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### Social Media For Fashion Marketing

Storytelling in a Digital  
World

eBook

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Fairchild Books Library

## DIGITAL DISRUPTION OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY

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Figure 1.1



Fashion disrupted through consumers' need to consume and share endless "postable moments" in real time.

## Chapter Objectives

- Explore the traditional fashion landscape before the emergence of social media
- Discover the ever-changing fashion system
- Examine how social media democratized the fashion industry
- Understand the digital disruptions that have forever changed the fashion industry
- Discover the blogosphere revolution
- Understand the strength of the fashion community
- Discover the future of runway
- Study the evolution of fashion intelligence

## Introduction

The business of fashion has undergone a revolution in the digital age of social media. It has democratized, disrupted, and even shifted the business model of the traditional fashion system. Most fashion industry veterans barely recognize the industry from a decade ago and continue to adapt to the emergence of new technologies and their influence on the new fashion consumer. This transition is not limited to marketing and management, but permeates to the core of design itself. While blogs and social media have influenced the speed of fashion-to-market, it is important to examine the way in which the cycle of trends and the adoption of fashion impacts the industry as a whole. In this chapter, we will take a closer look at the fashion industry from the beginning of the digital age (1990s) to the information age of the millennium. To forecast where the "business of fashion" is heading with the fast pace of social media behind it, we must first reflect on the fashion system before the disruption of social media. The traditional methodology of the fashion ecosystem has been rewritten; consumers' need for immediacy in receiving products and their demand for faster accessibility to trends contribute to the shift in the fashion industry. In this chapter, insights will be given into the pre-social media fashion industry and the building blocks of customers' adoption of fashion trends. Consumers' fashion interests derive from a collective response, globalized with the boundless reach of social media.

While this disruption has enabled fashion marketers to become closer to their customers, they have had to first understand the shifts that are affecting the industry as a whole. The fashion industry's entire ecosystem goes to great lengths to ensure that they offer goods and services that coalesce with consumer needs and desires seamlessly. Historical, economic, societal, and technological variables have always had an impact on fashion sales. This is true of any industry; however, today, the fashion industry has embraced this series of impactful disruptions as "business as usual." From the Industrial Revolution to women's suffrage, NAFTA, and the introduction of the Internet to mass consumption in the 1990s, the industry has been forced to adapt repeatedly.

Of these movements, social media's buildup of the "Information Age" and "Online Communities" have proven to be one of the most dramatic shifts to ever affect the fashion industry. In this chapter, we will explore the fashion industry before social media, and how the emergence of user-generated content democratized the industry as a whole. Additionally, the power of online social communities appears to be able to alter a brand's role in the marketplace. It permits a role reversal in which the industry doesn't merit chasing consumer cues and creating content in real-time to attract prospective customers. We will introduce and begin to examine four disruptions of the fashion industry, based on the evolution of the Internet and the impact of social networks on the future of fashion.

**" fashion is ripe for disruption... because a lot of the ways things are done now — fashion-of-the-week shows, buyers, very powerful editors in major fashion capitals — these were the ways that trends were distributed, and they weren't very democratic. but the internet democratizes everything."**

MANISH CHANDRA, FOUNDER AND CEO OF POSHMARK (*SILICON VALLEY BUSINESS JOURNAL*) (XAVIER, 2014)

## The Fashion Landscape Before Social Media

The fashion system before the advent of real-time social media feeds followed predictable boundaries of time and space. Fashion collections were set, styles were anticipated, and fashion venues for the collections were globally established, thus setting the tone for the fashion season. The fashion system was determined and controlled by a method that ran as the exclusive business of fashion through the 1980s and 1990s. Consumers were not privy to previews of designer collections, nor did they have any tools to monitor fashion shows in real time. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, technological advances such as Apple's 2007 smartphone, the iPhone, social media's open-platforms, and Web 2.0 applications began to transform both the creation and marketing of fashion. While this change created a disruption within the fashion industry, it is necessary to understand the fashion system before social media platforms became an active participant in the process.

**Social media** is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan and Michael)." The adoption of social media changed the way consumers communicated and connect in our modern culture, but it also opened doors to a new way to unite globally with others. There are over two billion active users on social media. While it may have begun as a way to connect with friends and family it has now evolved as a powerful tool for brands to connect with consumers.

## The Fashion system of Yesterday

Before social media, consumers adopted trends at a much slower pace, maintaining a leisurely driven fashion cycle (number of trend adopters over time). Consumers before social media were also more passive recipients, approving (and rarely rejecting) the industry-driven preselected collections presented to them in stores. The flow of goods through the fashion system (design concept and retail supply to consumers) shared a similarly moderate pace. However, after the social media movement, highly demanding, digitally connected consumers imposed intense and unprecedented pressures on the fashion system. Social media's real-time content has raised consumers' awareness and measurable participation throughout the fashion pipeline. This movement naturally creates new challenges along with new opportunities for retailers, marketers, and suppliers.

Who kept consumers up-to-date with what was deemed fashionable before social media? How was fashion cycled through society by the industry and its influencers before the onset of Google and fashion blogs? Early on, the fashion system opened with the presentation of collections to industry gatekeepers (influencers), a pre-selected, elite group of fashion editors, collectors, buyers, and celebrities. Fashion is also an expression



of personal preference, influenced by other, more prominent, groups (celebrities or publishers of fashion information) who inspire the masses through envy or reliability. Such gatekeepers largely defined fashion-acceptable merchandise (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). This gatekeeper theory also explains how traditional media such as fashion magazines, movies, or coverage of fashion events filtered "how and why certain information either passes through gates or is closed off from media attention" (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009).

Figure 1.2



One example of a traditional fashion gatekeeper is Anna Wintour, the English editor of *American Vogue* since 1988. Through the years, she has worked closely to help young designers through the pages of *Vogue* and Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA). Interesting enough, Isabella Blow for a brief time was Wintour's assistant before moving back to England. Photographed here in Paris with fashion designer John Galiano 1993. Wintour was the editor who first discovered Galiano when he first came onto the London fashion scene.

Fashion Week presentations (sometimes referred to as cat walks in Europe) are based in major world capitals for an exclusive, trade-only audience. These shows featured styles that were thematically aligned with the traditional seasons: resort, fall/winter, and spring/summer. Their primary purpose was to enable the media and consumers to preview a collection before its release for public purchase. Fashion editors gathered insight from shows to align with an editorial calendar in order to begin the storytelling process of the season. Buyers made their purchase decisions

based on their interpretations of what they believed their target audience wanted. Retailers incorporated push marketing strategies into the promotional mix (commercials, visual merchandising, catalogs, magazine advertisements, and editorials) to announce the seasonal trends to consumers.

Interestingly enough, both before social media and now, the marketing team is required to execute a highly strategized launch of a newly introduced collection in order to ensure a target market's strong adoption. Delivering the right marketing message continues to require placing advertisements in media outlets, billboards, and retail venues. Marketers craft a strategy around the collection to pique the interest of potential customers in, and in connection to, the goods. In a highly competitive market, each season's campaign seeks to entice the customer to re-invest in a brand by leaving a strong first impression that will hopefully develop into sales conversion. The speed-to-market has to be at a pace that ensures merchandise delivery, once advertisements successfully draw shoppers in.

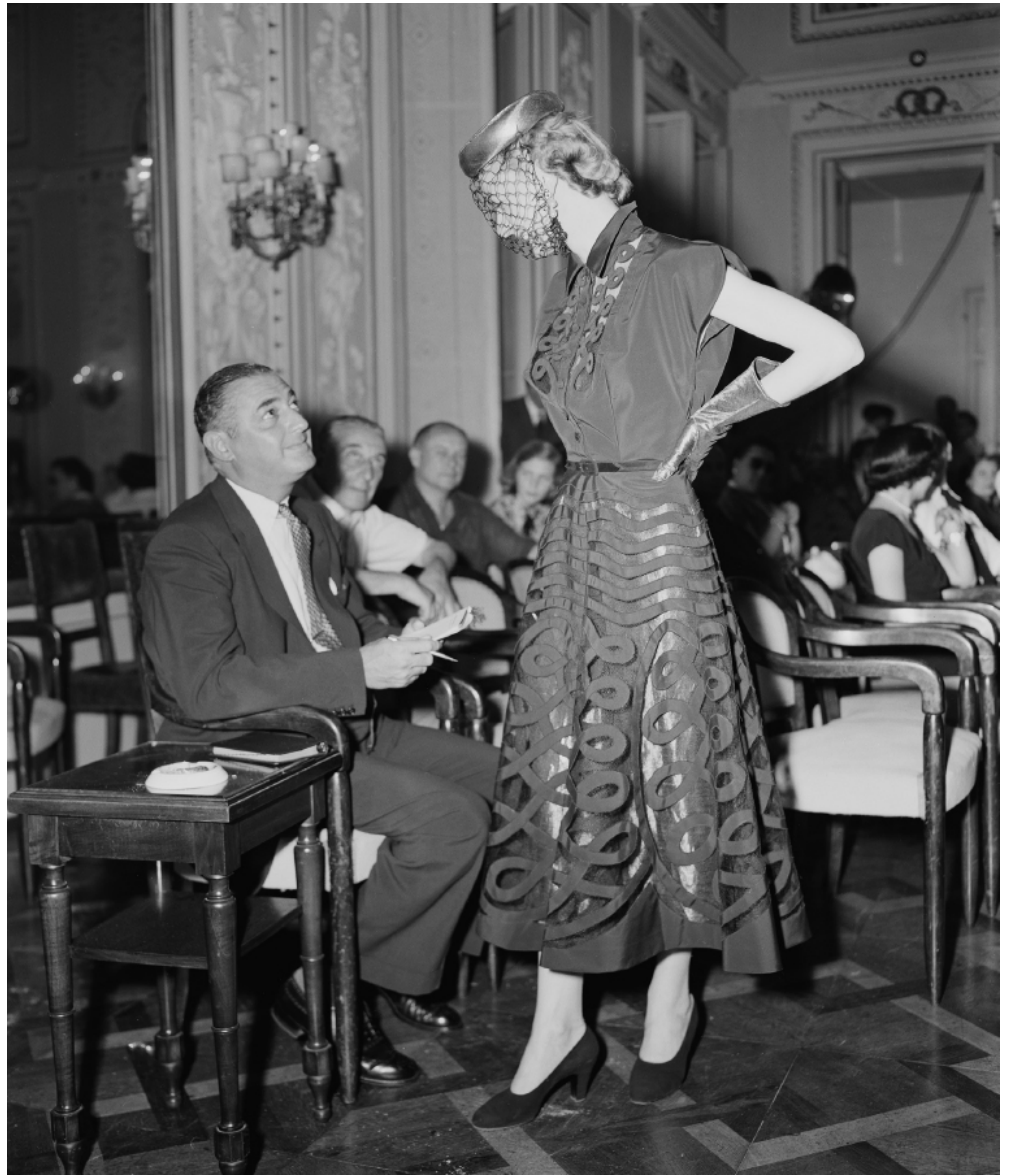
**Figure 1.3**



One gatekeeper who had a talent for discovering creative talent was Isabella Blow. Blow supported many young, talented designers and believed in them while others did not. Two fashion icons she discovered were Philip Treacy (milliner) and Alexander McQueen. In 1994, Blow attended McQueen's Saint Martins graduate show and bought his entire collection for £5000.

**Figure 1.4**





1951, US buyers at the Autumn-Winter fashion show in Florence

Historically, the fashion system followed a set, cyclical protocol, which was precisely timed to when the public received access to the collections. In the 1990s, the fashion industry, as a whole, would read reviews of the collections in the only source available, that is, trade journals. This was the platform used by veteran fashion journalists to share their critiques with a voice of approval or rejection of the season's fashion silhouettes, themes, colors, and textures. It is important to understand that this was the fashion industry's first glimpse of runway shows, without the privilege of being seated at the actual events themselves. Within twenty-four hours of these shows, trade publications such as *Women's Wear Daily* (WWD), the New York-based trade journal established in 1910, or *Drapers*, the British source of fashion business intelligence established in 1987, would feature extensive coverage of these events.

Alex Badia, WWD style director and men's fashion director, stated in an interview for *WWD*MAGIC that negatives of photographs from the early-90s Paris fashion shows would be flown to New York to be developed and sent to press for print the following morning. The final results would then be printed in trade newspapers the very next day, whereas the majority of full collections in an edited trade-only publication (such as Italian fashion magazine, *Collezioni Donna*) would take months to surface. The content published during the early stages was strictly intended for industry use. Trade-only content would have a large price tag attached to it and would be unavailable to consumer-based stores. Through this distribution of content, retailers and editors maintained tight control of the editorial and marketing strategies behind fashion collection launches.

