

MEDIA AND PUBLISHING

## Next steps for fashion-focused media to survive and thrive

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*Vogue cover April 2020. Image credit: Vogue*

By DIANNA DILWORTH

When the health crisis hit, fashion-focused media brands pivoted to becoming a source of information and connection to consumers.

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With consumers stuck at home, leading fashion publishers have been showing up online to make readers, listeners and viewers feel soothed, empowered and supported as they too wait to see how the pandemic will unfold.

"It's important to speak to what is on consumers' minds: what companies are doing to help, what they can expect in the future and how they will be kept safe," said Cheryl Dixon, adjunct professor at Columbia University, New York.

"Messaging about sustainability, how companies are helping their employees and handling changes in supply chain and distribution, as well as general regard for today's changing environment will be increasingly important," she said.



*Fashion icon Meryl Streep giving a toast on a Zoom call, featured on Vogue's Instagram page. Image credit: Vogue*

## Creative digital

As the pandemic hit, many fashion magazines were quick to turn their social media and digital channels into places of information and calm.

"Being creative and adaptable is key," Ms. Dixon said. "The demand for online content, social media and video streaming remains high. With dwindling budgets, companies will be looking carefully at ROI and will likely invest in media that supports ecommerce.

"It will be a balancing act of acknowledging the crisis and the new normal while continuing to maintain consumer loyalty and remaining true to the brand ethos," she said.

*Cosmopolitan* magazine's Instagram has been featuring calming ideas for baking during the crisis, as well as profiles of front-line workers.

*Vogue* keeps people entertained with news of fashion icons enjoying life in lockdown and sporting fashionable face masks or giving cheers during virtual happy hours. Fashion icon and movie star Meryl Streep is featured in a post with a martini from a Zoom happy hour.

"Digital channels help by bringing insight, help and often celebrities into consumer's homes," said Rebecca Miller, founder/principal at [Miller&company](#), New York. "Videos broaden the level of access and intimacy between celebrities and brands.

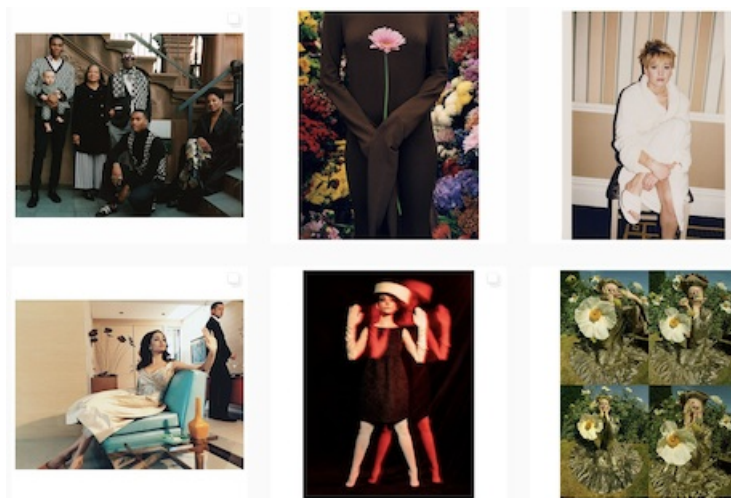
"Digital channels allow for new stories and communications about fashion collections to be exposed to a larger audience inviting them to follow and buy" she said.

"One may not be a customer, but they may like a brand's philosophy and global community participation, resulting in an organic feeding of the media machine. This is where brand culture plays a key role in transforming and solidifying business."

Fashion-focused media has an opportunity to collaborate with fashion brands to develop exclusive brand stories for each collection that align from an editorial and business standpoint.

"The content must be much deeper than an old model where pay-to-play often directed messaging," Ms. Miller said. "These collaborations must help to redefine the brand's mission. They must devise stories and campaigns that extend farther than product by exploring more broadly their attributes in a cultural content.

"Media companies should manage their business by rethinking value through portals of digital innovation, creating new revenue streams focused on flexibility and customer service by varying rates and program packaging that better identify and align with the brand's needs," she said.



*W Magazine's Instagram page. Image credit: W Magazine*

## Fashion show reboot

As major events and fashion shows will likely be cancelled for the near future and may be strictly limited or non-existent in the coming year, fashion media will have to think about its role and relationship with luxury fashion houses.

"Fashion media should take a cue from sports," Ms. Dixon said. "Several recent studies confirm that the majority of fans would watch broadcasts of games without fans. In the absence of events and shows, fashion media could have a very important role to play in helping brands reach consumers."

The events will likely become broadcast on social media as IGTV and Facebook Live have become the destinations for consumers seeking to keep up on the latest fashions.

Fashion media companies have the opportunity to curate and steer these conversations through partnerships with luxury brands.

"Digital is the key word when fashion media grapples with the inevitable past era of events and fashion shows," Ms. Miller said. "Once an elitist show for a well-targeted and edited group of important fashion figures, typically about 600, it was then streamed to about 8,000, who would post on Instagram reaching another 60,000, who would tweet and retweet to another 300,000, eventually reaching 10 million viewers [and now] has been eclipsed by a global pandemic.

"Digital must take the runway and not lose the front row experience to the 300,000 who help create awareness for both haute couture and all the brand's products, creating the halo effect for a brand online," she said.

"They must remove all emotional barriers generating emotional connections, which will be reflected on the bottom line with all participants profiting from the value of the effort."



*Cosmopolitan cover. Image credit: Cosmopolitan*

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