Don’t do Fashion, Be Fashion: The Strength of Branding in the Fashion Industry
DON’T DO FASHION, BE FASHION

The Strength of Branding in the Fashion Industry

Does an audience think about your brand as much as you’d like? Moving through our day-to-day routines and busy lives, there is little time for spontaneous nostalgia regarding our favorite labels. At a subconscious emotional level, recognized brands can and do play a pivotal role in our choices, but only when we are reminded or when we actively engage with them.

Tom Ford, when speaking at the 2013 CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund Awards, once said: “Remember that our customers do not need our clothes.” He made a critical point, but the question is; how do you make your customers want and desire your clothes over your competitors?

Let’s place design and quality aside and focus on what builds a customer base; intuitive and identifiable branding that meets your audience’s needs. Customers are far more likely to remember and engage with products that make them feel good and reinforce their beliefs and or style, over those that do not. So, the question is: are you eliciting the right emotions to optimize your brand growth and surpass your competitors?

Every fashion brand has emotional real estate where purchase intent, loyalty, and advocacy is maximized. Here, credible profitable brand campaigns are built and grown by executing every interaction with relentless consistency. Identifying what brand elements—colors, logo, taglines, script, look etc.—amplify your brand and applying them via branding automation tools can ensure you stay in style with your audience.

Building Fervent Global Customer Loyalty
OWNING YOUR PERCEIVED VALUE

Perceived value is what your customer believes your products to be worth. Measured by brand loyalty, awareness, and the positive associations you have cultivated within your target market, perceived value is hinged on successful digital asset management to ensure you’re communicating your brand’s story to the best ability.

At the heart of perceived value is the simple task of making your products look good. A stunning example of a brand getting this right is Zara. By using beautiful large-scale imagery and a subtle but identifiable branding aesthetic on both their website and app, the visitor is transported into a lifestyle in which Zara’s clothing and accessories are a cornerstone; you want to embody the Zara brand, the Zara style, the Zara cool. In doing so, Zara maintains a consumer base that successfully spans age, socioeconomic and geographic boundaries.

Despite not being a luxury fashion brand—Zara sits rather comfortably with some of the biggest names in the industry. Sustaining the image of a brand that possesses high cultural capital, Zara was named one of the world’s most successful fashion brands of 2014; proving that a label at the affordable end of the spectrum that embraces the intersection between fashion and culture can be extremely successful.

Perceived value is reached by combining the opinions of the market and the expected benefits of the customer. Therefore, a product may be sold for much more than what it costs to manufacture because of the perception of the customer. High-fashion that elicits a branding structure that positions their products with an air of rarity but worth their price has created many successful brands within the industry.

Fashion is all about image, and images should be at the heart of the online shopping experience. Significant resource should always be directed to the creation, editorship and management of images as they can make or break branding success. Successful fashion houses and retailers know this, and perhaps the bigger challenge for brands who sell a variety of labels and styles is how they position their branding to align with both their audience and the audience of the labels they sell.
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Owing Your Image

The fashion industry has some of the best content and visuals to work with—beautiful clothes, beautiful people, and professionally-produced big-budget photography. The value of branded content from a budgetary consideration is significant, especially when combined with the cost effectiveness of social media and mobile marketing.

Some brands have successfully personified themselves on various platforms. For example, Net-A-Porter’s Magazine Apple app executes perfectly-branded content on a mobile platform. Allowing users to watch exclusive video content, including runway shows and interviews, share product suggestions via social networks and share feedback while refreshing their assets regularly ensures that their branding never stagnates.

Social media monitoring and analytics company, Brandwatch, analyzed 32 luxury fashion brands. Looking through 721,140 social conversations, they ranked each brand based on five core metrics: social visibility, general visibility, net sentiment, reach growth, social engagement and content. Their report showed that Chanel has raised the social stakes and was leading the way, followed by Dior, Calvin Klein, Louis Vuitton, Ralph Lauren, Tiffany & Co., and Burberry.

Chanel is synonymous with fashion, so much so that is part of the culture, rather than just the industry itself. The brand has created some iconic products and has an absolutely first class Twitter account—doing everything possible to innovate and engage. Knowing that image is everything, almost all posts are accompanied with a high-gloss visual or big-budget video. The same formula is repeated on the Instagram account too, creating a dynamic account that remains iconic.

Another interesting insight learned from Brandwatch’s report is that certain celebrities have shared some serious social media muscle with the fashion brands they have collaborated with. Justin Bieber, for example, was especially impactful following his campaign with Calvin Klein. He was mentioned in relation to the fashion house over 87,000 times on social media.

In today’s market, the face behind any given brand is just as important as the product itself when defining perceived value—consider Karl Lagerfeld and Chanel. When buying a luxury item such as a Chanel bag, you are just as much buying into Lagerfeld’s personal brand as you are the label’s. The audience is investing both time and money into much more than just a commodity, and by using a figurehead that the audience has an emotional or aspirational connection to creates a powerful asset for the individual and brand. Successful marketers know that by working to identifiable strengths such as brand ambassadors and iconic branding elements that they will keep the audience engaged.
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Owning Your Strengths

Organizations that lack vision commonly concentrate on the competition rather than nurturing their own areas of strength. What are they doing; can we do it better? There is nothing wrong with knowing what others in the industry are doing, but don't get lost in their branding.

Take Burberry and their iconic trench coats as an example. A historical lack of focus left the label's brand loyalty vulnerable to newcomers in the market. When Angela Ahrendts took over as CEO in 2006, she asked one question: Where were the trench coats? Burberry's external focus on the competitive luxury clothing and leather goods arena meant they had strayed from the brand elements customers emotionally connected to the label, and thus, neglected a core strength.

As an American from the midwest, skeptics questioned Ahrendts' ability to understand an established British brand. However, along with chief creative officer Christopher Bailey, Ahrendts declared that they wanted the brand to become the first fully digital luxury company. Early to turn user-generated content into its own social media platform, they launched the ingenious Art of the Trench in 2009—realigning the label to the iconic trench coat—and were the first to test new social media channels and developments. At the end of 2014, Burberry upgraded its mobile site and tripled mobile revenue.

Now regarded as one of the most forward-thinking luxury brands in the world, Burberry provide their community with an interactive social media experience—unveiling new seasons’ lines to their online community via Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube before the runway show.

Owning Your Brand

Today, we're spending much of our lives staring at our computer and mobile screens, absorbing more information than our brain can process or even remember. The impact of this changing pattern in content discovery and consumption is big.

A hyper-competitive industry, fashion's internet-era consumers have more power than ever. Only interacting with the brands they deem worthy of their time via a number of digital channels; fashion labels must embrace new media and communicate a consistent and authentic message across multiple channels to stimulate consumer interest and create long-term brand value.
Bynder is a branding automation and marketing solution designed to build, manage and scale brands globally. Run as a Software as a Service (SaaS) model, Bynder is an integrated solution that enables brand managers to achieve end-to-end brand consistency.

Founded in 2010, Bynder is the leading branding automation solution and powers over 300 brands worldwide, including KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Logitech and AkzoNobel. Bynder has offices in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, London, Boston and Barcelona and is currently active in over 50 countries.