*Women's Wear Daily* first appeared as an insert in the *Daily Trade Record* (later named DNR), and aimed to supply relevant news to "important men in all departments of women's wear." See "Our Excuse for Being"—a reproduction of the paper's mission statement (Alexrod, 2008).

### Zeitgeist

Fashion trends are a reflection of "the spirit of the times" or Zeitgeist. According to Vinken, "the goal of determining a trend is to be able to monitor that it achieves full integration among the majority" (Vinken, 2005). Blumer (1969) agrees that individuals choose among competing styles that connect with the current Zeitgeist.

### Traditional Fashion Trade Publication "Our Excuse For Being"

Mission Statement from *Women's Wear*

"It will be the aim of the publishers to present to its subscribers a succinct epitomization of the most important happening and events occurring in the women's wear industry. The scope of the publication will be to cover the factors between the mill and the merchant. There is probably no other line of human endeavor in which there is so much change as in the product that womankind wears. This brings about an enormous amount of traveling, and the result is that important men in all departments of women's wear are scattered everywhere over the earth's surface and lose track of events and happenings, which it will be our purpose to try and chronicle as briefly as possible, so that these men can pick up and at minimum of time and expense keep posts. A knowledge of what has transpired is most important and Women's Wear will aim to do this."

*Women's Wear*, Vol. 1. No. 1. (June 1910)

The original *Women's Wear* mission statement

## Fashion news in Traditional Media

Consumer-directed news about the fashion industry is a new facet of the twenty-first century. While there were a few fashion distribution channels supplying news to the fashion industry in the 1980s and 1990s, it was nothing like today's current stream of content. Traditional coverage expanded with two television programs: CNN's *Style with Elsa Klensch* and MTV's *House of Style* with Cindy Crawford. These shows gave the average consumer a rare glimpse into the world of fashion. CNN's broadcasts on the world of fashion, beauty, and décor came first and aired from 1980 to 2001, while *House of Style* aired between 1989 and 2000 (re-launched in 2012). Fashion loyalists eagerly awaited each episode as models and celebrities shared their personal take on fashion in popular culture. Viewers gained a better understanding of the latest fashion trends, ultimately opening the door for average consumers to access what was once considered secret industry insight.

Figure 1.5



1995 CNN's *Style* television fashion commentator Elsa Klensch (on right) shown here with US fashion designer Donna Karan (on left).

Figure 1.6



1991 MTV's *House of Style* television commentator Cindy Crawford (right) interviews German super model Claudia Schiffer wearing Italian designer Gianni Versace.

**“ COOL HUNTING IS NOT ABOUT THE ARTICULATION OF A COHERENT PHILOSOPHY OF COOL. IT'S JUST A COLLECTION OF SPONTANEOUS OBSERVATIONS AND PREDICTIONS THAT DIFFER FROM ONE COOL HUNTER TO THE NEXT AND FROM ONE MOMENT TO THE NEXT.”**

THE NEW YORKERS (GLADWELL, 1997)

## The Directional Flow of a Trend Before Social Media

Like any successful enterprise, the fashion industry constantly adapts to social and economic changes that impact supply and demand. The fashion system, which encompasses the process of fashion from concept-to-consumption, includes influential consumers whose engagement with fashion novelties pushed trends forward to reach an even wider audience (Rogers, 1995). New trends must be adopted in order for the fashion cycle to evolve. Rogers (1995) defines the diffusion of innovation as “the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system” (p. 35). Innovations are initially adopted by a few forward-thinking consumers (innovators), proceeded by the early adopters, early majority, late majority, and lastly by laggards. Before social media, traditional entertainment media (magazines, newspapers, television, movies, etc.), in-store visual merchandising, and word-of-mouth (WOM) set the rhythm of exposure and interpretation of trends. Prior to the rapid increase of user-generated content through social media, a much more gradual adoption process of fashion trends existed locally, nationally, and globally.

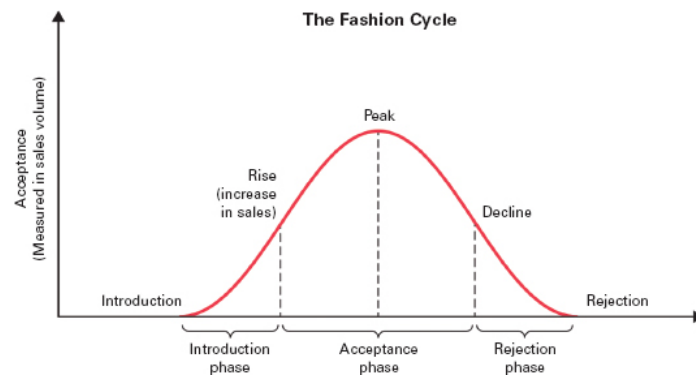
Innovative trends that differ from what is currently “in fashion” help keep the fashion cycle (Fig. 1.7) rolling. Consumers search for what is “new” and are not currently part of their respective inventories. The cycle of a trend requires both communication within a social system and a path by which communication migrates to another social group. Before the advent of social media, social circles of consumers embraced such influences as friends, family, acquaintances, and influencers from the print, television, and movie media.

Since the 1980s, fashion forecasters (Doneger Group, Tobé Report, Bill Glazer & Associates, Promostyl), buyers, designers, and retailers have looked to street fashion for inspiration. They began to collect and categorize street fashion shots to interpret and predict future trends from a consumer's point of view. The goal was to find something in the early stages from street fashion, “borrow” it from the early adopter, and share it with the early majority. Fashion forecasters and designers scouted locations around the world, collecting imagery and inspiration wherever they went. In contrast, owing to the prevalence of today's digital fashion communities, such as Polyvore and Pinterest, those forecasters and designers can pull opinions (behavior measured through data) from millions of fashion-minded consumers using the website. They can then share with the user what is popular or “trending” on the website. In chapter 6, we will explore how fashion data is shedding new light on the future of trend forecasting in the digital landscape.

Street fashion was closely monitored by the fashion industry as a runway on the streets. Still, consumers had little access to it on a global scale. Online social communities and outfit-sharing posts were still a decade away from realization. In early 2000, fashion bloggers were not reporting on runway collections, nor were brands live-streaming their runway shows. For example, if Gucci showed a jumpsuit with a seventies flare during Fashion Week, the show rule of “no public access” would still prevail and the generality of consumers would not be able to demand what they had not yet seen. Before social media, shows such as these were exclusive and only a select group of influencers had access to these. The only photographers allowed to shoot the shows were members of the press, strategically located at the end of the runway. The general consumer would have to wait an additional four to seven months in order to preview these looks.

**Figure 1.7**





The Fashion Cycle (Adapted from <https://rampages.us/chandlerbing/2015/07/08/the-process-of-fashion-forecasting-and-what-would-we-do-without-it/>)

## The Evolution of the Fashion System

The fashion industry has always been fast paced, adopting changing styles and shifting the latest fashion movement through popular culture. The Internet's evolution over the years has been a key contributor to increasing the momentum of fashion information reaching consumers. This shift began as the new millennium approached, with the emergence of a handful of fashion-focused websites, which began producing fashion content online for the fashion-conscious consumer.

**Figure 1.8**



Susanna Lau, founder of StyleBubble.co.uk blog. Lau now works full time on her blog as well as writing for *Elle* and *Dazed Digital*.

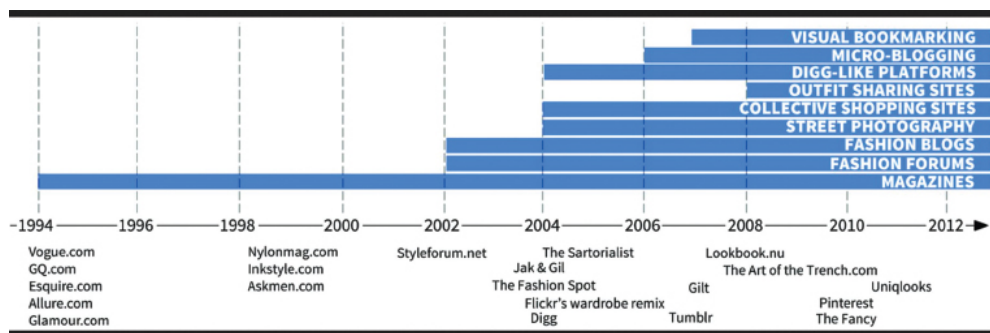
## The Transition of Fashion Information

One innovator to join the conversation on the Internet was visionary Parisian designer Jean-Paul Gaultier, who invited viewers for a virtual walk around his online boutique (the first of its kind). Two innovative websites that offered fashion news, FashionNet.com (est. 1995) and theFashionSpot.com (est. 2001), sprang up with an emphasis on Business-to-Consumer (B2C) rather than Business-to-Business (B2B). Susanna Lau of Style Bubble blog, one of the first well-established UK fashion bloggers, shared her view on the world's pre-fashion blogger movement in 2012. In the book titled *Style Feed: The World's Top Fashion Blogs*, Lau remarked that her first connection with fashion and technology occurred upon finishing her degree at university. Lau states, "Everyday I would escape from the lectures and seminars and log on to The Fashion Spot, a community forum where fashion lovers and industry insiders could pour over collections, models, magazine editorials, and personal style. I succumbed to having a second life on the Internet, chatting to people I had never met in person and sharing parts of my life with strangers long before the explosion of Facebook and Twitter" (Oliver & Lau, 2012).

Despite being seemingly trivial in light of today's fashion climate, this change was critical in the evolution of the fashion online community that was designed for the consumer to share and create content across the digital landscape. Lau was not alone in her interest in fashion and the world that surrounded it. New fashion-focused forums, such as LiveJournal, Blogger, and MySpace, attracted an entire generation of creative, style-driven consumers who were given platforms to comment, share, and embrace new discovery media. These social outlets used applications to foray into fashion territories that had not been mapped by the public. As time passed, advances in social media enabled the devoted fashion follower to

actively participate in this newfound fashion world of blogs, websites, and social media networks of communities. Participation was key for this success as well as engaging user-generated content practices of sharing personal style photos or haul videos. Haul videos are a narrative approach of sharing recent purchases (fashion, beauty products, DIY ideas), including details and ideas surrounding the products.

Figure 1.9



A Timeline of the Online Fashion World: This figure shows what Dolbec and Fischer captured in terms of the emergence of online fashion media taking action with the adoption of an online presence. Source: Pierre-Yann Dolbec, Eileen Fischer. "Refashioning a Field? Connected Consumers and Institutional Dynamics in Markets." *Journal of Consumer Research*, 2015; 41 (6): 1447 DOI: [10.1086/680671](https://doi.org/10.1086/680671) / By permission of Oxford University Press.

Figure 1.10



Worth Global Style Network is a service website that offers faster content compared to traditional forms of media (e.g., newspapers and magazines). While they have a strong presentation merging their company with StyleSight. com, today, they have well-attended presentation, both on and off line, about trends at both the micro and macro level. The photograph shows WGSN during Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Russia in Moscow, Russia.

This shift from B2B to B2C fashion insight began to challenge the very foundation of the fashion industry. The industry's initial reaction was to approach the Internet as a commerce hub; however, the dot-com crash of 2000 caused it to begin taking note of how the Internet was transforming into a valued online community for engagement. The fashion industry was trying to remain on the forefront of technology and incorporate new methods of receiving insight, but more consumer-based websites around the fashion industry were appearing quickly, armed with more insider-based content than others. It reached a point where the fashion industry was lagging behind consumers' tastes, resulting in retailers beginning to fall behind. In 1998, a UK company took note of how the industry needed to modify the way it received content on trends, consumers, and the retail environment. Worth Global Style Network (WGSN) broke into the world of B2B online trend forecasting, providing extensive online content for a subscription fee. The information was developed by a global team of researchers and flooded the website with content that used to take months to provide to fashion channels. Designers, merchandisers, buyers, and marketers began to utilize the content instantly in order to keep up with market speed.

## Digital Transformation of the Fashion Industry

The escalation of consumer expectations directly results from increased access to trends through social media feeds. The speed-to-market of fashion developments is nearly impossible to meet. Fashion shows are live-streamed and photographs are immediately uploaded from mobile applications directly onto social media networks from the front row of top runway shows. Consumers have begun to adapt to the fashion-on-demand mentality and don't believe in waiting for a product in the traditional sense (months after the show). Consumers demand instant gratification of their fashion desires with each double-tap on Instagram or newly curated board on Pinterest. The human attention span is shortening, and consumers no longer wish to wait for the release of a collection six months after its debut. Thus, they demand the very latest, instantly. The pressure on the fashion industry to produce at an ever-ratcheting pace continues, which is a growing concern in the world of fashion today.

