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Shoppable mobile streaming dilutes exclusivity of Fashion Week

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Lauren Conrad works on designing for the upcoming runway show

By [Brielle Jaekel](#)

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A new trend is emerging for New York Fashion Week, with ready-to-wear brands streaming their runway apparel through social media and mobile platforms while also including commerce options, bridging the gap between sales and the catwalk and diminishing the exclusivity of the event.

Retailers such as Macy's and Kohl's are taking to mobile to promote their runway way collections, but are not missing out on the opportunity to jump starts sales of the lines. Both brands and numerous others are introducing a variety of methods in streaming their live shows during Fashion Week, but also allowing fans to purchase the items in real-time.

"Real fashion shows showcase a collection for professional buyers," said Martin McNulty, CEO of [Forward3D](#). "Runway pieces are just that.

"Many never reach stores and the ones that do are often almost unrecognizable once they are on a rail. Thanks to online streaming and social media shows are becoming ever more accessible to the general public and their exclusivity is waning as their reach grows."

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Fashion Week shift

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Ready-to-wear retailers have been excited to jump in on the digital era of ramping up sales through mobile and desktop efforts, and are constantly innovating methods in accomplishing this further. Brands as a whole are interested in connecting with fans as much as they can, whether high-end or not, which further brings consumers closer to them.

NYFW was - not so long ago - focused on appealing to professional buyers and apparel was not ready as is, but went through many stages before becoming available to the everyday shopper. Brands such as Macy's, Kohl's and BCBG Max Azria have developed collections ready for stores and brought these items directly to their fans.


For instance, Macy's is providing Fashion Week attendees with the ability to purchase new looks instantly as they are modeled on the runway via a new microsite accessible on smartphones ([see more](#)).

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Kohl's is monetizing mobile live streams for its apparel brand LC Lauren Conrad, exhibiting the potential of applications such as Periscope and Meerkat not just to connect with fans, but to drive sales as well ([see more](#)).

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BCBG Max Azria shared images of their runway collection for last year's Fashion Week via Instagram, and allowed users to purchase the merchandise directly through the social network.

"The obvious risk is that brands may go to great lengths to enable commerce around their events without driving the necessary scale to make it pay off," said Tim Dunn, director of strategy at Isobar US. "While this is perhaps not critical in these early days where we are testing the depth of consumer desire and interest, it is unlikely that any great learnings will be made without volume of viewers and shoppers.

"Therefore maximum effort should go into PR and social in the run-up to the event," he said. "Integrating competitions or other incentives into the commerce experience would also be a good idea.

"Another risk is purely operational: fashion shows are hectic and fast-moving environments, so aligning the commerce offering piece-by-piece with what emerges from the dressing room requires real-time agility and flexible software."

Commerce emergence

While relatively all runway shows for NYFW are streamed lived through the event's desktop and mobile Web site, and many through brands' own social networks only a handful are starting to implement a commerce element to it, but the tactic is likely to be seen more often in the future.

The shows from brands such as Macy's and Kohl's are creating a more sales-driven event, rather than the VIP fashion affair from the past.

"It is this reach and buzz that retail brands like Macy's are keen to tap into but let's not be fooled. The Macy's show is not a show in the traditional sense," Mr. McNulty said. "It is not aimed at professional buyers, it is 100 percent focused on consumers.

"The fact that you can shop from the runway simply demonstrates that this is a show of finished items that have already been vetted by buyers," he said. "Do not be fooled."

Final take

Brielle Jaekel is editorial assistant at Mobile Commerce Daily

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