

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Designing the red carpet: the pitfalls, benefits of dressing an Oscars attendee

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Margot Robbie hits the Red Carpet in a white Chanel gown. Image credit: David Fisher, Shutterhock.

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

On the heels of New York Fashion Week, the fashion world is preparing for yet another major event the Academy Awards. But designers sometimes lack the initiative to take full advantage of the modern social media era's opportunities.

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With social media allowing fashion moments to go viral beyond the fashion fans, the stakes are now higher for designers and their endorsements on the red carpet, as faux pas often see more attention than moments done right. Many experts believe that any press is good press to bring awareness to the brand, but others feel a misstep could be damaging to a label's reputation.

"All marketers have the same goal: they want the dress or 'look' to go viral with the right audience," said Allen Adamson, cofounder of [Metaforce](#). "But it's easier said than done.

"Consumers only share extraordinary, and they often prefer trashing on social media versus promoting," he said. "Everyone has become a critic, so there is often more downside than upside to trying to stand out and get social media buzz."

From the runway to the red carpet

There has been significant buzz around this year's Academy Awards ceremony, coming up on Sunday, Feb. 24, due to being the first show in years without an official host.

Previously booked host Kevin Hart had old tweets surface that were homophobic in nature, prompting the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to boot him from the event. The production decided not to book another host.

But the Oscars often sees significant buzz surrounding it, scandal or no scandal, and the fashion is a significant part of it.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

Presenter at the 90th annual #Oscars @salmahayek Pinault wore a custom #Gucci sequin gown with ruffled tiered skirt, jeweled chandelier embroideries, and clutch with crystal butterfly closure by #AlessandroMichele.

A post shared by Gucci (@gucci) on Mar 5, 2018 at 1:05am PST

Gucci promotes Salma Hayek wearing its gown

The most coveted film awards presentation ends this year's awards season, which has already had many viral fashion moments, not all of which were good.

With meme culture growing, a trend dedicated to amateur comedy online rooted in images, it is easy for stars to go viral for the wrong reasons.

For instance, Katy Perry stepped onto the red carpet of the Grammys in a pink Balmain Couture gown with a fluffy skirt. Photographs of the dress quickly began to surface online with comedic captions, likening the dress to food such as a Hostess Sno Ball.

One user even photoshopped the image to depict Ms. Perry as a paint roller coating a wall in pink.

But the singer took the joke in stride and joined the trend on her own social media account, posting her favorite edits and captions of the dress.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

hi to whoever made this edit

A post shared by KATY PERRY (@katyperry) on Feb 11, 2019 at 3:12am PST

Katy Perry's Instagram post leaning into the joke

How Balmain is affected by the mainstream reaction to the dress can be debated.

While the average consumer may be learning of the designer's name for the first time, a true customer of the brand likely will not be swayed by trending jokes on social media.

"I'm a big believer that bad press is still good press," said Kimmie Smith, cofounder, creative and style director and celebrity stylist of [Athleisure Studio](#). "Even if the outfit goes viral for the wrong reasons, people in the industry will still look at additional offerings from the brand to see if this is something indicative of the whole line or just a one-off situation.

"There are a number of designers who have had these moments and talent still requested the designer for future red carpet and performance looks," she said.

Brands and the Oscars

Swarovski, Barneys New York and Piper-Heidsieck were among the many luxury brands who leveraged the prestige that comes with the Academy Awards last year, with each hoping to stand out through one-of-a-kind strategies.

While the Oscars is the most important awards show of the year for those in the film business, it is also one of the biggest events of the year for luxury brands due to its renowned status. Combined with the visibility of the event, luxury brands tap methods beyond simple advertising to capture the show's elegance ([see story](#)).

French label Chanel brought an Academy Award-nominated actress along as part of its group of ambassadors on Hollywood's biggest day.

"I, Tonya" actress Margot Robbie stepped onto the runway before the 2018 Academy Awards in a specially made Chanel dress, designed by Karl Lagerfeld himself. The moment marked the beginning of the actress' relationship with the label, where she acts as a Chanel ambassador ([see story](#)).

It is clear that any label worn by a celebrity on the red carpet of an awards show, especially the Oscars, is likely to gain a couture image.

While red carpet and Fashion Week seasons overlap, the fashion industry is still looking to the awards shows to see what these brands have to offer in a more bespoke manner. Research shows their media value is impacted.

"The Oscars and other similar key events provide brands with a unique opportunity to get their products in front of many new and existing fans in an organic way," said Alison Bring, chief marketing officer at Launchmetrics. "From our data at Launchmetrics, we see that brands can get three to five times more Media Impact Value during these events than any normal day-to-day celebrity dressing opportunity.

"The value here is not just the individual social posts from the brand or celebrity, but actually all of the echo around the post, the conversation about the event connected to the celebrity and the brand, as well as all the press coverage," she said. "These added benefits are something a brand can't leverage when it's just another Saturday afternoon of celebrity dressing, so it's fundamental in driving Media Impact Value for the brand's PR strategy."

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