The notion of "a trend is over before it begins" means that by the time the merchandise is shipped to retailers, consumers will already have moved on to another trend. Still, customers gravitate towards brands that can most quickly provide insight to what is currently trending at that moment. Consumers are traditionally attracted to the "new" factor of fashion trends, but in today's digitally connected world, the FOMO (Fear of Missing Out, detailed in chapter 3) fuels the consumers' drive to "possess immediately" whatever they see on social media platforms.

In 2009, *WWD* reported that the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) held a town hall meeting with designers, retailers, and fashion journalists to review the entire "hyperactive fashion system" (Feitelberg and Karimzadeh, 2009). Presenters agreed that this shift in the fashion system grew out of the digital communication revolution, which had already begun to refocus fashion weeks and presentations onto consumers' use of social media.

The readiness of the industry to create brand awareness through social media tie-ins at runway shows has, perhaps ironically, contributed to consumers' discarding of trends even before the collection is shipped to the stores. In a CFDA meeting, Donna Karan, Anna Wintour, and Diane von Furstenberg met to brainstorm how they might rescue the fashion industry from this threat. Donna Karan, long a proponent of showing and selling clothes in-season, took the opportunity to challenge the fashion cycle and consumers trying to understand fashion season on the digital landscape provided to them. Seasons are getting pushed together and the industry is trying to incorporate what they have in stores to reflect what consumers are seeing on their social media feeds, but it continues to confuse all parties involved. Karan said, "We should truly focus on the problem and the solution. The consumer has been trained to buy on sale. The clothes in stores are not in season, so she is confused. Why should she go out and spend money early in the season, when in fact come September and October, when the season actually changes, the next season is there and it's called resort?" Karan's remarks confirm both digital and social media control over the fashion system and creators' fear of this control. KCD president Ed Filipowski stated that "it's probably a good time...for the industry to come together and look at how we need to adapt to how the landscape has changed." One fact that clearly stirred conversation, if not controversy, was that the speed of the Internet, social media, and blogs made clothes shown on the runway seem dated before their delivery to consumers (Feitelberg and Karimzadeh, 2009).

**"RUNWAY SHOWS DON'T MATCH RETAIL EXPECTATIONS; DESIGNERS CAN'T KEEP UP WITH ORDERS; AND CUSTOMERS CAN'T BUY A COAT IN WINTER. BUT IT'S HARD TO KNOW WHO'S TO BLAME? . . . THE PUBLIC CLICKING ONLINE TO BUY DURING BURBERRY'S LIVE-STREAM RUNWAY SHOW MONTHS BEFORE THE CLOTHES ARE EVEN SEWN? INTERNET SHOPPERS HITTING ON SPECIAL DELIVERY PIECES FROM NET-A-PORTER THAT NO ONE ELSE WILL HAVE AT LEAST FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS?"**

SUZY MENKES (MENKES, 2013)

Figure 1.11



Attendees at the live runway show capture the moment from the POV of their smart phones and tablets to share immediately with their audience. These real-time moments are changing the runway culture forever.

## Democratization of the Fashion Industry—Information Age

Prior to 2006, the fashion industry carefully curated and pre-selected the looks it would share with the public through email outreach, banner ads, catalogs, visual displays, in-store retail merchandising, and other non-digital channels. The momentum behind fashion trends had much to do with the linear business model of fast fashion for mass-market retailers like Forever 21. Fast fashion retailers achieve maximum productivity through efficient planning and manufacturing technologies that increase speed-to-market, and thus the concept-to-commerce process (design, manufacturing, distribution). Some retailers utilized vertical integration (manufacturing, distribution, retail) that ensured the seamless marketing of fashion trends within a month of production, allowing consumers to accept it before more accessible venues cheapened them. Merchandise that are yet to achieve a full cycle of acceptance would be marked down in price to make room for the next on-trend merchandise on the floor. This fashion cycle continues to spin ever faster, consigning trends ever more quickly to the realm of has-beens.

## The Evolution of Real-Time Fashion Information

Both the pace and direction of trend adoption hinge on exposure to the public, whether from media or firsthand experience. Access to real-time fashion, through top influencers' social media feeds and live-streamed fashion shows, disrupts the classic mode of diffusing innovation, enabling almost any consumer to view merchandise before it becomes available for purchase. Social confirmation of a trend is now measured through engagement and acknowledgment of social media feeds, trends "liked" and commented on, and those shared by the new digital native gatekeepers (digital influencers and fashion bloggers). The "likeability" of a trend can now be measured and evaluated by consumers through social media feeds. Owing to social media, the transmission of images, video, and text allows fashion-conscious consumers to obtain front-row seats to international runway shows and exclusive launch parties, showrooms, and trade-only events. This in turn has ignited consumers' sense of entitlement to know more about "behind-the-scenes" moments of the fashion industry. Bloggers were the first to share this fashion-privy content, giving the industry no choice but to share information with consumers to compete with this movement. By 2011, the walls were completely torn down and there were more fashion bloggers attending runway shows than members of the press. The democratization of fashion clearly began with the bloggers and the shift in the role of communication in the digital landscape.



Figure 1.12



In Fall/Winter 2014, Moschino unveiled a collection inspired by fast food chain McDonald's and capturing the move towards "fast-fashion" and the speed of trends at retail.

Figure 1.13



J-Lo's green Versace dress led to the creation of Google Image search.

High social-media engagement explicitly reveals consumers' desire to discover new trends and to obtain them quickly. Online fashion communities such as Lookbook.nu were founded on the principle that the latest coveted styles, outfit posts, and like-minded fashion insights need to be shared immediately within the community. Exposure to trends on social media platforms can also be measured by social reach and impressions through "likes" and "shareability" on platforms such as Pinterest and Instagram. The fashion industry utilizes the **social intelligence** gathered to create algorithms, enabling it to track trends showing good traction. According to the Future of Retail Report by PSFK research, it was "found that retailers and brands are leveraging intelligent algorithms and social data such as a person's "likes" and "pins," as well as those of their friends, to create a more personal and curated shopping experience for their customers. These automated services, which can also tap into previous transaction history, help simplify the process of shopping by building a user-centric stream of recommendations and available offers focused on delivering relevancy and aiding in the discovery of new products" (Ryan, 2012).

### Fashion influences Technology: a Dress inspired Google image Search

According to Google's executive chairman, Eric Schmidt, J-Lo inspired Google Image. Prior to J-Lo's now famous Versace dress she wore to the 2000 Grammy Awards, there was no way on Google to search for images. The former method was to search for keywords and hope that the desired image(s) would turn up. In 2000, J-Lo's dress was the most popular search query that appeared on Google. Thus, Google Image search was born.

**“ MORE THAN GOING TO A SHOP AND HAVING A LOOK, YOU FIND SOMEONE YOU FOLLOW ON INSTAGRAM OR A BLOG. IT BECOMES A LIFESTYLE RATHER THAN A TREND. WE'RE MOVING FROM BEING TREND-FOCUSED TO LIFESTYLE-FOCUSED... SOME TRENDS TURN OUT TO BE SHORT-LIVED, WHEREAS OTHERS CONTINUE TO EVOLVE AS THEY ARE MORE ABOUT LIFESTYLE CHOICES AND STYLE, RATHER THAN CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION.”**

ANNE LISE KJAER, FOUNDER OF INTERNATIONAL TREND FORECASTING AGENCY KJAER GLOBAL (ABNETT, 2015)

## Bloggers vs. Traditional Press

Suzy Menkes, the highly acclaimed British journalist and Vogue's International Editor, wrote an article that took on the fashion bloggers' position in the industry and international fashion weeks: "The Circus of Fashion." In this controversial article, Menkes compares and contrasts the fashion industry before and after the arrival of social media, and she touches on the role that fashion bloggers play. This was the beginning of change for fashion week, and through this article, the great debate between fashion bloggers and fashion journalists began. Menkes was formerly the fashion editor/critic for the *International Herald Tribune* but now is the international editor for *Vogue*. (To see the full article, please visit: [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/10/t-magazine/the-circus-offashion.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/10/t-magazine/the-circus-offashion.html?_r=0))

**Figure 1.14**



Kenzo's Tiger Sweatshirt

### Social Media Changing The Trend Landscape

Ruth Chapple, head of content at Stylus Fashion states, "It's making some trends stick, while long ago we would have been over them more quickly. The Valentino rock stud, which everyone expected to be a one-season wonder, has been going strong for eight seasons. The death of the stud was forecasted long ago, but that was very much a social media trend, where the bloggers made that trend stick. On the other hand, social media can quickly overexpose a trend, and kill its 'edge.'" Kenzo's tiger sweatshirt, Chapple recalled, was "over and done within a month" (Abnett, 2015).

### Case Study: Street Photography Zeitgeist Garage Magazine

**Figure 1.15**



Bill Cunningham viewed the Fall 2016 Collections at New York Fashion Week. While sitting at the front row he would often say, "The best fashion show is on the street."

In a documentary film titled *Take My Picture* by GARAGE Magazine, they explore the fashion street photographer and the blogger influencer movement. This impactful film takes the viewer through the lens of the photographer and the movement known as "Peacocking." Tommy Ton (blog Jak & Jil), Style.com and GQ's street photographer, was interviewed about how he selects who he photographs. Tim Blanks, Business of Fashion Editor At Large, who is being interviewed in the documentary, shares his opinion of fashion bloggers and the real-time content that is being shared by everyone involved. "It's part of reality TV, it's part of 'No secrets about anything' anymore because of Facebook and stuff like that. It's a world where everything is just on display the whole time. Everybody has a blog, everybody has a Facebook account, everybody has this, that or the other thing. 'You're part of the dialog, you're part of the process.'"

## Bill Cunningham

In the 1970s, photographer Bill Cunningham snapped candid photos of what ordinary New Yorkers wore in their everyday lives. He happened to take a photograph of the always-stunning silver screen star Greta Garbo, published it in the *New York Times* in December of 1978, and began a new career as the paper's street fashion photographer. In 2010, First Thought Films released *Bill Cunningham New York, 2010*, a profile documentary of the renowned street photographer.

Figure 1.16



Smartphones ready to capture runway moments as they exhibit the latest styles and instantly share with millions.



## The Fashion Landscape Altered: Four Disruptions That Changed the Fashion Industry

In the early 2000s, during the beginning of the social media phenomenon, "business as usual" characterized the fashion industry. Most fashion leaders appeared to believe in the notion that "this too, shall pass." Even brands that joined the conversation had yet to figure out how social media and bloggers could actually benefit their businesses and lead to increased sales. Although the industry's transition seems slow in retrospect, all of it actually happened within a five-year span (2006 to 2010) and continues to evolve through new business opportunities and blogger-brand collaborations to shoppable real-time runway shows. The four elements that so dramatically changed the fashion landscape are the following:

1. The Blogosphere
2. Style Sharing Communities + User-Generated Content
3. The changing nature of runway: 360° Videos, Live-Stream, Virtual Runway, Shoppable Runway, See Now/Buy Now, and Consumer Participation
4. The Confirmation of a Trend through Online Engagement: Trend Evolution of Fashion Analytics

These four key factors will be looked at in further detail in the following sections.

Figure 1.17



Paparazzi at New York Fashion Week capturing the latest street fashion.

**" FASHION IS RIPE FOR DISRUPTION... BECAUSE A LOT OF THE WAYS THINGS ARE DONE NOW — FASHION-OF-THE-WEEK SHOWS, BUYERS, VERY POWERFUL EDITORS IN MAJOR FASHION CAPITALS — THESE WERE THE WAYS THAT TRENDS WERE DISTRIBUTED, AND THEY WEREN'T VERY DEMOCRATIC. BUT THE INTERNET DEMOCRATIZES EVERYTHING."**

MANISH CHANDRA, FOUNDER AND CEO OF POSHMARK (*SILICON VALLEY BUSINESS JOURNAL*) (XAVIER, 2014)

## Blogosphere Takes on the Fashion Industry

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the introduction of blogging ushered in a new online persona and environment: the Blogosphere. In the fashion world, these innovations represented a "changing of the guard" as style bloggers and their followers took a place alongside traditional gatekeepers: fashion editors and celebrities. Fashion bloggers and social media influencers, the new gatekeepers, generate content that directly connects with consumers who are now a part of rapidly growing fashion communities. User-generated content gives a glimpse into "a day in the life" of a fashion influencer or fashion peer, alongside his or her "outfits of the day" (#OOTD). Additionally, they prove more approachable and more credible than the gatekeepers of decades past, and average consumers latch onto their availability and honesty, allowing bloggers to aggregate fashion news and opinions.

