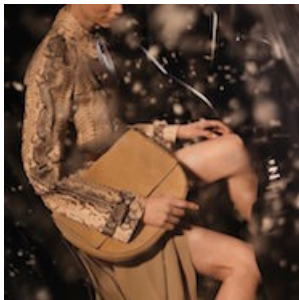


RESEARCH

Instagram continues takeover of NYFW as consumers clamor to buy now

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Michael Kors NYFW image

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

New York Fashion Week is still growing as a conversation starter on social media, meaning that more brands may alter production schedules in deference to the audience, according to a new report from L2.

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Data from marketing agency Pixlee shows that the Feb. 11-18 New York Fashion Week reached more than 659 million people across Twitter and Instagram with #NYFW and #NYFW16, with reach almost 10 times that the previous September. As social media continues to expose new products to a wider audience, brands must consider making new collections available to consumers closer to the runway show.

"We live in a society of now - people want to buy things now, read things now and see results now," said Elizabeth Elder, study lead at L2. "Snapchat plays into that desire by making its content only available for 24 hours.

"While Instagram showcases more poised and branded content, Snapchat shows the guts and spirit of the brand through top models and influencers," she said. "L2 sees brands utilizing the two platforms in tandem by capturing authentic brand moments on Snapchat and then posting relevant content on Instagram."

Instagram takeover

Engagement is also trending upward, with L2 finding engagement numbers around 14.4 million, compare to around 12 million for last year's fall/winter New York Fashion Week runway shows and 8 million the prior year. In addition, Instagram has taken over the conversation, with 93.3 percent of submitted photos being on Instagram according to Pixlee.

Platform use was more diverse during September 2015, as only 79.9 percent of photos submitted were from Instagram. The difference could attest to the wider audience for spring/summer collections in addition to the increasing share of Instagram.



Oscar de la Renta at New York Fashion Week, fall/winter 2016

With Instagram's share of the conversation growing, brands will need to decide whether they want to use the platform for engagement or for customer acquisition. When making that call, they will need to consider the diminishing role of Facebook in fashion weeks, the emergence of Snapchat and live streaming platforms such as Periscope and Meerkat and consumers' "buy now" mentality.

"The decrease in Facebook popularity among fashion brands is due to two things," Ms. Elder said. "First, the Facebook algorithm change in the first half of 2015, which decreased organic reach, and second, Instagram being an inherently visual platform that plays to fashion brands' strengths.

"For a smaller brand with limited marketing dollars, it is much more likely to be successful on Instagram because the brand can still gain a largely organic following without having to pay for its media to reach the brand's intended audience," she said.

Although New York's fall/winter fashion week is growing, spring/summer collections are more popular among consumers. The search interest for last month's week was around two-thirds of the preceding spring/summer 2016 week.

With each passing year, the disparity in interest between fall/winter and spring/summer fashion weeks grows, but each edition continues to gather more traction online.



Hugo Boss New York Fashion Week Instagram post

L2 found that on Instagram during men's shows, brands posted an average of eight times, averaging more than 18,000 interactions per post. Instagram users were more interested in women's, averaging over 92,000 interactions on 20 posts per brand.

Twitter had the highest average posts but the lowest average interaction rates at just 490 likes and 1,117 retweets, while Facebook interaction was modest, with 2,000 per post for men's and 8,000 for women. Brands that do not yet concentrate their posting on Instagram must be sure to do so for future fashion weeks.

A small number of brands presenting at New York Fashion Week also took advantage of Instagram's growing advertising platform. Nine brands, including Diane von Furstenburg and Hugo Boss, advertised the runway show or the release of their spring/summer collections that coincided with fall/winter shows.

Overall, Michael Kors captured the most interactions on social media at 2.5 million, narrowly edging Victoria Beckham. Ninety-eight percent of the interactions came from Instagram.



Image from Neiman Marcus New York Fashion Week 2016 Snapchat story

Despite the overwhelming appeal of Instagram, many brands turned to Snapchat, which encouraged use by creating a New York Fashion Week geofilter and allowing for a "Live Story." A third of men's brands and a fifth of women's brands were active on Snapchat, allowing for decreased competition among those vying for an especially young and influential audience.

See now, buy now?

Instagram has already established itself as the premiere social media platform, with Snapchat as the innovative up-and-comer, but the increasing access to new collections these networks provide to youth consumers with a "see now, buy now" mentality is giving brands pause at the current fashion calendar.

Burberry has already altered its production schedule so that products will retail immediately after the show. Tom Ford is planning a runway production that will be available for purchase in September, and Michael Kors made a small batch of items available after its runway show.

With brands using social media to generate excitement and interest, it makes sense for them to also offer those products now.

Shortening the turnaround from runway to retail will help fashion brands and department stores compete with fast fashion, which often is able to offer similar designs at lower price points in the period between runway reveal and when the collection becomes available to consumers.

As a result, brands that offer consumers what they want as soon as possible will win a chunk of the market. A shorter lead-time will allow high-end brands and retailers to narrow or eliminate the window fast fashion thrives on and also hook consumers before other high-end competitors can ([see story](#)).

The debate surrounding the role of the fashion show today is escalating, as more designers opt to shake up the

runway format.

A rise in digital integration at fashion shows means that the audience at home and within the venue consumes and creates media instantaneously, but typically that feeling of instant gratification ends there, as consumers then wait months for the collection to become available for purchase. In a world where shopping is often just a click away, this delayed path from runway to retail can feel dated, prompting a number of brands to attempt to fix the format ([see story](#)).

"While it may seem like these decisions are happening simultaneously, brands have been thinking about the switch for years," Ms. Elder said. "Realigning supply schedules to coordinate with the demand generated at runway shows requires significant capital. While big brands have the luxury to decide what production schedule will better fit their consumer, most of the brands at NYFW were smaller and simply not capable of a massive logistics change.

"While no immediate drawbacks present themselves regarding this approach, we will have to wait a few runway cycles to see if the shopper is buying into it."

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