

COLUMNS

The fashion business must slow down

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Fashion has become one of the fastest-moving industries and an integral part of the social pop-culture.

As a partaker in the Fashion Week hysteria over the past years I can say that fashion has never been more democratic. Fashion shows were once reserved for insiders and, in my opinion, rightfully so.

Despite all the glamour they still are a working moment.

During the 15 minutes of a show, buyers are already visualizing their purchase orders, and the media can express a point of view.

Collecting thoughts

Today, the industry is moving at Instagram speed, generating content at a frenetic pace and the consumer has full access to once-classified information.

Forget the Hollywood model of launching a movie: the fashion industry brought millions of customers directly to the set and is now scratching heads when the customer becomes disengaged because they are living the same cycle that Anna Wintour does.

The crazy pace is not only about broadcasting. It pertains to the creative process as well.

We now have pre-collections, resort collections and capsule collections in addition to regular seasons. Big brands with deep pockets are splashing on off-schedule shows that are great vehicles to grasp the world's attention outside of the fashion calendar.

Designers, buyers, showroom directors and editors, on the other hand, are suffering from a non-stop activity flow that does not leave us any time to reflect, plan and digest.

The social media craze also means that no one goes deep into the subject, and attention span is less than a second.

It may be exciting for the viewer, but surely takes value away from creativity. Too much stays on the surface. If the whole system never slows down, what chances are there that the creativity will thrive?

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Some fashion brands make a conscious choice to ignore the craze and fashion calendar altogether, with brands such as Supreme releasing a couple pieces every Thursday and never even presenting a collection.

Line of sight

Senior merchants at retailers and brands are also having a difficult time.

Presenting customers with a point of view has become more complex as they have access to the same information and are doing the curation themselves. And what they see on the runway now, they want now not months down the road.

Retailers are looking at ways to close the long gap between when clothes are shown and when they arrive in stores, and many are argue that the see-now-buy-now model is the new thing.

With a few exceptions, see-now-buy-now has become polarized at two ends of the fashion industry.

Big brands with deep pockets and a mostly vertically integrated supply chain have both the financial and operational means to pull it off. Those running a small enough business can shift the strategy and it is not going to kill them.

For midsized brands that largely sell through wholesale channels, a see-now-buy-now model requires more work to be taken on internally, from production to marketing, and most of them are not equipped for it. But what about the consumer?

The quick verdict on see-now-buy-now collections is that there was very little that sold out immediately. It seems to me that the new model is eventually killing the demand progression.

The argument that if you have already seen a product several times, then you are bored of it by the time it hits stores, goes against much of what we know from marketing psychology.

Messages are more effective when repeated and the gap in time is vital because it allows for cultural and personal value to develop around a product through customer-product projection.

As a marketing and branding expert, I would argue that visualizing and projecting oneself into the future by viewing collections that will not go on sale for six months is probably one of fashion's most powerful effects.

What could be more satisfying than seeing a fall collection in February, and being propelled straight into September, wondering who you will be by then and what you will wear from all these collections that will best represent the amazing future you?

A lot happens in the consumer's head during this time gap that advocates of see-now-buy-now are not grasping.

The consumer-product identification process and the building of cultural value around a product takes time to reach a broader market.

THE SEE-NOW-BUY-NOW concept does not give space for the customer to project.

I would feel very pressured if I was thrown right into fall in actual fall without any time to calibrate. And while there is a digitally conditioned desire for more newness, there is no reason why this cannot be satisfied with occasional capsule collections.

Dear Fashion Industry: brake pedal, please.

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