Figure 1.18



@Tania\_Sarin started blogging to share her style with a few friends. Today with over 200k Instagram followers and a strong engaging audience, she is a valued influencer in the fashion industry.

## Fashion Bloggers' Role in the Industry

We have seen that the previous rules of style innovation were guided by controlled content, which retailers, magazines, and selective outlets provided to the masses. Bloggers ended this virtual industry dictatorship or, at least, forced its somewhat unenthusiastic evolution, by introducing fashion trends to consumers in real time. Without a doubt, digital influencers have changed the game by creating a direct, impactful link with fashion-conscious consumers. Not only have fashion bloggers contributed a new voice to fashion, but they have also opened the doors to a world that was once trade-only. These new influencers attracted a global following by offering an authentic voice with relatable points of view. Bloggers gained loyal followers from valued insights shared on their blog, involving everything from outfit posts to where to find the best deals on apparel. Tween to twenty-something fashion bloggers share content as if they were speaking directly to their best friends. These communities have opened a two-way conversation between bloggers and commenting readers. As bloggers continued to write about fashion trends, deals, and gossip, they quickly realized that the most inspirational content peeked behind the scenes in the fashion industry. The industry recognized that these bloggers had a strong voice in the blogosphere and wanted a piece of this profitable pie. Thus, a select group of influential bloggers with large audiences has been given behind-the-scenes access to exclusive B2B insight that turned it into B2C content designed to be shared with readers. This single, radically new disruption of the fashion industry would begin to change the dynamics of how and why consumers shop, engage with like-minded individuals, and remain loyal to a pre-selected group of brands.

The blogosphere began with a community of self-published "web logs" (now known as blogs) by individuals within the self-contained world of the Internet. A blog can be defined as a type of content management system (CMS) that includes social features throughout its platform such as blogrolls, comments, trackbacks, and subscriptions (Zarella, 2015). The first fashion bloggers were young writers and fashion enthusiasts who were looking for a platform to share their opinions and insights about fashion. These platforms enabled bloggers to connect to hundreds, even thousands of like-minded individuals with whom to exchange their views. At first, they shared a practical take on the world of fashion from their perspective and provided advice on topics such as shopping to do-it-yourself (DIY) fashion design projects. That emphasis soon shifted as sponsorship and affiliate programs altered the bloggers' primary motivations.

*LiveJournal* (1999) was one of the first online platforms that allowed bloggers to speak their minds on fashion industry trends and ideas. Since blogs air individual opinions without the imposition of sponsors or publishers, all consumers could now access a safe platform to share their point-of-view as a matter of simple free speech. During this unique stage of online community development, the term "free" characterized both access and opinion. Readers of blogs quickly realized that bloggers were sharing authentic relatable viewpoints, without the influence of other agendas, and swiftly placed their trust in this platform. These self-published blogs soon built a fresh, engaging, and global dialogue available through any Internet connection. Up to this point, fashion content had normally been paid for through magazine subscriptions, so, the notion of free content provided "by consumers, for consumers" proved revolutionary.

### Citizen Journalism

The concept of citizen journalism, sometimes referred to as "street" journalism, puts the public citizen in the active role of being a reporter. This is a volunteer position that enables "real people" to disseminate the news or stories they collect and analyze. The rise of mobile phone reporting in real-time, far outweighs the content that is collected by traditional journalism.

These radical changes in communication allowed users not only to follow and discuss but also to purchase full collections online. The blogosphere had become a platform in which fashion consumers resided as part of a new community that eventually became accepted as legitimate online journalism. The unprecedented personal and interactive approach of blogging sharply contrasts with traditional mainstream media's treatment of consumers as both generic and passive. To their readers, fashion blogs smack of authenticity both in their display of practical tutorials and a "look-at-me" approach.

**"SOCIAL MEDIA HAS ALLOWED EVERYONE TO BECOME A FASHION CRITIC. I THINK THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THAT HAVE BEEN BOTH GOOD AND BAD. ON THE PLUS SIDE, AN UNPRECEDENTED NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARE EXPOSED TO FASHION NOW, EVEN FASHION THEY COULD NEVER DREAM OF AFFORDING,**

**AND BY DRAWING PEOPLE INTO THE INDUSTRY, SOCIAL MEDIA HAS HELPED MAKE FASHION A TRUE PART OF POP CULTURE, IN THE SAME WAY FILM, TV AND MUSIC ARE, BECAUSE IT CAN BE 'CONSUMED' ON SOCIAL MEDIA, AT THE SAME TIME IT'S CONSUMED IN REAL LIFE."**

BOOTH MOORE, SENIOR EDITOR, FASHION HOLLYWOOD REPORTER/PRET-A-REPORTER

## Blogger Zeitgeist — A Timeline

1998	1999	2000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open Diary is launched as the first tools to assist users in publishing online journals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LiveJournal launches to be the first International social network blogging service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily Candy Newsletter Launches. Popular newsletter site delivers interest insight on new fashion and lifestyle information straight to your email inbox.</li> </ul>
2005	2006	2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Shaded View on Fashion (ASVOF) by Diane Pernet is launched. Pernet was one of the first digital fashion reporters for trade publication, French <i>Elle</i>, and <i>Vogue</i> as well as a fashion editor for JOYCE, Hong Kong.</li> <li>Scott Schuman began photographing the street-style of "real people" on the street and posting the photos to his blog, The Sartorialist.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Julie Fredrickson unexpectedly interviews Anna Wintour for her personal blog at New York Fashion Week.</li> <li>Susie Bubble, UK Blogger. Susie Lau, based in the United Kingdom, begins her internationally recognized blog – Susie Bubble. It is featured in <i>Vogue UK</i>, <i>Vogue US</i>, and <i>ELLE US</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alix Cherry begins Cherry Blossom Girl in Paris after working for Alexander McQueen and Chloé. The name is an ode to the song "Cherry Blossom Girl" by French band AIR.</li> <li>Model, socialite, and blogger Gala Gonzalez begins AMLUL.COM. Gonzalez is considered to be the first Spanish fashion blogger. She posts daily with the goal "display, share, and learn."</li> <li>IFB (Independent Fashion Bloggers) First fashion blogging association is founded</li> </ul>
	2009	2010
<p>Aimee Song starts her personal style blog, Song of Style in college. Today, her blog receives over two million page views per month. She complements her site with an active Instagram account, which boasts 3.4 million followers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the United States the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) publishes regulations regarding bloggers and brand advertising.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital Brand Architects digital agency is launched focusing on creating a brand's voice through digital strategy, social media innovation, online talent agency (bloggers), and influencer marketing. The beginning of bloggers being recognized as an important part of marketing outreach in the digital landscape</li> </ul>
2012		2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>London-based menswear blog, The Gentleman Blogger was founded by Matthew Zorpas. Dedicated to men's fashion lifestyle, street style, and</li> </ul>	<p>shopping secrets. Zorpas also teaches Luxury Management and Communications at universities in the UK.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <i>Blonde Salad</i> book by fashion blogger Chiara Ferragni is published.</li> <li>Fashion blogger Leandra Medine's launches her new book <i>Man Repeller</i>.</li> </ul>



2003		2004	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kathryn Finney of <i>The Budget Fashionista</i> was invited to New York Fashion Week.</li> <li>Myspace is launched and joins the newly discovered social network (blogging)</li> <li>WordPress is launched enabling easier ways to create blogs and websites</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bryan Grey Yambao begins blogging using alias Bboy777. Begins using name "Bryanboy" in 2004. Launched from his parent's home in Manila, the Philippines.</li> <li>The launch of Flickr, a photo-sharing community, begins and sharing images becomes common practice</li> </ul>	
		2008	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>by Jennine Jacob to support the blogging community.</li> <li>London based, Navaz Batliwalla launches <i>Disneyrollergirl</i> an anonymous fashion insider blog about insider secrets while he was working as a fashion director at a magazine in London.</li> <li>The microblogging site Tumblr was introduced to the blogging community; founded by David Karp. Enabling re-blogging of posts.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marc Jacob names his Ostrich bag the BB in honor of blogger Bryanboy.</li> <li>Tavi Gevinson begins <i>Style Rookie</i> at age 11 from a small town in Oak park, Illinois. Gevinson takes the fashion world by storm while giving a new generation a voice on the Internet.</li> <li>Rumi Neely starts her style blog <i>French Toast</i>. She began with her eBay vintage store, <i>Treasure Chest Vintage</i>, also in 2008. <i>French Toast</i> continues to have a</li> </ul>	
		2011	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Career as a Blogger. According to fashion trade paper <i>Women's Wear Daily</i>, Bryanboy boasts that he has made \$100,000 annually as a blogger.</li> <li>Tavi Gevinson's bow causes uproar between bloggers and journalists at the Dior 2010 runway show. TWITTER: "At Dior. Not best pleased to be watching couture through 13 year old Tavi's hat" @Grazia_Live.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leandra Medine begins <i>The Man Repeller</i>. While studying journalism in college Medine begins her journal with a blog to add some humor to the fashion industry while paying respect to the industry itself.</li> <li>CoachxBloggers, a major collaboration between bloggers and Coach, created four custom bags that embodied the blogger's personal style.</li> </ul>	
2014		2015	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LiketoKnow.it is launched and changes the way consumers view Instagram (IG). Allows IG users to "like" a photo from their favorite bloggers and influencers to receive ready-to-shop product links straight to their email inboxes.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harvard University created the first fashion blogger case study of its kind on how Chiara Ferragni of the <i>Blonde Salad</i> makes \$8 million annually from blogging.</li> </ul>	
		2016	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blogger Squads are formed; key influencers attend the same events as a group and create #SquadGoals.</li> <li>WWD Reports that the top bloggers make between one to three million dollars a year.</li> </ul>	

## The Fashion Blogging Movement

Kathryn Finney of *The Budget Fashionista* was the first fashion blogger invited to New York Fashion Week (Burcz, 2012). According to a 2006 *WWD* article, fashion bloggers began to appear at Bryant Park for New York Fashion Week. In 2006, fashion blogger Julie Fredrickson of *Almost Girl* surprised renowned *Vogue* editor-in-chief Anna Wintour with an interview at the New York Fashion Week. At the time, it was unheard of for a non-industry writer to interview an industry powerhouse such as Wintour. The disruptions in the fashion industry continued and the shift in how fashion was communicated to the public persevered with the rise of the fashion blogger. Fashion bloggers immediately posted reviews from the show tents onto their websites. This too deviated from the norm, since most reviews traditionally appeared in trade publications, usually a day after the actual show. More importantly, these fashion bloggers were unafraid to criticize as well as praise what they had seen. While traditional reviewers regularly panned collections they did not like, their opinions were respected due to their reputations. For instance, Julie Fredrickson of *Almost Girl* wrote, "The John Bartlett men's collection is just slightly odd and is a combination of lumberjack bearded men with Tobias Wolf Old School and was not a look I can really grasp" (Corcoran, 2006). Not all bloggers were as harsh as Fredrikson, but all remained true to their voice in order to ensure that readers received authentic points of view.

**" FASHION OFFERED THIS INCREDIBLE ESCAPE. AND YOU KNOW LINDA EVANGELISTA WAS LIKE THIS GODDESS... AND I THINK TIMES ARE HARD AGAIN, BUT THE ESCAPE ROUTE IS NOT "YOU BEING TAKEN 'SOMEWHERE,' WHERE YOU NEVER GET TO GO. IT'S 'YOU' BEING 'EVOLVED' NOW, EVERYONE IS EVOLVED."**

TIM BLANKS, EDITOR-AT-LARGE, THE BUSINESS OF FASHION PREVIOUSLY WAS EDITOR-AT-LARGE OF STYLE.COM, AND THE SITE'S PRINCIPAL SHOW CRITIC SINCE 2006. (GARAGE MAGAZINE, 2012)

Tim Blanks, the editor-at-large of *The Business of Fashion*, spoke freely in the documentary film *Take My Picture* by *GARAGE* Magazine about his point of view of how social media has changed the way behind the scenes content (e.g., photos) at fashion shows is viewed by the consumer: from the fashion industry in the early 1990s "supermodels" (e.g., Linda Evangelista) to how real-time content from fashion bloggers has changed the way content is viewed now.

