

How Social Media is Changing the Fashion Industry

Posted on September 19, 2018

Introduction

Technology has changed the world around us in many ways that we see in our daily lives, whether that is travelling to a place, booking a restaurant, or shopping. The fashion industry has always been popular and successful among people of all ages, from all backgrounds and genders. Everyone wants to look beautiful in their most stylish clothes suggested by their trusted fashion advisor and influencer. Technology has changed how we access the fashion industry. This has been further altered by social media and its influencers. The new era of advanced technology, social media and online retailing has made every product only a touch away.

Social media is a platform for people to connect with each other, breaking the boundaries of distance and geographical and demographical differences. The media has taken over our lives and influenced a majority of our activities, including how we talk, how we walk and how we dress. Moreover, social media websites, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other blogging websites, have increased the number of fashion bloggers and their followers. People are able to share their opinions and way of living on these social platforms. Among these, some people, who are referred to as social media celebrities share their lifestyle and opinions in order to inspire their followers.

The craze of social media, addiction to online shopping and obsession begin with social media apps like Instagram and the concept of “trending”. Billions of people today are using social media like Facebook and Instagram. The followers of famous celebrities are on the rise, while newly claimed celebrities who gain their fame through Instagram are gaining popularity and becoming highly influential.

Long gone are the days when people are waiting for the new edition of Vogue or other fashion magazines every month to get an insight into the new trends in the fashion industry and then seek similar outfits in different stores. The modern world is accustomed to new trends every day, with your favourite outfit inspired by the person with the highest number of followers is only a click away.

The History of the Fashion Industry

Fashion can be described as clothing and accessories that men and women wear to express themselves and make themselves appear more attractive with the trendy most desired type of clothing in that period of time and cultural impacts. People mostly designed their clothes by

themselves or hired a professional tailor to meet their requirements and follow influential people like the Royal family. The fashion industry came to life in the mid-19th century.

The first designer to see his label in garments was Charles Frederick Worth in 1858. This is when the difference between haute couture, referred to high-end designers and dressmaking, and ready-to-wear clothes. The designers made custom outfits for every woman according to her body shape and preferences. Moreover, the designers also played the role of stylists and accessorized their clients with hats, gloves, and jewellery. A similar process of clothing and dressing for men was adopted by professional tailors and designers (Milbank, 1985).

The fashion industry flourished in Paris, and most designers settled there. This is why Paris is still the fashion capital of the modern world. Rose Bertin was one of the first designers, and she served the Queen of France to dress her well in order to hold a stronger position against the enemy with style.

Later in the 20th industry, the fashion industry expanded significantly and wasn't restricted to the elite and high society people. Paul Poiret, one of the most famous designers of his time, revolutionized fashion and introduced a clothing line that did not require the corset. Moreover, Maison Redfern created suits for women inspired by the male dress, which became an important part of the wardrobe of all decently dressed women.

By the times of the last decades of the 20th century, fashion has become a crucial part of the lives of both men and women from all groups of ages, cultural backgrounds, and social status. Following new trends and copying famous and influential people from the fashion industry became an obsession. These people were not restricted to the royal family but famous movie stars, sports celebrities, fashion designers, models and well-known people from all professions and sectors who dressed well (Milbank, 1985).

Vogue and Other Fashion Magazines' Impact on Fashion

During the times of the late 20th century, Vogue became the most influential fashion magazine in the world. It made its debut in 1892 as a newspaper but changed its publication to a monthly lifestyle and fashion magazine in 1973. During the 1970s, the new editor of Vogue realized the change in women's lifestyle from household responsibilities to becoming working women and focused on their presentation of dressing and making them appear more attractive and organized. The fashion industry revolved as well with time, introducing more affordable and fashionable clothing for women. Vogue served as a guide to women who wanted to look like celebrities and famous models (Hill, 2007).

On the other hand, Harper's Bazaar was one of the first women's magazines from America who published as early as the mid-19th century. They were popular among housewives and women from

the elite society. Harper's Bazaar was mainly focused on women's fashion and provided lifestyle guides regarding house-making, women's presenting themselves and any kind of news that interested the typical woman (Hill, 2007).

However, Vogue gained market share after it shifted its focus from housewives to working women in the modern world and introduced new lifestyles, trendy looks and affordable clothing for all income groups. These fashion magazines inspired young girls to become fashion models and try to look like them. Women looked forward to every monthly issue of Vogue and other fashion magazines to pin their favourite outfits and try to match them with the resources available to them. Vogue's copies increased from 400 thousand to 1 million during the late 1970s when Grace Mirabella introduced more practical clothing that could be worn by working women to their workplaces, shopping malls, and other social gatherings.

