Håkan Preiholt, PhD
Associate Professor
Stockholm University
School of Business
Kräftriket Building 2B
S- 106 91 Stockholm
Sweden
Phone: +46 8 16 15 41
Mobile +46 73 04 73 837
E-mail hp@fek.su.se

Who is controlling the fashion brand?

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Summary

Like others that compete in the consumer marketplace, companies that make and market fashionable and branded clothing have begun to use the World Wide Web, social media and other Internet tools to attract customers to their products. Streaming video, including the ability to send three-dimensional images to customer computers, have made it possible to project fashion shows in real time to a broader base of potential purchasers. Although most fashion companies now use these technologies to project their brands and messages while simultaneously strengthening their relationship with their customers, some fashion houses do not do so. The reasons for this are examined in this paper. One important reason is the inherent difficulty in doing effective, real-time marketing in the fashion industry.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the differing Internet-based and traditional fashion marketing alternatives. Suggestions are made about ways to overcome the decline of fashion seasons as a focal point for collections.

Keywords: Web, fashion, social interaction, live streaming, social media, symbol.

Introduction

In the movement to the digital world of information and communication, fashion brands face positioning alternatives that were not previously available. For example, third-generation mobile telephone technology (3G) can deliver a live view of the catwalk to

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individual customers no matter where they might be.   Because this streaming video technique moves the customer right into the primary fashion shows, sales and distribution for fashionable clothing begins immediately and alters fashion marketing in a dramatic way.

The choice for fashion companies is whether to open what has traditionally been a closed marketing process—one heavily dependent on fashion shows open to relatively few members of the fashion-oriented community and media—or, instead, they can adopt an on-line marketing system built around direct and potentially endless interactions with the consumer. Under the traditional system, fashion customers have been heavily dependent on the evaluations and commentary of intermediaries in the fashion press and on the store-stocking decisions made by retail buying groups and their own couture experts. In the new system, the importance of the fashion show shifts away from those traditional arbiters of couture and towards the individual judgement of consumers themselves.

The problem for fashion companies is demonstrated by the theory of symbolic interaction, Blumer (1986[1969]), which is based on the consumer's desire to create meaning in their garments which is, in turn, the motive to be involved with fashion.

Those fundaments of fashion—the meaning role of symbols—are employed in this paper to analyse the impact of new technologies on the fashion marketplace.

Previous studies on the subject

Fashion is exceptionally diverse and is therefore very difficult to grasp fully in terms of its variety and performance. There are very few disciplines and subjects that have not been involved in fashion studies - from logical sciences to humanities. Historically, fashion has been studied as a trickle-down effect by Spencer (1885), Veblen (1899) and Simmel (1904). For these analysts, fashion was a concern of the social upper classes evaluated as individuals made seasonal changes to their dressing habits, in the process taking control of current dressing trends. Another type of research has focused on the structure underlying the development of fashion. For example, Levi-Strauss (1971) compares two clothing collections side by side to seek the underlying similarities that unify them. Similar to this is the system approach, mostly known from a study by Barthes

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(1983) on fashion. It primarily concerned identifying different types of garments such as the The actual garment, the represented garment, the use of the garment.   .

Furthermore, postmodernism has radically changed fashion research and design. Baudrillard (1994) argues that in fashion, we live in a world where we experience a kind of reflection of reality. This reflection, which is known as 'simulacra', is then turned into value for the customer in the consumption of fashion. Bourdieu (1984) focuses on the role of social power and status relationships in fashion. It is meant here that the social power take us in where we traditionally belongs. There is for most of us very little space to move on to other social fields or belongings. However, this applies to fashion only if we as human beings understand the inherent power of what we wear and its significance, which is a very noteworthy point in the research. Foucault (2000) suggests that our ideas about fashion result from our interpretations of discourses, or interaction with people, texts and images that change our opinion about outfits that lead to fashion creation Our essential understanding of language and how we express ourselves is of great importance to these studies. Derrida (1997), another French postmodern philosopher, is known for establishing deconstruction, which means "as everything exist in relationships throw the language in use, the only way to create new things is to give up those relations". One example is that we believe by tradition that nr one is always better than to be number two for instance. However, in a Derrida view, two can be far better than to be number one one example from the fashion industry is Japanese avant-garde and postmodern deconstruction design, frequently represented by Walter van Beirendonck, Dirk Bikkembergs, Ann Demeulemeester, Dries Van Noten, Dirk Van Saene and Marina Yee. Featherstone's (2007) observations emphasize that the individual's consciousness about his or her appearance has become more a result of constantly measuring against and comparing him or herself to idealized images of the body,. Kawamura (2007) is one of the people attempting to treat fashion as a matter of cultural globalization that has replaced the Western costume system. The cultural globalization system includes production and consumption of fashion, as well as institutions and individuals. Our focus on the use by designers of alternative marketing approaches for their seasonal collections works best in the context of the symbolic interaction model to explain fashion (Blumer,

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(1986[1969]). Taste are the product of experiences. Once they are formed, however, they may decline and disintegrate.

