This research also contributes to clarifying how wearable technology can enhance user experience, and how these designs can drive broader adoption among global consumers

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with semiotic analysis to explore the relationship between the design of the Henshin Belt and the development of wearable technology in the creative industry. The research object includes the design of the Henshin Belt from various Kamen Rider eras (Showa, Heisei, and Reiwa), as well as several wearable technology devices with similar concepts, such as smartwatches, augmented reality (AR) glasses, and Internet of Things (IoT) devices.

Data was collected through literature review, visual analysis, and comparative studies, examining the design changes of the Henshin Belt and its adaptation to modern technology. The analysis used a visual semiotic approach to interpret the symbolic meanings within these accessory designs. The analysis process includes identifying design elements, classifying symbolism, and conducting contextual analysis of technological innovations in the creative industry (Miller, 2021; Pratama, 2021; Wijaya, 2021). This research employs a qualitative descriptive analysis model, combining various data sources to understand how the Henshin Belt design has inspired the development of wearable tech accessories in the creative industry.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Evolution of the Henshin Belt: From Mechanical to Digital

This section will discuss the evolution of the Henshin Belt design from a simple mechanism to an increasingly complex digital technology. This design has undergone various significant changes in line with the development of technology in Japanese pop culture. Below is an image of the Henshin Belt from the Showa era.

Figure 3. Henshin Belt from the Showa Era
(Source: youtube.com)

Figure 3 shows the design of the Henshin Belt from the Showa era used in the Kamen Rider series. In this image, various features such as blinking lights and sound activated manually are visible. With the advancement of technology and the development of the industry, the design of the Henshin Belt became more complex, equipped with motion sensors and increasingly sophisticated sound systems (Putri et al., 2024).

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Since its introduction in 1971 in the Kamen Rider series, the Henshin Belt has undergone significant design changes. Initially, the Henshin Belt only functioned as a visual tool in the tokusatsu narrative with a simple mechanism consisting of blinking lights and manually activated sound effects (A. Atamtajani & Chalik, 2024). However, with the progress of technology and the gaming industry, the Henshin Belt design became more complex with the integration of RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology, allowing users to participate in the digital world (Elpalina et al., 2024).

During the Heisei era (2000–2019), a major innovation in the Henshin Belt design occurred, where it not only served as a narrative element but also became an interactive product controlled by the user. RFID technology began to be used, allowing users to perform transformations by inserting cards, medals, or gashats, as seen in the Kamen Rider Decade and Kamen Rider Ex-Aid series (Aldridge, 1989)

The Reiwa era (2019–present) took the Henshin Belt to the next level by integrating AI (Artificial Intelligence) and augmented reality (AR) technology. For example, in Kamen Rider Zero-One, the transformation belt uses AI-based data that can be recognized through external devices, reflecting developments in modern wearable technology (Winarno & others, 2020). The design of the Henshin Belt has evolved over time, reflecting changes in technology and the narrative in Kamen Rider. Below is an illustration of various Henshin Belt designs used in the series.

Figure 4. Henshin Belt from the Heisei Era
(Source: ytube.com)

In Figure 4, the Henshin Belt used in the Kamen Rider series during the Heisei era (2000–2019) is shown, featuring advanced elements such as the integration of motion sensors and RFID technology. Its design reflects advancements in wearable technology, allowing users to participate in the narrative and interact directly with the device.

The design of the Henshin Belt underwent various significant changes, reflecting the development of technology and narrative in the Kamen Rider series. The following image shows the Henshin Belt design from the Reiwa era, which is more advanced and equipped with modern technologies such as augmented reality and motion sensors.