The Commercial Approach to Fashion

Fashion is a form of art for designers and a form of personal style and self-representation for consumers. But more importantly, it is an industry with millions of people involved in it and billions of dollars of business companies depending on the demand for fashion. Popularity is the key to the success of every firm operating in the fashion industry, whether those are fashion magazines, clothing brands or fashion models (González and Bovone, 2012).

Hence, the fashion industry always has to keep up with the new trends and patterns in the markets and consumer demands. Demand is highly influenced by consumer preferences in a certain period of time which can be affected by the weather, economic and political situations, cultural background and the rise in awareness about certain cultures or the increase of the fame of new celebrities and their personal style. For example, fashion is influenced by the rise of pop culture and the rise of the bohemian community which has inspired new trends and designs. Moreover, the new minimalist nature of lifestyle has increased the demand for simpler and practical clothes. Another example includes the increased popularity of the Kardashians and their personal style, which has influenced how women wish to dress and seek similar clothing in the fashion industry (Błaszczuk, 2011).

Clothing brands and fashion magazines address these changes in demand and provide consumers with the most desirable products, while fashion magazines provide guidance and highlight the new trends for women. In 1988, when Anna Wintour became the chief editor of Vogue, she addressed the change in the way people viewed fashion and created the magazine into something that met the needs and wants of the consumer. She believed in making Vogue appear younger and accessible to all types of consumers from different social classes, cultural backgrounds, and professional lives. She made a mixture of affordable and high-end fashion products which targeted the mass market (Lauridsen, 2014).

Modern Fashion

Fashion is never the same; it is something that is meant to change with time. However, the modern world and the introduction of technology have changed the way people view and approach fashion. The modern world includes people who are busy with academic responsibilities, jobs, and running businesses. The pressure has increased, and the time limit decreased. The industry has become faster moving. People are now more focused on fashion that is practical, creative, accessible and affordable. Majority of the people lack time to go to actual stores and go through every rack and pile of clothes to search for the right fit and fashionable item they saw in a magazine. Buying and reading fashion magazines is also a topic of the past.

The Internet's Impact on Fashion

The introduction of the internet, blogging and online shopping has changed the perception and accessibility of fashion. There are thousands of websites that provide fashionable and affordable clothing for men and women. In this case, the customer is also able to save time and extra money spent on transport and refreshments while shopping. The internet has provided a platform for different fashion and lifestyle bloggers to share new fashion trends with their viewers. Moreover, fashion magazines have shifted their focus from physical publications to online websites and blogging. This was they are able to reach an audience from every part of the world.

It is easier for consumers to Google their favorite celebrities and their looks, as well as see new trends for the month, instead of going through a magazine and getting a restricted view of the editor of the magazine. The internet provides customized searches and filters the items for the client. However, traditional magazines fail to provide for every customer and their specific needs. It is difficult to determine what the consumers wish to see, no matter how extensive the market research is. The fashion industry has one of the fastest-moving markets, which shows a change in demand every day. In this case, monthly fashion magazines fall back, and designers of famous clothing brands fail to see the future choices of consumers when they introduce seasonal clothing lines.

Bloggers and fashion websites are updated on an hourly basis introducing new trends and updating consumers of the outfits worn by famous celebrities every day. Paparazzi capture celebrities all the time and sell these pictures to fashion websites, use them to show consumers what their fashion idols are up to and what they wore to a certain place. People are more focused on “street style” and casual wear as it is more practical and accessible.

Social Media: Major Influencer of Fashion

The era of media and the rising power of social media over our lives have similarly impacted the fashion industry. Social media has provided a platform for people to share their everyday activities,

including their outfits of the day, which in the internet language is called “OOTD”. Moreover, bloggers have gained immense fame and celebrity status for millions of followers. The industry is expanding every day with the ease of its access and affordability for the mass public. People using their smartphones and access to the internet are only a touch or click away from their favourite outfit, which lands at their doorstep a few weeks after it is seen on the social media profiles of celebrities and Instagram fashion bloggers (Duffy and Hund, 2015).

Fashion bloggers have become influential enough and gained immense wealth and fame to introduce their own clothing lines in the fashion industry. As more and more people are using social media websites and spend the majority of their time on apps such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook, the market for online retailing is increasing, and businesses are shifting their promotions towards modern media, i.e., social media.

Social Media Celebrities and Influencers

Chiara Ferragni is one of the most well-known names in the social media community. The 30-year-old millionaire gained unimaginable fame through her blog, “The Blonde Salad” and turned it into a multi-million business in a short period of time (Keinan et al., 2015). Ferragni soon introduced her collection of shoes which was really famous among her followers. She has advertised for many well-known brands and monetized her blog and social media profiles through advertising and promoting multiple brands, including fashion, skincare, makeup, personal care and weight-loss products.