Between 2006 and 2008, the fashion industry began growing skeptical of self-proclaimed fashion bloggers; they were presumed to lack the expertise that would guarantee quality and credible reporting. However, this cultural sphere, once resisted by established brands and designers, has now been adopted into their corporate communication strategies. This does not indicate that all fashion bloggers are influential; in fact, there are more amateur fashion bloggers than professional or influential fashion bloggers. But today's marketing mix includes digital agencies and in-

house digital directors responsible for connecting bloggers with brands in order to create impactful collaborations. These highly influential bloggers now possess a gatekeeper position (level of influence), based on their impressive capability to exponentially grow a brand's social following through engaging social content. In chapter 5, we will take a closer look into the monetization of fashion blogs and their impact on the fashion industry.

In another *WWD* interview during the 2006 New York Fashion Week, buyers and traditional (newspaper and magazine) journalists were asked what they thought about the presence of bloggers. Constance White, style director at eBay, stated, "The impact [blogs are] having is the idea that the whole population is taking control and ownership of fashion. As we used to say at *The New York Times*, "Our jobs are in jeopardy. Everybody's a fashion critic. Everyone can comment on whether Reese Witherspoon should have worn the same dress that Kirsten Dunst wore before" (Corcoran, 2006). Fashion bloggers began inviting their readers to follow them through Fashion Weeks, while allowing them to see daily trend reviews. Influential bloggers (measured by followers and level of engagement) were on the move, and aggressively evolving after their first invitation to designer collection previews, runway shows, and private launch parties.

**Figure 1.19**



Shows are being captured, shared and instantly consumed on Facebook Live, Snapchat and Instagram Stories.

Fashion bloggers now possess a full access pass to the trade-only side of the fashion industry and represent a new, significant press platform. This enables their followers to legitimize the bloggers as fashion experts who are able to attend industry-exclusive events. When fashion bloggers first began posting their personal style photos, everything they did was "shareable" and readers were given complete access to these posts. These bloggers could have possibly had no inkling as to where blogging would take them, but they were certain that consumer engagement (comments, sharing, liking) fueled their fashion posts. Consumers were no longer being educated about trends directly from brands or traditional media; rather, they were receiving.

**Figure 1.20**



Independent Fashion Bloggers (IFB) logo

## First Fashion Blogger Association and Community

To assist bloggers in their role as modern fashion gatekeepers, Jennie Jacobs created a website in 2007 to support the blogger community. It was called Independent Fashion Bloggers (IFB) at HeartIFB.com. The community of bloggers could contribute and share their own knowledge about the blogging industry from affiliate programs to the best data tracking programs.

## How Fashion Bloggers Changed the Process of Innovation

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is generated by consumers through social media, from one consumer to another, with the use of social transmission through the vast supply of social media. The spreading of a message through social media characterizes social transmission, which may include verbal and nonverbal communications, actions, behaviors, knowledge, and beliefs.

The WOM movement was spread from social media communities, and was led by blogger communities such as Lookbook.nu and Chictopia. Digitally connected consumers rejoiced in having everything at their fingertips through advances in mobile technologies. Social media platforms have lifted the traditional limitations of consumers' access to global trends by providing them with uninhibited access to global online communities.

Transparency has also improved, that is, by permitting and cultivating conversations between brands and consumers. Social media and fashion communities have opened the door to digital influencers (users with a strong digital following) who impact the adoption rate of fashion trends. The spread of trends through social media's reach and impressions has taken the digital word-of-mouth movement to a global level. The hierarchy of a trend is beginning to flatten out, and the trend spreads to the masses quicker than ever, unlike earlier when the pace of trend development followed a more traditional system.

Influential fashion bloggers can impact global communities consisting of millions of individuals. Some of the most notable bloggers include Style Bubble (London), Man Repeller (New York), Song of Style (Los Angeles), and The Blonde Salad (Milan). These influencers became the eyes and ears of their online community audience. "Fashion used to be very dictatorial," notes Constance White, eBay Style Director, but today, these

influencers are “moving from the status of commentators to creators” and are viewed as taste-makers (Corcoran, 2006). Fashion bloggers have attained success by sharing and influencing from a new perspective of collective fashion. “The result is that consumers are becoming their own style curators, picking up ideas from online communities rather than just following the trend seen in a magazine,” fashion photographer Yvan Rodic said of his street-style blog Face Hunter (Young, 2007).

### ***The Business of Fashion* (BoFF) Imran Amed, the founder & Editor-in-Chief**

*The Business of Fashion* (BoFF) was founded by Imran Amed. *The Business of Fashion* has gained a global following as an essential daily resource for fashion creatives, executives, and entrepreneurs in over 200 countries. It is frequently described as “indispensable,” “required reading,” and “an addiction.” Founded in 2007 by Imran Amed, a fashion business advisor, writer and digital entrepreneur, *The Business of Fashion* began as a project of passion, aiming to fill the void for an informed, analytical and opinionated point of view on the fashion business. Today, the website has grown to leverage a network of savvy writers and fashion insiders in style capitals around the world, delivering fashion business intelligence on emerging designers, disruptive technologies, and global brands that are making their mark on the industry at a time of unprecedented change. **The following are his thoughts on digital storytelling, written specifically for this book:**

*What is your advice on the art of storytelling in the digital landscape? How does the next generation of fashion journalist capture the attention of the highly connected consumers?*

“Storytelling has always been a key part of connecting with fashion consumers. Even with the digital revolution, this has not changed. What’s different is how these stories are told and how they are delivered. Today, instead of storytelling in PR or advertising with the goal of driving consumers to physical stores, fashion stories are told in a more fragmented way across a growing number of digital and physical touch points.

What’s more, brands don’t need to rely solely on other media to deliver their messages. Rather they can cultivate direct relationships with consumers via email, social media, and CRM to track and engage their fans across the customer journey.

The other major change is that this conversation happens in real-time, 24 hours a day. It’s an ongoing dialogue and conversation that never ends! It’s a story that begins but never ends, and brands have to continue to retell and reimagine their story in new, exciting ways that keep consumers surprised.”

## Style Sharing Communities; User-Generated Content (UGC)

Online fashion communities have grown to be one of the most powerful collective voices on the Internet. Social websites host fashion-minded groups with strong, average-order-value (AOV) per session, which drives sales through social sharing and social shopping. UGC enables fashion enthusiasts to pool their inspirations and fuel purchases as new users join with comments or social shopping links. Within the creative community, UGC is one of the most valuable currencies today, ensuring authenticity of shared material within the connected community.

## Crowd-Sourcing Fashion Communities

Fashion communities are **crowd-sourced** websites, allowing individuals with a common passion to share content and insights within the group. Users collect and share ideas involving inspiring lifestyle images and organize them based on communal preferences. Their communal activities include sharing personal outfit posts, styling tips, shopping links, online scrapbooking, and bookmarking, which are different means to gather and crowd-source common interests in order to create a common space. Members of style communities also consult each other as community-based fashion experts and receive scores (likes or hearts) based on their popularity and rankings (as seen in Polyvore). Consumers who traditionally follow fashion interpretations in magazines can now consult the opinions of others as well as share their own. Platforms that enable UGC disrupt and democratize the fashion industry by creating trend boards, pinning photos from websites, and editing/publishing content. Along with hosting these actions of engagement, websites simultaneously monetize information data collected from consumers’ likes or dislikes and brand content. Polyvore (est. 2006), Lookbook.nu (est. 2008), and Pinterest (est. 2010) are some of the most significant online fashion-focused style communities today.

**“ SOCIAL MEDIA HAS ALSO CREATED A PLATFORM FOR LESSER KNOWN DESIGNERS TO BREAK INTO THE FASHION WORLD, WHICH HAS DISRUPTED THE TRADITIONAL TOP-DOWN MODEL OF DESIGNER TO MEDIA TO CONSUMER, AND MADE FASHION MORE DEMOCRATIC AND TRENDS LESS RIGID. ON THE MINUS SIDE, I DON’T ALWAYS THINK THE DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA ABOUT FASHION IS THAT CONSTRUCTIVE. SOMETIMES LOOKS ARE DISMISSED WITHOUT KNOWING THE STORY BEHIND THEM OR WORK THAT WENT INTO THEM, IN AN EFFORT TO BOIL A COMMENT DOWN TO 140 CHARACTERS OR A QUICK, DIGESTIBLE QUIP OR IMAGE. AND THE WAY CLOTHING AND APPEARANCE ARE CRITIQUED CAN BE SO HARSH, IT ALMOST REACHES THE LEVEL OF HATE SPEECH.”**

BOOTH MOORE, SENIOR EDITOR, FASHION HOLLYWOOD REPORTER/PRET-A-REPORTER

## Fashion Communities

Style-sharing communities for fashion enthusiasts allow these individuals to search fashion trends, looks, and inspirations globally by viewing style portfolios created through UGC. Communities can also filter through style-sharers that best match the users’ style preferences. This “strength in numbers” enables these communities to influence the diffusion of innovation of fashion trends from one market to another. The community looks to others within itself to study and then incorporate their styles into their own wardrobe. The traditional method of trends being spread from one consumer to another has been disrupted; today, a global market is readily accessible for inspiration. This transnational community has no borders and enables users to share their styles to connect with like-minded individuals on social community platforms. On an average day, a member from a small town in California can discover trends from online communities in Ukraine or Barbados. Examples of social-sharing fashion communities are Lookbook.nu and Chictopia, as mentioned earlier.

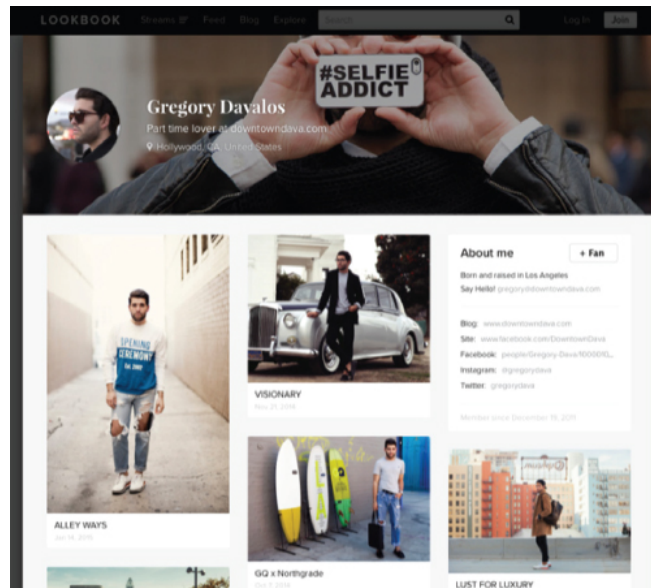
### LookBook.Nu

Lookbook.nu stretches its global reach from North America to Southeast Asia and was one of the first personal style communities to contribute to crowdsourcing styles and looks from around the world. Founded in 2008 and driven by global user-generated outfit posts, this community supports itself by members uploading looks of the day and having their peers rank them to affirm or dispute trend-forwardness. Lookbook. nu allows consumers a glimpse into a larger market of style enthusiasts who are sharing their own unique takes on fashion. This personal style-sharing collective allows trendsetters and tastemakers to influence and inspire each other with their mined updates of latest looks and street fashion.



Lookbook.nu statistics state that their audience is 80 percent female, between the ages of 18 and 34, with 50 percent of them running their own blog or personal website (Lookbook.nu/Advertise); As of today, Lookbook.nu has over three million unique visitors per month with seventy-five million page views per month.

Figure 1.21



Gregory Dava of Downtown Dava blog, GQ Influencer, Lookbook.nu

Figure 1.22a



Combination of fashion and technology, and a 4-D fashion show in New York City's Central Park for the Spring 2015 collection from Polo Ralph Lauren at New York Fashion Week.

Figure 1.22b



Givenchy Spring/ Summer 2016 collection runway show opens the door to the limited 200 seats for the public. This changes runway from the private event for buyers and press, to more of a form of entertainment to the public.

### Interview: Rachel Arthur, Founder of Fashion and Mash

**Rachel Arthur is an award-winning business journalist specializing in fashion and digital communications. She contributes to titles, including *Forbes*, *The International New York Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Wired*, and *The Business of Fashion*, as well as her own tech-focused news site, *Fashion & Mash*. She also acts as a consultant on digital strategy and innovation to leading retail and luxury brands, and a mentor to start-ups on the likes of John Lewis' JLAB accelerator program. She regularly speaks on such subjects at conferences around the world, including SXSW, CES, Web Summit, and the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity. Rachel was previously based in New York as a senior editor for leading online fashion trade publication and trend forecaster WGSN, where she managed global coverage of the industry from a communications, branding, and technology standpoint.**

The power of fashion communities (Pinterest, Polyvore, fashion blogger's communities, etc.) both enable and disrupt the fashion industry. How do you think the fashion industry can learn to unite better with these communities and utilize social media to share their stories?