Research process and data collection

Cases reviewed in this report are interpreted in the context of the theory of symbolic interaction. Positive cases, in which companies have taken steps to adapt to today's technologies, are discussed in relation to negative cases, in which new technologies have not been adopted for fashion marketing. All the data is collected from the Web in the fall 2011. Live streaming is defined as immediate broadcast of media over the Internet. One of the companies that uses digital marketing to a large extent is the listed fashion firm Topshop. Topshop.com serves here as an example of how communication to the customer works in practice for companies in the digital world that use live streaming as illustrated as follows."Topshop are live streaming the shows straight from London fashion week. The Topshop Show Space has moved to Old Billingsgate Market and is set to become one of London Fashion Week's hottest new spots. Take our word for it, our very own Topshop Unique show is set to wow, while Richard Nicoll, Peter Pilotto and Meadham Kirchhoff's all-important shows are at the top of the style sets' must-see list. With bright young stars, Mary Katrantzou, Michael van der Ham, and the Fashion East designers' also showing in our space, this is set to be one of our most stylish seasons yet! For your viewing pleasure, we'll be streaming all the shows we sponsor live from the catwalk. Take a look at the schedule and make sure you write these dates down in your diary - we wouldn't want you to miss out on all the front row action."
(http://www.topshop.com)

Other fashion houses that use digital marketing communication include:
 Prada http://nymag.com/daily/fashion/2011/02/pradas_fall_2011_show_is_live-.html
Gucci http://nymag.com/daily/fashion/2011/09/live-streaming-gucci-spring-2012.html
Hermes http://www.livestream.com/hermes
Versace http://www.livestream.com/versace

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Armani http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/videos/TMG8587450/Live-stream-Giorgio-Armani-menswear-springsummer-2012.html

Example of fashion houses that are not using digital technology, include:

The negative case Tom Ford (www.guardion.co.uk)
Tom Ford takes fashion back in time to find its lost mystique
The celebrated designer's London fashion week show will be a private, intimate affair
with no photographs – just like launches used to be

The negative case Apple (http://thegagets.net)
Apple is here read as an fashion firm living on design not technology in this case.
If, like me, you were hoping to keep up with Apple's announcements today via a live
video stream straight out of Cupertino, then we have bad news for you: Tim Cook will
not be gracing the airwaves for an instant live-stream.
9to5Mac has confirmed with an Apple press representative that there will be no public
live-stream for today's iPhone media event. Although the event will be live-streamed to
the company's flagship Covent Garden store, this will be strictly for Apple staff and
European press. Are you disappointed that there will be no live stream?

Theory
Our focus is on changes that are required of fashion marketing because of Web-based
marketing. . Consumers assign meaning to fashion design, and consumer fashion
categories provide classifications for analysis using symbolic interactionism, Blumer
(1986[1969]). Fashion is further defined as a desire to stay up with the times and express
the tastes that emerge in a changing world. One reason to choose such a theoretical
approach tied to social interaction is because it helps to define the foundation of fashion.

Goffman (1957) saw society as a theatre where we always try to play our social roles as well and convincingly as possible. Studies of social roles and social interaction come very close to revealing what fashion can be.

Symbolic interaction includes the theoretical context upon which the analysis is based. It is basically a matter of setting out fashion design when the Web comes in to the marketing communication. Symbolic interaction helps to interpret this issue. Human beings respond to fashion on the basis of the meanings that they ascribe to it. The meaning of fashion arises out of the social interaction that one has with others and society. Symbolic communication means that meaningful gestures,   which are essential in communicating the message so that it is perceived in the same way by a sender and receiver, are used consciously by the individual.. Finally, meaning and symbol become the created individual style. This is the result of the meanings being processed in and modified by an interpretative process used by the person when dealing with the things he or she encounters.