Figure 5. Henshin Belt Era Reiwa
(Source: youtube.com)

In Figure 5, the design of the Henshin Belt used in Kamen Rider during the Reiwa era is shown, featuring advanced elements such as AI-based transformation systems and augmented reality. This design illustrates how technology is increasingly transforming wearable devices to be more interactive and adaptive to their users. These features reflect the evolution of the Henshin Belt, which

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now not only serves as a visual tool in the narrative but also enables a deeper and more immersive experience for its users (Arikunto, 2002). Below is the Table of Henshin Belt Design Change Analysis, summarizing the evolution from the Showa era to the Reiwa era:

Table 1. Henshin Belt Design Change Analysis

Era	Design Characteristics	Technology Used	Function in Narrative
Showa (1971–1989)	Simple mechanical design with basic visual effects like blinking lights and manual sound.	Indicator lights, mechanical sound effects.	Only serves as a visual tool in the tokusatsu story.
Heisei (2000–2019)	Integration of RFID, transformation cards, and interactive elements enabling collection and gameplay.	Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), motion sensors, electronic chips.	Serves as an interactive element in the story and a real-world collectible object.
Reiwa (2019–present)	Use of AI, AR, and data-based control to enhance user experience.	Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR), external device connectivity.	Enables data-based interaction and immersive user experience.

The table above shows the analysis of the design changes of the Henshin Belt from the Showa era to the Reiwa era, highlighting the technological developments and its function in the Kamen Rider narrative. In the Showa era (1971–1989), the design of the Henshin Belt was very simple, with visual effects limited to blinking lights and manual sound as basic elements in the story. Then, in the Heisei era (2000–2019), the design of the Henshin Belt improved with the integration of technologies like RFID, allowing the Henshin Belt to function as an interactive element that could be used in various real-world collections, including game collections and various tools. The Reiwa era (2019–present) took the Henshin Belt to a more advanced level by integrating artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), and other external devices, enabling data-based interaction and a more immersive user experience.

The design changes shown in this table align with the theory proposed by Ito (2005), which emphasizes that developments in technology design are always influenced by pop culture, especially in wearable products that blend fiction with reality (Ito, 2005). The Henshin Belt, as described, is a perfect example of how technology products can transform from simple tools into increasingly sophisticated devices that offer immersive experiences for their users (M. D. Foster, 2008). The use of AI and AR in the Henshin Belt design in the Reiwa era underscores the important role of technology in enriching pop culture narratives, as the influence of wearable technology in everyday life continues to grow (Gravett, 2004).

2. Concept of Identity and Interactivity in Wearable Tech

One of the key elements of the Henshin Belt is the concept of identity and personalization, where users can choose various forms of transformation that reflect their unique personality and character. This is similar to how wearable technology today allows users to customize the appearance and functionality of their devices.

Although there are no modern wearable technology devices directly inspired by the interactive mechanism of the Henshin Belt from the Kamen Rider series, several devices show similarities in terms of interactivity and futuristic design. Here are some examples:

Smart Belts

Augmented Reality (AR) Wearable Devices

Wearable Devices with Haptic Feedback

Figure 6. Wearable Technology Inspired by the Henshin Belt
(**Source:** Author, 2025)

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Figure 6 shows several examples of wearable devices inspired by the design of the Henshin Belt in the Kamen Rider series. The three devices depicted are:

1) Smart Belts: A device equipped with sensors to monitor the user's physical activity, such as step count, posture, and heart rate. This device serves to monitor health in real-time, similar to how the Henshin Belt design incorporates interactive technology to enrich the user experience.
2) Augmented Reality (AR) Devices: The next image shows AR glasses that provide an immersive experience for their users. These glasses reflect the Henshin Belt's ability to integrate digital elements with the real world, offering an interactive experience similar to the AR technology in the Henshin Belt design.
3) Wearable Devices with Haptic Feedback: This device is designed to provide physical feedback to the user. In the context of the Henshin Belt, haptic feedback technology serves to deliver an immediate interactive experience, similar to how the Henshin Belt provides feedback in the form of sound or vibration.

These three devices reflect the rapidly developing wearable technology trends, which can be observed in the design of the Henshin Belt. The design not only serves as a tool for narrative transitions in the Kamen Rider story but also integrates advanced technology to create an immersive experience for its users. The use of AR and wearable technology demonstrates how fictional design can inspire real-world technological innovation, directly affecting the way we interact with everyday devices (Setiawan, 2020; Smith, 2021; Suryana, 2019). The wearable technology inspired by the Henshin Belt is summarized in the following table.