**RA:** I think these communities have made a huge difference to the way "we" consume fashion today. This spans from such networks, to blogs, to of course the very existence of social media at large. Today, 81 percent of consumers trust the opinions and recommendations of our peers (including family, friends, and other influencers) over that of brands. It is a bit of a no brainer really, but it just means that we are much more likely to pay attention and accept the thoughts of others than what we are being supposedly preached at by corporations. I think, for brands, this has two implications: 1. That they have to focus on a content strategy that is very in-keeping with the way the internet exists. By that, I mean talking about what they love and not just what they sell. We refer to that as the 80/20 rule—80 percent of the time on other content, 20 percent of the time on product. It varies per channel (Instagram, for instance, focuses more heavily on products if it beautifully curated), but generally speaking it is a good agenda to set. It also means tone of voice to suit the digital generation, that is, more relaxed and informal than, perhaps, would be expected on websites, email marketing, or in-store material. And, the adoption of things like emojis, memes, slang, etc., as we have seen so many brands do. It just has to be in a really authentic way for it to actually resonate and not seem too try-hard. Some of the best examples of brands doing this are indeed the new generation of brands themselves. Reformation, Everlane, Chubbies are some of the best in my opinion.

The other thing is working with influencers that have the sort of sway in these communities that matter. Brands today are spending big budgets on ambassadors who have significantly more power than traditional media collectively has in terms of numbers of followers and levels of engagement. Instagram is hugely impactful in this space, with multiple influencers (social media celebrities, models, and, of course, the expanded remit of the blogger), who all fit into this space. It is an absolutely necessary move for brands today, but one that takes really considered research and understanding on what the objective is in order to move into it. The influencers' space is a real "wild west" at the moment between who drives social likes and who drives actual conversions.

In what ways has social media democratized the fashion industry and where do you see the fashion industry heading?

Social media has democratized fashion enormously, evolving it from an industry that was once only accessible to the wealthy, to an industry where every consumer, no matter their age, size, salary, social class, or race has a right to entry. The anonymity it affords in so many ways is exactly what has enabled this sort of democratization. Nowadays, consumers expect to be able to have a dialogue with the brands they aspire to, without being judged for whether they are going to actually buy something. In fact, of course, most of the time, they do not. More than anything else, engagement today is about aspiration. But it is also about dialogue; the landscape has shifted from being about brands talking at consumers, to brands talking to them, and increasingly, to brands listening to them. Where once there was apprehension around joining social channels on that very basis, the savvy brands realized that conversations were happening anyway about them online, and that it was necessary to be a part of that discussion in order to help shape what it looked like.

Increasingly we are also seeing this start to impact product offerings. Today's most established digital brands (Burberry and Calvin Klein as inevitable examples, but also the likes of Chanel, Marc Jacobs, and even Oscar de la Renta) are successfully fuelling the appetite for digital content, by feeding these consumers (digital millennials) with the products they CAN afford, namely, beauty, fragrance, and small accessories. We've seen the return of big license deals in-house and the launch of multiple new lines as a result.

*"Growth these days is, after all, largely coming from digital for such businesses. According to McKinsey, e-commerce will be worth \$70bn or 18% of total luxury sales by 2020 (up from just 5% in 2014), and the world's third largest luxury market after China and the US," states Arthur in a Forbes article (Arthur 2015a).*

In terms of what is next, we are really seeing brands focus on a much more sophisticated approach to their social media strategy: concentrating on influencers, but more importantly their community of ambassadors and loyal consumers that can help build and share the brand for them. The input of data, more integrated campaigns and a significant uptick in paid media/social budget is helping to make this happen.

Long term, I am also expecting there to be some further categorization of the fashion industry as a result of digital/social media. See this piece regarding the future of fashion weeks:

Arthur referring to an article she wrote for *Forbes* magazine investigates the changing landscape of runway. *"Caroline Homlish, a New York-based digital brand strategist who recently launched her own agency following senior digital positions at Chanel and Alexander McQueen, agrees communications around collections becomes all the more simplified, not to mention amplified, with a single release date. "Right now as a marketer, we have to come up with a whole set of content around the show, then make decisions about what to hold back and release later. We almost have to do two waves of communications, but the second wave is so much later the challenge has been around how to make it exciting. And you can't really." "If you're going to do something for the public, you need to help them craft the message, and you need to give them tools to tell the story you want told," she says. "That's a scary prospect for a lot of brands." (Arthur 2015a)*

There will need to be some breakdown between what is a "true" luxury brand, what is a "contemporary" luxury brand, what even is a "mass luxury" brand. I imagine that at some point, this will shift what fashion weeks look like, so, we have something along the lines of couture, ready-to-wear, and in-season consumer-facing collections.

## The Future of Runway

Fashion shows are now being shared with a global reach across social networks and the Internet through live-stream videos, virtual reality, interactive social media, and real-time shoppability with "See Now, Buy Now." The original intent of runway presentations was to introduce the season's collection exclusively to the fashion press and retail buyers. While these motivations remain, the intended audiences of such fashion shows now include a broader public demographic, a facet that its current description "fashion entertainment" adheres to.

### Live-streaming

Live-streaming video has positively altered the Fashion Week landscape by unveiling the presentations of designers to a larger audience. Originally restricted to press and major buyers, fashion shows have assumed the new role of fashion entertainment. Who better to pioneer this new approach of sharing creative vision and performance-driven extravaganzas than Alexander McQueen? His theatrical and artistic slant keeps audiences riveted, yet uncomfortable at the same time, constantly capturing and sharing particular moments in time through his visionary designs. The exposure offered by live-streaming technology was important to the designer who did not always appreciate how traditional interpreters judged his collections. McQueen embraced the idea that his shows were not just a platform to sell his goods, but a stage to display his imagination (Knight, 2010).

Live-streamed collections permit viewers to experience the enthralling mood of shows through music, motion designs, and intricate set designs. It also empowers design houses to maintain control of their content and share it, on their terms, to a global audience. By embracing live-streaming and online style communities, brands invite their audiences to collaborate and become part of the modern fashion movement. These forms of digital engagement capture fashion-forward consumers en masse, hardly a bad marketing strategy. On a global scale the fashion weeks in 2015 had the most accessed live-streaming collections ever experienced by a global audience. While we had seen this tested in past seasons, the 2016 shows committed to this disrupted shift to provide consumers with the power to purchase runway merchandise without delay off the runway with "See Now, Buy Now" and "The Next Season Now" push by retailers. Brands today are becoming aware they need to capitalize on the consumer buzz on social media from the fashion shows with the ability to purchase the styles after the shows. Today's distribution channels have dramatically shifted, answering demand by instantaneously selling items through live-streaming events. This section covers the specific movements that made it the new normal.

**" YOU'VE GOT TO KNOW THE RULES TO BREAK THEM. THAT'S WHAT I'M HERE FOR, TO DEMOLISH THE RULES BUT TO KEEP THE TRADITION."**

ALEXANDER MCQUEEN (O'CONNOR, 2011)

**Figure 1.23**





Fashion entertainment and art installation seen at the Alexander McQueen Spring 1999 runway show at London Fashion Week.

Figure 1.24



While other designers were strategically placing celebrities in the front row of their shows, Valentino took the fashion world by surprise. Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson stunned the fashion industry crowd at the 2015 Fall/Winter Valentino show by making an appearance on the runway. The entire moment was covered on Snapchat and Instagram by onlookers and the Valentino social media team. The two celebrities were also in character as Derek and Hansel to promote their upcoming film *Zoolander 2*.

## How Real-Time Runways Are Altering the Diffusion of Innovation

The democratization of a new frontier for fashion week has moved to live streams, immersive virtual reality (VR) fashion shows, 4D shows, 360° videos, street fashion trends (outdoor runway) and the abundance of bloggers and vloggers. The new normality of real-time fashion shows are more B2C-oriented (rather, B2R: business to real-people) than B2B-oriented. Displaying designer collections to the public has shifted the fashion narrative from editors to consumers in multiple ways, through the visibility of shows on mobile devices, public digital displays, and broadcasted events. Riccardo Tisci, creative director for Givenchy, opens his show for the public to attend his Spring/Summer 2016 women's collections in New York on September 11. Tisci invites 1,200 non-industry guests who have no fame tied to their name. These guests include 280 students and faculty from local fashion schools. The rest of the 800+ guests will receive their tickets online through Givenchy's collaboration with the city of New York called the "public-audience project." Times are changing in the business of runway promotion and while in 2010, the fashion elite who typically attend the show had to get used to sharing the front row with bloggers, now they have to share it with real-people. Modern shows are based on *Social Entertainment*, *Runway to Commerce*, and *Runway Social Media Engagement*.

**" VALENTINO'S SHOW, WITH ITS SURPRISE INSTA-BAIT APPEARANCE BY HANSEL MCDONALD AND DEREK ZOOLANDER (A.K.A. OWEN WILSON AND BEN STILLER, WHO WILL REPRISE THEIR MALE-MODEL ROLES IN THE COMING ZOOLANDER 2 ), WAS THE MOST-TWEETED PARIS FASHION WEEK SHOW, WITH TWEETS PEAKING AT 740 A MINUTE."**

THE NEW YORK TIMES ("HOW KANYE WEST," 2015)

Ken Downing, senior vice president, fashion director of Neiman Marcus, said, "I am an enormous proponent of relooking and recalibrating how we use the fashion show that has become a mega-marketing" event (*Women's Wear Daily* 2015). "The history of fashion shows was to show the buyers and the press the message of the season. But technology has utterly changed everything in our industry. That customer continues to follow Instagram and Twitter and watches the live-stream of fashion shows. When they are seeing clothes, they are less aware of seasons. What they are seeing, they want," he said (*Women's Wear Daily* 2015).

### Valentino

The 2015 Fall/Winter Valentino presentation in Paris exemplified the notion that front-row audiences now consist of more than the fashion elite, and the fashion industry is aware of it. Two days before the show, Valentino announced that the brand would be shared on Snapchat through a live stream. Instead of primarily focusing on Valentino's craft, the audience was stunned by the presentation of actors Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson as Derek Zoolander and Hansel McDonald (characters from the film *Zoolander*) walking down the runway. This performance may have garnered mixed reviews, but it clearly highlighted the rapid change in the nature of fashion shows, as brands continue to court a larger social media presence.

Figure 1.25





Dolce & Gabbana embraced the story of the runway collection by having their models take selfies as they walked down in the runway.

Figure 1.26



Tokyo Girls Collection

## Runways of the Future: Setting the Global Stage for Fashion Week

### Contributing Writer - Keith Nishida

Runway shows, a fast-evolving marketing platform, and the role it will play in maintaining the complex balance of retailer/consumer demand, is indicative of how brands will now have to foster a stronger and lasting relationship with its consumers, built upon what can be called the "trivergence of retail": entertainment, convenience, and information (Smulders, 2015). How well brands activate the creative configuration of 1) entertainment value 2) convenience in bringing runway to commerce, and 3) information worthy of social media engagement to its future marketing strategy, especially involving fashion week activities and runway shows, will be key to yielding higher return-on-investment for brands stakeholders. Below are examples of brands that have successfully integrated runway shows and fashion week activities with the trivergence of retail.



## Runway As Entertainment

Modern-day runway shows have become a marketing activity beyond its basic function of promoting latest collections to media editors and tastemakers; runway shows have now become a spectacle for entertainment worthy of an Instagram post or ten. Ralph Lauren made a splash during its Spring 2015 collection debut during Fashion Week with an innovative 4D presentation, projected against a screen of water. "[H]olographs of models sporting the new spring collection walked on water in the futuristic runway experience. The water-screen projection used four-story tall holographic effects, which showcased models walking through iconic New York City backdrops ranging from The Brooklyn Bridge to the High Line" (Fisher, 2014). It was a futuristic show worthy of getting the waterworks going.

The Victoria's Secret Fashion Show may well be considered the epitome of runway as entertainment. The show was catalytic in fashion brands embracing a true multi-channel multi-media marketing campaign. Victoria's Secret was not the first apparel brand to launch its new media department. However, in 1999, advertisement for its first web-cast fashion show was credited to be the first "dot-com" commercial in Super Bowl XXXIII (American football game).

This cross-promotion garnered one million website hits in half an hour (Durbin, 2002). The first large-scale real-time streaming video presentation of the annual fashion show that same year made fashion history when an overwhelming demand during the show crashed the company website and network throughout the United States.