The categories of fashion houses in this study are defined qualitatively in terms of there way to create meaning in fashion and to their customers. They have different merits in terms of symbolic interactionism, Blumer (1986[1969]). The intent is to then recognize fashion trade strategies in the world of digital communication on the Web.

Analysis

Fashion Week occurs twice a year, in February and September**.** This event consists of a series of fashion shows presented by fashion houses, their designers and fashion labels. Fall collections are released in the spring, and spring collections are released each fall**.** The lead time from design to the store takes several months, which means that the garments announced in the fall are ready for sale in the springtime. The seasons are symbolic for a certain design that creates a sense of meaning in the world of fashion. Theoretically, according to Blumer (1986[1969]) there is an individual meaning in getting things, which arises from the social interaction with others, making fashion. In addition this is a process that will take time to make us to accept those changes that we use to see in fashion.

It is possible now to experience formerly exclusive fashion shows as they happen, from the comfort of your own home. It is also possible to buy garments via the Web. This makes that the c Customers may purchase the spring collection in September, which means that the customer is now running a seasonal schedule of her/his own. Based on the theory of symbolic interaction, Blumer (1986[1969]) this is a disaster. Symbols inherent in the fall, winter, summer and spring collections do not absorb as much meaning when a customer may obtain all essential information in advance of the retail season. Discarding social processing in fashion will lead to boredom. When we can buy and view everything directly with our iPads from the catwalk in real time, we are already bored when the garments finally come to the store.

To avoid fashion boredom, seasons as a symbol for fashion design must be abandoned. However, seasons must be supplanted with some alternative symbols to create fashion and fashion branding. For example, Web-based designer Rad Hourani creates alternative symbols by numbering garments connected to events and fashion shows. For him and others who practice digital marketing, immediacy is created through alternatives to seasons. This includes, for purposes of this study, the Prada, Gucci, Hermes, Versace and Armani brands.

Fashion houses wedded to traditional marketing techniques avoid using the Web to display and market their garments. Tom Ford is among those designers who choose to use a traditional approach to the market. The first pictures from the catwalk for spring should not appear in print media until the end of the year. From the first show until the garments are available for purchase should require several months. This process give the designer control of their collections. Theoretically, this process encourages customers to react to fashion on the basis of the meaning they ascribe to the clothing, or their symbolic interaction with it.

Findings

The Web has changed fashion industry marketing communication. The most important fashion brands are for the moment in the hands of the Web and have real time

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connections with their customers. This opens the possibility of purchasing garments from a tablet computer even as they are displayed on the fashion show catwalk.

Under these circumstances, seasonal variation in fashion ceases to have meaning. This creates an unstable fashion environment and decreases the control that designers have over their collections.

Managerial results

Although fashion companies have themselves adopted real-time marketing for their clothing, it is clear that it is no longer so far and within this logic possible to use a seasonal approach to fashion creation and interaction with customers. What, then, can fashion companies do to restore some semblance of social interaction and symbolism to the definition of fashion?

Among approaches that might help are these:

1. Base brands on places rather than times. The place and what it means becomes the focus, not the season. Holt et al (2004) is a reference.
2. Center fashion introductions around names, similar to the approach of Rad Hourani, who numbers garments and sells them in his shop during Fashion Week. He thus creates a sense of immediacy through numbering.
3. Permit customers to participate in the flow of design and production as a "co-designer" of a garment. Customers, especially those attuned to internet marketing, are often up-to-date with fashion trends and often are interested in gaining some influence over the thinking behind their garments. Backlund (2011).

These and other alternatives may permit fashion companies to overcome the loss of symbolism that was built into the traditional fashion marketing approach.

Limitations

Although the study demonstrates changes in how designers bring their goods to market, and the jeopardy this causes to fundamental communications strategies in the fashion business, it may be limited by the single focus on digital media for fashion brands The In addition, the study provides no focus on the economic value of changes in fashion marketing, the frequency of purchases nor the relationship of fashion changes to personality or status-based consumption.

Further research

Additional research on this subject may be required on the role of bloggers in fashion consumption. One such example is "Marketing fads and fashion", Phil (2011). It shows how consumers are able, by engaging in activities, to exert a high degree of influence and act as institutional entrepreneurs. Further, for social networking, in its essence there are several references where, Rettberg (2009) is an option. Recent research also illuminates the main difference between the roles of the actors, as consumers of fashion have evolved into creative producers of fashion Backlund (2011), which also gives hints on who is controlling the fashion brand.

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