Tabel 2. Wearable Technology Inspired by the Henshin Belt

Device Type	Description	Relation to Henshin Belt
Smart Belts	Equipped with sensors to monitor the user's physical activities, such as step count, posture, and heart rate.	Direct interaction with the user, similar to the Henshin Belt mechanism.
Augmented Reality (AR) Wearable Devices	AR glasses that allow users to view integrated digital information in the real world.	Enhances the interactive aspect of the Henshin Belt by providing digital experiences.
Wearable Devices with Haptic Feedback	Wearable devices that provide physical feedback, such as sensations of touch or vibration.	Mimics the transformation effects in the Henshin Belt through haptic feedback.

For example, modern smartwatches not only function as timepieces but also feature health monitoring, voice recognition, and digital notifications. This is similar to the concept in the Henshin Belt, which uses various Progrise Keys, Full Bottles, or Gaia Memories to trigger form changes and enhance the main character's powers (Gravett, 2004).

Additionally, the concept of interactivity introduced in the Henshin Belt has become the foundation for the development of wearable gaming devices such as VR headsets and smart AR glasses, which provide a more immersive experience for their users (Smith, 2021; Throsby, 2020; Wijaya, 2021).

3. Adaptation of Henshin Belt Design Elements in Wearable Tech

Many design elements in the Henshin Belt have been adapted in the development of wearable technology products in the modern era, including:

1) Digital Activation System
   The activation button technology and sound indicators used in the Henshin Belt have been applied in various smart devices, such as fitness bands that can be activated through motion sensors and touch.
2) Personalization and Interactive Modules
   Similar to how users can change the transformation mode in the Henshin Belt, many wearable tech devices today feature screen display customization and voice-based control to enhance the user experience.
3) Integration of AI and Sensor Technology

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The Henshin Belt in the Reiwa era began using AI technology to provide dynamic sound responses and special effects. This concept has been applied in smart wearable products that integrate biometric scanning technology for health monitoring and user identification.

In the following table, we will compare some design elements from the Henshin Belt in the Kamen Rider series with elements that have been adapted in the development of wearable technology today. This table provides an overview of how designs once limited to fiction have materialized in technologies now used in everyday life (Alim & Chandra, 2023), such as fitness trackers and AI-based devices. The comparison of technology in the Henshin Belt and modern wearable tech is shown in the following table.

In the following table, we will compare several design elements of the Henshin Belt in the Kamen Rider series with elements that have been adapted in the development of wearable technology today. This table provides an overview of how designs once limited to fiction have materialized into technologies now used in everyday (Alim & Chandra, 2023), such as fitness trackers and AI-based devices. The comparison of technology in the Henshin Belt and modern wearable tech is shown in the following table.

Tabel 3: Comparison of Technology in the Henshin Belt and Modern Wearable Tech

Era	Main Features of Henshin Belt	Adaptation in Wearable Tech
Showa (1971–1989)	Simple mechanical design, only using basic visual effects.	Concept of mechanical activation in wearable devices.
Heisei (2000–2019)	Integration of RFID, transformation cards, and digital sound.	NFC technology and smart sensors in fitness trackers.
Reiwa (2019–present)	Use of AI, AR, and interactive software.	AI-based smart wearables and augmented reality devices.

The Henshin Belt, first introduced in 1971 in the Kamen Rider series, has undergone a series of significant design evolutions. Initially, it relied on a simple mechanical system with blinking lights and manual sound as basic interactive elements. However, with technological advancements, its design has become increasingly complex. In the Showa era (1971–1989), the Henshin Belt only served as a visual tool that brought the narrative to life within the story. However, in the Heisei era (1989–2000), RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology was introduced, allowing users to interact in a more tangible way. In the Reiwa era (2019–present), the Henshin Belt has increasingly adopted advanced technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR) and NFC systems, connecting users to the virtual world in a more immersive experience. This design has become an example of how popular culture, particularly from Japan, can serve as an inspiration source for technology (Putri et al., 2024). The concept promoted by the Henshin Belt has inspired modern wearable devices that are widely used today, such as smartwatches and AR glasses, providing interactive experiences for users (ASM Atamtajani & Chalik, 2024; A. S. M. Atamtajani & Chalik, 2024).