## Runway-To-Commerce (R2C)

Accessibility to live-streaming fashion shows and instantaneous social media feeds available from influencers and show attendees have created a sense of normalcy for modern-day consumers to expect a much shorter turn-around time for products to reach their doorsteps. The disruption of the fashion cycle, combined with heightened consumer expectation for convenience, consequently pressured brands to further integrate an efficient implementation of cross-platform promotional marketing with sales functions. Tokyo Girls Collection, a fashion event in Japan, solved the age-old conundrum of designers showing merchandising ahead of the intended season. During the live runway event, attendees clamored to their smartphones as they instantaneously bought items through the event's digital shop. One must be present at the event to buy the merchandise, affording attendees exclusive access to next seasons' fashions, otherwise unavailable until it hit retailers (Sidell, 2011).

Burberry hosted a runway show viewing party at its global boutiques where guests were equipped with iPads; they were encouraged to select/pre-order items as the clothes and accessories came down the runway. The added benefit of preordering items from the collection (and shipped before they hit retail stores) gave the customer a sense of exclusivity. Jenny Dyson, a creative director, noted that "Burberry's live streaming of its catwalk shows, plus inviting customers to buy directly off the screen, is a clever digital trick to democratize the brand experience without compromising on its brand vision/luxury status." (Barbat, 2013) Burberry's Autumn 2013 runway show was the first livestream on Twitter with "Made to Order" function, where customers were able to view the personalization process as they made purchases on their smartphones.

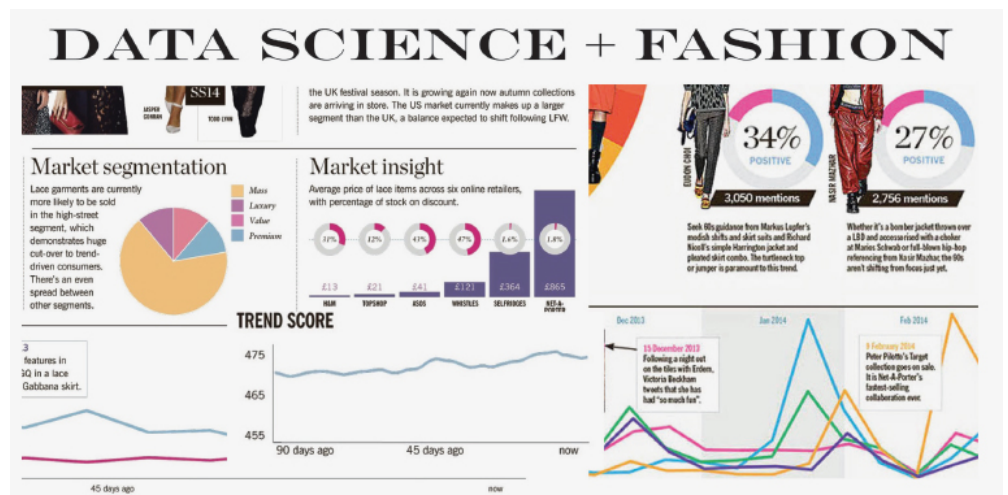
Topshop similarly enabled its livestream fashion show viewers to shop in real-time by clicking on the looks, ordering clothes/accessories/makeup gracing the catwalk, browsing color options, switching through music options, downloading the show soundtrack from iTunes, and sharing screenshots through Facebook. Justin Cooke, Chief Marketing Officer of Topshop, called it a "social entertainment and commerce rolled into one." (Indvik, 2012). These R2C systems successfully combined a sense of urgency to purchase and accessibility to show content, otherwise privy only to industry professionals.

## Shoppable Runway on Social Media

Twitter introduced a "Buy" button, which allows followers to purchase products directly through its platform; this made mobile shopping convenient, allowing brands to expand efforts to convert social media followers into customers (Jain, 2014). During the 2014 London Fashion Week, Burberry integrated the "Buy Now" button feature (Burrows, 2014). This enabled Burberry followers to react immediately to latest fashion products featured down the runway. Lindsay Nuttall, Chief Digital Officer of BBH, an advertising agency, and former global head of strategy & communication of ASOS, a British fashion store, offers this perspective: "Linking everything to mobile means awareness and engagement is never more than one swipe away from converting to purchase, right there and then, wherever they are," (Arthur, 2015b). It transformed the means of consumers gaining exclusive access to items otherwise unattainable via traditional retailing, and furthermore, solidified the future of online retailing bridging the runway to commerce.

Topshop partnered with Twitter during the London Fashion Week, generating real-time data collected from the #LFW hashtag. Wordclouds with shoppable products were generated from tweet results on billboards, six of which were within a ten-minute walking distance from a Topshop store. Additionally, tweets to @Topshop using a highlighted trend (i.e., #pleats or #colourblocking), received a curated shopping list in response. Sheena Sauvaire, Topshop Global Marketing & Communications Director notes "through Twitter's listening power, we can allow [consumers] to shop the trends [and give] them insight and access into runway shows...this will be a first example of real-time shoppable billboards." (Arthur, 2015b) Shoppable "See Now, Buy Now" and sharable social media outlets provide a competitive advantage to converting fashion week activities on/off the runway from purchase intent to transaction.

Figure 1.27



Fashion Data + Analytics EDITED.com providing insight to the fashion industry leaders. (More insight from Edited in chapter 6.)

## Runway to Social Media Engagement

Designer Rebecca Minkoff took to Instagram prior to the fashion week to solicit follower's feedback, inviting her users to help pick a look to grace the catwalk. Instagram followers responded to the call-to-action, casting their vote on which styled look from her Spring collection lives to make its debut on the runway (and which to be eliminated from the show).

During the London Fashion Week, Topshop approached five influential Instagrammers to generate original content throughout the week, to which the images appeared both on its Topshop.com e-commerce site as well as on a screened-installation at their flagship Oxford Circus store window (Arthur, 2014). The window display called-to-action the passerby fans, "Be Part of the Topshop social catwalk with Instagram and Facebook"; consumers were encouraged to tag their posts with #topshopwindow, which were then added to the digitally-curated installation. The brand achieved a multi-platform initiative of fashion promotion (both digital and physical), with a seamless integration of Fashion Week happenings to social and retail engagement.

In conclusion, runway shows have transformed into a promotional platform beyond its historic significance of serving merely the industry professionals. The future of fashion week and its runway shows has and will continue to be a critical component for many brands' marketing strategy, as a proven-effective promotional platform for consumer engagement on and off social media.

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## Confirmation of a Trend Through Online Engagement

Trend confirmation from consumers and the fashion industry are now focused on measuring the social engagement of user-generated content. The measurability of social confirmation through online engagement creates interest in trends as a form of acceptance. High engagement and shares increase the value of the trend and its viral effect to spread rapidly throughout the Internet. Consumers are now following the progression of a fashion trend's social acceptance stats through content shared from sites like Polyvore, who tweet out what is trending on their site through #PolyData. In chapter 6, we will take a closer look at the fashion data company, EDITED.com. Through a one-on-one interview with their lead analyst, we are able to see how the company is providing the fashion industry with insightful innovated data that is contextualized to be actionable.

## Confirmation of Fashion Trends by Polyvore Data Tweets

#PolyData provides the Polyvore user with unique insights of what is trending through consumer data such as likes, shares, and use of items available on the website. Polyvore's data intelligence is then shared in a fashion story format through additional social media outlets such as Twitter and Instagram.

**"SOCIAL MEDIA HAS BECOME THE BIGGEST TRANSFORMATION THAT WE HAVE SEEN IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY, SINCE I CAN REMEMBER. I THINK THE INTRODUCTION OF SEE NOW, BUY NOW IN FASHION WEEK WILL CONTINUE TO DISRUPT THE INDUSTRY . . . THE WHOLE FASHION SYSTEM HAS BEEN TURNED UPSIDE DOWN BECAUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA. THE DIRECTION OF FASHION IS NOW IN THE POWER OF THE CONSUMER."**

ALEX BADIA, WWD STYLE DIRECTOR

Figure 1.28



While the fashion industry prepares for seasonless and "See Now, Buy Now" movement, retailers will be looking at runway for a measureable way for social confirmation of a trend. One way will be utilizing the highest-viewed shows on Vogue.com through consumer engagement and confirmation from social media: Adidas Originals X Kanye West Yeezy Season 1 4,578,461 page views (shown in figure); Chanel 3,405,945

page views; Dolce & Gabbana 2,905,544 page views; Valentino 2,547,711 page views; Saint Laurent 2,244,004 page views; Gucci 2,210,173 page views; Louis Vuitton 2,025,937 page views (<http://www.vogue.com/13288496/most-viewed-collections-fall-2015-runway/>). Chanel loses their position from the top viewed show from the year before. Vogue website runway show reviews featured the most-viewed events and their respective readers' comments.

## Social Media Influence on The Fashion System; Runway to Commerce

Figure 1.29

GATEKEEPERS' CONTENT	MEDIUM	CONSUMER CONFIRMATION	ACTION
Runway Collections	Live Streamed Directly to Consumers	Social Conversation About Trends  Measurable Social Confirmation Through Levels of Engagement (Style.com/Vogue.com ranking the shows that have been viewed the most and showcasing them)	Buy It Now – Commerce “Fashion On Demand” • Through Brand (Buy Now Button – Burberry Shoppable Runway) • Social App (LikeToKnow.it)
Pre-Viewing Collection (Fittings, Sneakpeaks before the show)	Shared on Social Networks (Blogs, social media outlets)	Shareability and Reposting of Trends Confirm Further Acceptance or Rejection of Trends (Polyvore/Pinterest)  Note: The fashion industry collects consumer data from engagement online to monitor consumers activity around trends (in chapter 6 will review)	Retailers Find Similar Trends from Runway They Have In Stock To Push Consumers To Purchase Now (TopShop #LFW Twitter Campaign)
Outfit Posts from Influencers (Street Fashion; Guest of the show)	Magazines (Online)		Runway Collection at Retail Immediately “See Now, Buy Now” or delivered traditionally five to six months later (In Season or a Season Ahead)
Runway Behind the Scenes			

The process of fashion trends moving from runway or influencers through the social system.

## Social Confirmation of a Fashion Trend

Style.com is primarily a B2C publication targeted at fashion-conscious consumers, but the fashion industry should also take note of this published data as a valuable indicator of consumer interest. Style.com confirms what is currently trending on their website to their audience by posting the rankings of what shows were viewed the most on their website, tallying page views whilst also sharing their readers' comments about these shows. This functions as a reader's social confirmation of a particular fashion trend that is derived from number of views. This measureable action from the audience now influences consumers' acceptance of a trend. Before this type of social measurement, online consumers relied on the fashion editors' selections of which designers they considered the ones to watch. Now, this democratic way is based solely on the audience engagement. In chapter 6, we will review how the fashion industry is also using this insight for everything from marketing to merchandising.

Another example of how consumers (and the fashion industry) are able to confirm a trend through social confirmation of community engagement is during fashion weeks. This includes the endless content from street fashion, runway fashion, pre-launches (first exposure to looks behind the scene) and the buildup to the entire event that takes place twice a year, globally (not including the additional seasons). Online social communities, fashion bloggers, fashion editors, designers, and industry experts all add to the online conversations and value through social engagement. Figure 1.29 breaks down how fashion innovation that starts at the runway or street fashion level moves through the social system of fashion in the digital age of social media:

1. Gatekeepers: ultimately control what content the consumers view and are exposed to
2. Medium: the channel of communication that delivers the content (e.g., photos, videos) to consumers
3. Confirmation: engagement measureable through acceptance and denial (e.g., negative comments)
4. Action: the process or movement of purchase (ultimate support)

“I BELIEVE IN ‘SEE NOW, BUY NOW’—WE HAVE TO STAY CONNECTED AND GO FASTER,”

~ OLIVIER ROUSTEING CREATIVE DIRECTOR OF BALMAIN (VOGUE UK, 2016)

## Exercises

**Critical Thinking:** How does the “diffusion of innovation” continue to change and alter the fashion industry with the help of social media? Track a trend from the runway to the consumer and follow the path of influence.



**Practical Application:** Examine bloggers' profiles, comparing blogs from different markets and communities. How do they impact fashion system from sharing content? Review a set of bloggers by market segment (e.g., luxury menswear) and measure their level of engagement received during a fashion week they attended and the trends they promoted.

**Business Activity:** Review a digital (social media) breakthrough or disruption of technology that is influencing the way brand marketers share content. Look to the "Technology Corner" for insightful up-to-the-minute content.

