

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Fashion calendar experimentation poised to continue

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Burberry February 2017 collection. Image credit: Burberry, photo by John Olins

By SARAH JONES

Over the past couple of years, numerous fashion labels have toyed with new runway show formats in an effort to keep up with an increasingly fast fashion cycle.

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Luxury brands Burberry and Ralph Lauren are among those giving the fashion calendar a makeover in an attempt to meet consumer demand for instant gratification. Fashionbi's "[Challenging the Fashion Calendar](#)" report notes that there are pros and cons to every option, leading to lots of experimentation.

"I believe these experiments didn't yet reach the peak in order to slow down the overall trend," said Yana Bushmeleva, chief operating officer at [Fashionbi](#), Milan. "It's already clear the speed of consumers' consumption and willingness for novelty is higher than the traditional speed of the fashion calendar, so sooner or later the major number of players will shift to a different business model.

"The question which is not yet answered is how this new model should look," she said.

Calendar choices

One of the popular ways brands are rethinking their runway shows is with a see-now, buy-now model. While traditional fashion shows take place approximately six months before clothes will appear in stores, some designers are opting to sell their collections immediately off the runway.

Burberry, for instance, has foregone the typical spring or fall seasonal collections in favor of lines that are named for the month when the show takes place.

Often, the see-now, buy-now format turns the runway show from a primarily buyer and media vehicle to a consumer-focused event. Handbag label Anya Hindmarch, for instance, has swapped out runway shows for "consumer happenings," a model that will debut during London Fashion Week this September ([see story](#)).

In addition to rolling out season less apparel aimed at a global audience experiencing varied climates, luxury brands are also catering to more fluidity in gendered dressing. Whereas traditionally menswear and women's wear would be shown during separate events, many labels are combining these presentations into one cohesive show.

Etro, Gucci and Bottega Veneta are among the brands that have taken this co-ed approach to fashion shows.



Gucci's recent runway shows have been co-ed. Image credit: Gucci

Female consumers will often shop from a menswear collection and vice versa, so these combined shows offer a chance to reach the entire potential audience for a collection. Showing once also cuts down on the budget for these large-scale productions.

The major fashion weeks draw the fashion industry to cities such as New York, Milan, London and Paris. Many brands that have altered their show strategy have opted to stay within these schedules.

However, some are branching out, picking their own dates and moving show locations.

For instance, Proenza Schouler has decided that instead of showing in New York in February and September, it will present its new designs in Paris in July and January, taking inspiration from the couture show calendar. Joseph Altuzarra and Thom Browne have also opted to take their shows to Paris.



Thom Browne fall/winter 2018 runway show. Image credit: Thom Browne

Alexander Wang also exited New York Fashion Week in favor of events in June and December, which are typically the months that pre-fall and resort are shown.

Moncler has chosen to stray from typical seasonal releases in favor of monthly drops of new merchandise. Along with this "Genius" strategy, the brand has stopped holding runway shows ([see story](#)).

"Probably the least risky path is to include some see-now, buy-now pieces in the traditional ready-to-wear fashion show," Ms. Bushmeleva said. "But the brand should make sure that the random customer has a clear understanding what he/she can buy immediately now from the fashion show and which pieces will be available later at the online/offline stores.

"For example, I personally was quite confused after the last Burberry fashion show in February 2018 when on the brand's Web site some of the pieces were shoppable and some key looks were available only for pre-order with delivery in August, at the same time the show was positioning and see-now, buy-now," she said. "There was no clear division of these items on Burberry's Web site and I was discovering this information with random clicks product by product.

"At the same time, Tommy Hilfiger successfully was selling the GigixTommy collection straight from the live streaming. Here it's important to remember that the collection was endorsed and co-created by very influential celebrity and second, which is even more important, the prices of Tommy Hilfiger are much lower compared to the top premium and luxury brands, plus the style is very casual, the Tommy Hilfiger products are easy to buy from the fashion show."

Maintaining tradition

While many brands are playing with the fashion calendar norms, others such as Chanel and Dior have stuck with tradition. This offers lead time to gain editorial placements in glossies, get feedback from buyers and drum up excitement from consumers.



Chanel is sticking to the traditional seasonal runway schedule. Image credit: Chanel

Tom Ford tried out a see-now, buy-now format, but is reverting back to the typical season format for spring/summer 2019, which will be shown in September.

After only one year of supporting the see-now, buy-now business model, the brand is dropping it, suggesting that the once popular trend may be dying out among the big names of the fashion world.

The fashion brand cited difficulties relating to the store-shipping and fashion show schedules that made it challenging to have a collection for sale and on the runway at the same time. With other big fashion houses such as Thakoon also dropping see-now, buy-now, the fire of the business model looks like it could be slowly dying out, while some still defend this retail innovation ([see story](#)).

For luxury fashion in particular, the time between a show and store availability gives consumers a chance to covet a design and helps maintain a brand's exclusivity. The traditional format also allows more time for creativity and craftsmanship.

"Only within some time, we can say if sticking to the traditional calendar is outdated or a tradition," Ms. Bushmeleva said. "There are also some of the examples when the brand after experimenting with new format came back to the traditional schedule."

"It's very important to remember that the fashion industry is a very complex system with multiple international players and all of them somehow should switch to the new format," she said. "Probably the brands that are now following the traditional schedule are just waiting for when the entire system will be ready."

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