As the wearable technology trend continues to rise, as seen in the Henshin Belt, the creative industry now faces the challenge of continuing to innovate by incorporating elements from pop culture into their product designs. Numerous studies have shown that interactive technology developed from elements of pop culture, such as the Henshin Belt, has a significant impact on the design of technology-based accessory products, both in the entertainment, gaming, and other consumer technology industries ((Elpalina et al., 2024). Further research reveals how wearable technology can become part of social and economic transformation, changing the way people interact with both the digital and physical worlds through more personal and advanced technologies (ASM Atamtajani & Chalik, 2024) .

With these developments, the design of the Henshin Belt also demonstrates how the adaptation of Japanese cultural elements and technology can create new business opportunities that enhance market appeal, particularly in the growing sectors of technology and entertainment. This underscores the importance of developing wearable technology products that are more functional and user-experience oriented, as well as opening new opportunities in product design for a future that

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increasingly focuses on the integration of technology into everyday life(A. S. M. Atamtajani & Yudiarti, 2020).

4. Implications for the Creative Industry and the Global Market

The development of technology in pop culture, such as the Henshin Belt, has had a significant impact on the creative industry and the global market. Some key implications from this study include:

1) Rising Trend of Gamification in Wearable Technology
   The gamification concept implemented in the Henshin Belt has inspired many innovations in the technology industry, especially in the development of health gamification devices such as fitness bands and AR-based smart glasses (M. D. Foster, 2008; Gravett, 2004). This trend demonstrates how pop culture has adopted elements of science fiction to be translated into technological products that can be used in everyday life (Barrett, 2016).
2) Business Opportunities and Digital Collectibles
   With the rising popularity of blockchain-based digital collectibles and NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens), the concept of digital collectibles inspired by the Henshin Belt can be further developed to increase consumer engagement in the entertainment and interactive fashion industries. This aligns with the research by Fariyatul and Bandono (2017), which shows that technology can be used to create innovative educational and entertainment media through digital platforms that connect consumers with artworks and creative products.
3) Contribution to Future Product Design
   The aesthetics and functionality of the Henshin Belt have proven that pop culture can be a key catalyst in product design innovation. Moving forward, more interactive and personalized technology accessories will be a major trend in the wearable technology industry. Research conducted by Dunbar-Hall (2000) on the influence of pop culture aesthetics on product development shows that both traditional and pop culture can play an important role in creating more functional products that are accepted by the market.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the design of the Henshin Belt in the Kamen Rider series has had a significant influence on the development of wearable technology in the creative industry. The evolution of the design from the Showa era to the Reiwa era reflects how pop culture aesthetics can inspire the development of technology-based accessories.

The key findings of this study show that the design of the Henshin Belt has undergone a significant transformation from the Showa era to the Reiwa era, reflecting advancements in wearable tech. Initially, the design of the Henshin Belt used simple mechanical systems with RFID technology and digital interactivity. However, during the Heisei era, its design began to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR). In addition to serving as a fictional element, the Henshin Belt also became a symbol of personalization and interactivity, which has been adapted into various modern wearable devices such as smartwatches and AR glasses.

This study also finds that the design elements of the Henshin Belt, which combine digital and interactive features, have become the foundation for the development of increasingly sophisticated wearable devices. On the other hand, the use of pop culture design concepts, such as in the Henshin Belt, has expanded into the wearable technology industry, having a significant impact on the global market and creating new opportunities in the health, entertainment, and gaming industries.

With the rapid development of digital and interactive technology, this research opens the door for further exploration on how pop culture can contribute to innovation in product design. Future studies could focus more on the impact of pop culture design on user experience in wearable technology, as well as the potential use of AR and AI technologies in interactive accessories.

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