**Journal Article Recommendation to Review:** Pierre-Yann Dolbec, Eileen Fischer

- Refashioning a Field?

Connected Consumers and Institutional Dynamics in Markets. *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Link: <http://jcr.oxfordjournals.org.libproxy.aalto.fi/content/41/6/1447>

**Infographic:** Create an infographic timeline of runway fashion adoption to entertainment, e-commerce or consumer engagement.

#### Technology Corner

- Discover the world of fashion forecasting through a fashion forecasting service such as WGSN.com and EDITED.com.
- News and updates from the tech world can also be viewed at BusinessoffFashion.com, Drapersonline.com and WWD.com.

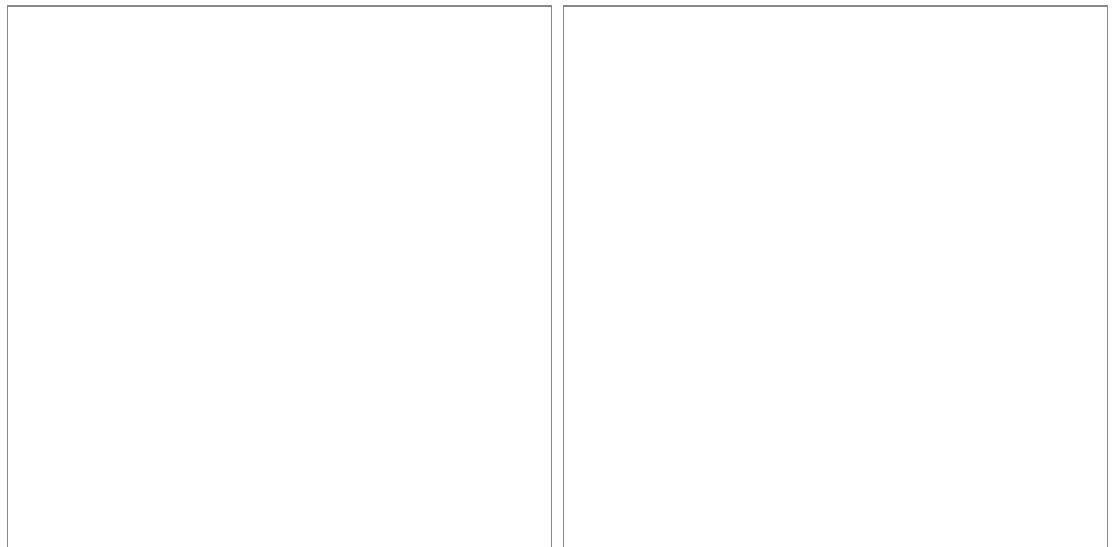
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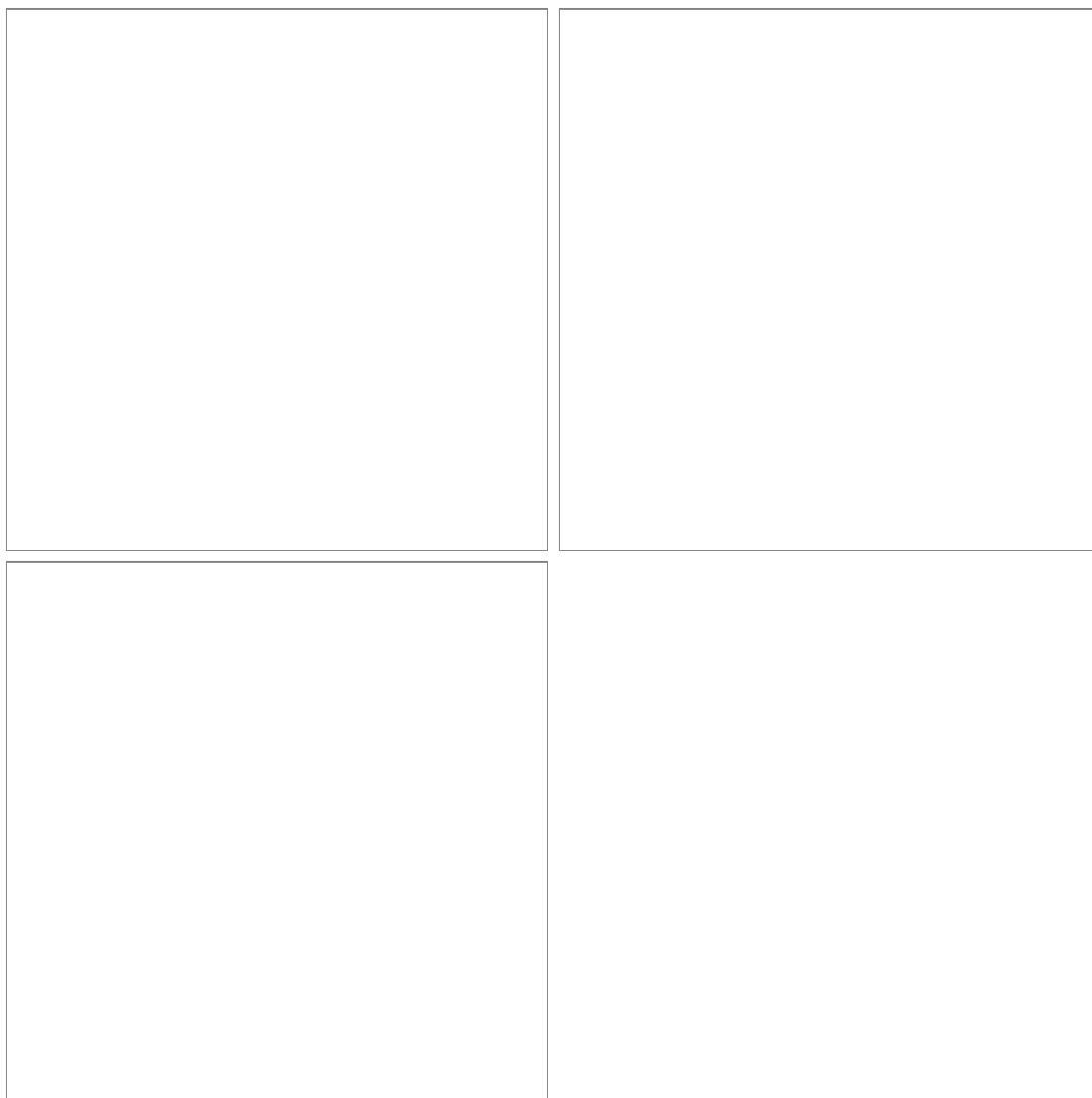
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## Text + Videos

### Urban Fieldnotes: An Auto-Ethnography of Street Style Blogging

■ Book chapter

**Brent Luvaas**

**Source:** *FASHION STUDIES. Research Methods, Sites and Practices*, 2016, Berg Fashion Library

street style blogsanthropologyLuvaas, Brentfashion studiesstreet style blogs forUrban FieldnotesUrban Fieldnotes is a "street style blog," a photography-based website featuring pictures of stylish "real" people shot "on the streets" of Philadelphia in their everyday clothes (see Figure 4.1). It is also a blog aboutstreet style blogsstreet style blogs, an experimental, auto-ethnographic research instrument I started back in 2012 as a means of studying other street style bloggers. I use it to post

### Introduction: Anthropology. Street Style

■ Book chapter

**Brent Luvaas**

**Source:** *Street Style. An Ethnography of Fashion Blogging*, 2018, Berg Fashion Library

It was Monday, 26 March 2012, a windy and unseasonably cold afternoon in Center City, Philadelphia. I was standing on the corner of Walnut and 18th Street, a backpack swung over my shoulders, a Panasonic Lumix GF-1 micro-four thirds camera dangling from my neck. My head ached. My teeth were grinding with caffeine. And my eyes were dry and strained from overuse, darting continually back and forth, as I assessed the outfit of every person passing by. I remember being self-conscious about what I was

### On 'The Street': A Conceptual History of Street Style Photography

■ Book chapter

**Brent Luvaas**

**Source:** *Street Style. An Ethnography of Fashion Blogging*, 2018, Berg Fashion Library

'On street style photographydescription ofthe Street' is the title of photographer Bill Cunningham, BillCunningham's long-running weekly column (and now web video series) in the Sunday style section of the New York Times. It was also the title of Amy Arbus' photo column in the Village Voice throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Midway through the first decade of the new millennium, Scott Schuman began using it as a heading for his posts on The Sartorialist, TheSartorialist website, followed by a '...', t

### Style Radar: On Becoming A Street Style Blogger and Knowing Whom to Shoot

■ Book chapter

**Brent Luvaas**

**Source:** *Street Style. An Ethnography of Fashion Blogging*, 2018, Berg Fashion Library

Let's go back to that day in late March of 2012, where we started this book, my first time out 'on the street' as a street style blogger. I had brought my camera and a stack of photo release forms, a notebook for jotting down thoughts, and an iPhone for posting Twitter updates to a non-existent set of followers. I was anxious and over-caffeinated, with little idea of where to go and even less of what to do when I got there. So I went to the first location that popped into my head, South Street. S

### Reel to Real Life: Re-Fashioning India from Bollywood to Street

■ Book chapter

**Arti Sandhu**

**Source:** *Indian Fashion. Tradition, Innovation, Style*, 2015, Berg Fashion Library

Cinema in India is an extremely influential cultural medium. India has the world's largest film industry with over 1,000 films produced every year in more than 20 languages. And over 14 million Indians go to the movies on a daily basis. In 2008 the industry was valued at approximately US\$2.2 billion, and expected to grow by 9 percent p.a. till 2015 (Deloitte 2011 report: "Media & Entertainment in India Digital Road Ahead." [www.deloitte.com/in](http://www.deloitte.com/in) [accessed June 4, 2013]) Many more watch them at home

### How New Are New Media? The Case of Fashion Blogs

■ Book chapter

**Djordja Bartlett, Shaun Cole and Agnès Rocamora** (eds)

**Source:** *Fashion Media. Past and Present*, 2013, Berg Fashion Library

The 1990s saw the birth of blogs—a contraction of the terms Web and log shortened into its present form by blogger Peter Merholz in 1999 (Rettberg 2008: 26)—with their number soaring from 50 in 1999 (Kaye 2007: 128) to over 181 million by the end of 2011 (Nielsenwire 2012). When in 2003 the genre—a regular, often daily, online posting of one's musings on a variety of topics—was appropriated by a young American woman to document her style, the first blog devoted to fashion—nogoodforme—was created.

### Fashion on Smartphones

■ Encyclopedia entry

**Leopoldina Fortunati and Yao Nie**

**Source:** *Fashion Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion. Global Perspectives*, 2010, Berg Fashion Library

This article investigates fashion mobile applications that are mapped according to their features: content typology, number and average scores of ratings, as well as number of reviews posted by users and their content. Second, user behavior is compared between the United States and China, the two biggest smartphone markets in the world. Fashion mobile applications have an indirect relationship with the fashion system and millions of potential customers. In these applications, in fact, the relationship

### Current Issues in The Fashion Media: Industry Roundtable

■ Book chapter

**Djordja Bartlett, Shaun Cole and Agnès Rocamora** (eds)

**Source:** *Fashion Media. Past and Present*, 2013, Berg Fashion Library

Laura Bradley, former fashion features editor at SHOWstudio, editor of i-D online (at the time of the conference), and now editor of Another.com and commissioning editor of Another Magazine

### The Changing Face(s) of the Fashion Magazine and the New Media Landscape

■ Book chapter

**Pamela Church Gibson**

**Source:** *Fashion and Celebrity Culture*, 2012, Berg Fashion Library

Magazines directed at women alone first appeared in the eighteenth century: the purveying of information about the latest fashions was part of their remit, but they had other tasks to perform. The earliest magazines on both sides of the Atlantic were serious publications, often with an educational element (Ferguson 1983; Gough-Yates 2003). Nevertheless, they always contained line drawings and perhaps coloured plates of the latest fashions from Paris. The idea that the function of the magazine is to

### The Subject(s) of Street Style: Street Portraits as Fashion Singularities

■ Book chapter

**Brent Luvaas**

**Source:** *Street Style. An Ethnography of Fashion Blogging*, 2018, Berg Fashion Library

What does street Philadelphia style photography 'reveal' about its subjects? What does it show us about who they are, where they are from, and the times they are living in? What hidden meanings does it unearth from the clothes they wear and the styles they embody? What kinds of anthropological knowledge, in other words, can we glean from a street style photograph? If the realism of street style photography is largely performative, a construct of the conventions photographers employ (see Chapt

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