The Blonde Salad, like many fashion websites and blogs, provide a shopping option for the clients to directly link to the online retailing website to the outfit the client just saw and liked. Moreover, consumers are often provided discount codes by these social media celebrities to attract them to buy the product and increase the sales for these brands (Keinan et al., 2015).

One of the reasons behind such a great number of followers of these social media celebrities is that they are average people and a part of the general public, with no history of celebrity status or influential families. Hence, the followers are able to relate to them, which inspires them to do similar things and believe that they are able to do it. Unlike most social media influencers have realistic body types that attract the mass public and follow their fashion and personal style.

Secondly, fashion bloggers provide affordable and accessible options to their viewers, which makes them popular among the general public and the majority of the middle-class population. Ease and comfort are the new fashions of the modern world, which are highly promoted by ‘street style’.

The Kardashians have gained fame and wealth in a very short period of time due to their luxurious lifestyle and displaying their perfect lives to the general public. Kim Kardashian and Kylie Jenner have one of the highest followers on social media, which makes them major influencers in the fashion industry. They have turned to introduce their own makeup lines, clothing, and accessories. They promote their own brands and other brands on social media, which is very popular among the

younger generation (Duffy and Hund, 2015).

Social media has become a place for self-branding and a platform for businesses to target their audience easily. People are now more focused on who wore what and where was it seen. They also consider the products promoted by these celebrities as they are the most trusted fashion advisors for the general public.

Fashion Business on Social Media

Change in Fashion Market

Clothing brands and the fashion industry have realized the importance of social media and the change in audience preferences. Businesses are now shifting their marketing and promotions to social media. It has become a convenient place for brands to do market research and analyze the new demands and trends. At the same time, it is the perfect place to reach the target audience. Followers of famous social media celebrities and fashion bloggers are the people to whom fashion and pressing matters. Hence, clothing brands find it easier to reach out to them or make the consumer come to them and their online websites.

Brands often hire social media celebrities and fashion bloggers to market their products or send them gifts of their new collection. These social media influencers promote these brands by wearing their collection and posting new pictures in their outfits. They tag the brands in their pictures and provide links to buy them. Followers who are inspired by their looks easily access these outfits and increase the sales for those particular brands.

Brands from the fashion industry also pay well-known celebrities such as movie stars, reality TV stars, and famous models to wear their outfits to a certain event or generally in their casual attire. Firms no longer require carrying out professional shoots to make their clothes appear attractive; the paparazzo does the job for them. They are able to capture the natural looks of these celebrities in their casual attire, which is popular among the modern generation. People now prefer relatable pictures, which include celebrities in their natural poses and wearing comfortable street-style clothes. Meanwhile, fashion bloggers and websites immediately recognize the brands these celebrities are wearing, which is provided to the consumer with links to relevant websites, as well as suggesting alternative cheaper options to the mass public.

Fashion designer, Rebecca Minkoff, has made her brand customer-oriented, where she targets her audience on social media and prioritizes their demands and favourable trends. Similarly, Smashbox, a cosmetic company, has completely given up on traditional media and shifted its marketing focus to social media and online retailing. Moreover, Allure, a well-known fashion magazine and website, hired a younger digital media-oriented editor to run their business successfully and be creative in the process. According to a report from Mintel (Team, n.d.), 35 per cent of millennial women agree that

social media is the top influencer when it comes to fashion.

Social media influencers and fashion and beauty editors can increase the sales of a brand remarkably through a single post, snap or tweet. Burberry is reported to have hired 17-year-old Brooklyn Beckham, who is the son of the famous footballer David Beckham, because of his 6 million followers on social media. The news circulated and gained shocking popularity, which helped Burberry receive the attention it required (Hope, 2016). Moreover, famous fashion magazines such as Vogue and Harper's Bazaar have moved towards digital media and use their website as the digital form of their magazine.

Conclusion

The increasing popularity of social media among the younger generation and the millions of followers of social media influencers, beauty bloggers and fashion editors on the internet proves that the introduction of social media has changed the fashion industry. It has impacted the way people approach clothing brands and new trends. It has increased online retailing and attracted businesses to market their brands on these platforms. Consumers find the Internet and online shopping to be more affordable and accessible.

The fashion industry, which includes clothing brands and fashion magazines, has evolved and adjusted to the change in market demands. Businesses have taken advantage of the preference of social media and the internet and used it as a place to market their products.

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