

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Direct-to-consumer takes hold of NYFW 2016: L2

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Iris Apfel during Monse's New York Fashion Week show

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Social media continues to be pervasive for New York Fashion Week, with numerous brands employing social for direct-to-consumer selling, according to L2.

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Along with many things in the fashion industry, retail and consumer behavior, social media has drastically shifted the experience of the NYFW, which has now evolved into entertainment rather than a trade event. While a multitude of brands take to Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook and other social media for live streams and direct-to-consumer abilities, others are remaining true to the origins of the event, such as Dianne von Furstenberg, by holding private showings.

"The landscape of the fashion industry has shifted as it adapts to a digitized, hyper-connected world. Catering to the modern consumers' need for immediacy, traditional buying models and production cycles are being up-ended by direct-to-consumer availability," said Garrett Levy, insights manager at L2. "While brands may be tempted to commit heavily to this alternative approach, doing so runs the risk of fracturing retailer relationships.

"By launching capsule collections in the see-now, buy-now format, they are able to experiment with the runway-to-retail style of production without alienating these longstanding partnerships with retailers," he said.

"Tommy Hilfiger executed a direct-to-consumer functionality for only its Gigi Hadid collection, which was supported with substantial advertising as well as Facebook Messenger bots that allowed consumers to shop the collection."

Direct to buy

The direct-buy options, popping up all over Fashion Week are unlikely to go away, as they have been integrated with these events for a few years. L2's report showed that this year, 21 percent of NYFW brands incorporated a direct purchasing experience.

Many brands are even showing off exclusive collections through Snapchat and Instagram before shows, on runways themselves, interviews and inside preparations.



Hugo Boss NYFW Instagram

For instance, U.S. fashion label Ralph Lauren took over an entire city block to debut its runway-to-retail concept as the see-now, buy-now frenzy takes hold of New York Fashion Week.

On the evening of Sept. 14, Ralph Lauren debuted its latest Ralph Lauren Collection along Madison Avenue, which was closed to traffic for the occasion. The stretch of retail high street that hosted the women's ready-to-wear collection is home to the Ralph Lauren Collection flagship boutique found at 888 Madison Avenue between 71st and 72nd Streets ([see more](#)).

However, many brands are still holding on to their exclusivity by holding private fashion shows only open to select press and buyers.

Also, only 57 percent of brands at NYFW were active in the real-time organic social media space, using Instagram and Snapchat Stories, even though all of the brands have a presence on Instagram and 69 percent on Snapchat.

Social media appeal

The direct-to-consumer aspect of social media is too appealing for brands to give up.

While not all brands are leveraging it for Fashion Week, the opportunities will still continue to grow and more will jump on board. The sheer mass of the number of users online and on social media is hard for brands to turn down.



Graph from L2 regarding Snapchat and Instagram NYFW use

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

Data from marketing agency Pixlee showed that February's Fashion Week reached more than 659 million people across Twitter and Instagram with the hashtags #NYFW and #NYFW16. February's New York Fashion Week reach almost 10 times that of September 2015.

As social media continues to expose new products to a wider audience, brands have considered making new collections available to consumers closer to the runway show ([see more](#)).

"Snapchat and Instagram Stories were used not only to broadcast various forms of content like a brand's runway show, behind-the-scenes exclusives, and interviews but also to exclusively debut a brand's collection," Mr. Levy said.

"Misha Nonoo and J Mendel made their collections available only on Snapchat and Instagram, respectively, with Misha Nonoo giving consumers the opportunity to purchase the clothing online immediately after the show," he said.

"As smaller brands grapple with the high costs of showing multiple collections a year, digitally sharing their lookbook provides them with a cost-efficient alternative."

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