

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Industry leaders examine the future of Fashion Week

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Industry leaders analyze the future of runway shows. Image credit: British Fashion Council

By NORA HOWE

Fashion brands should build digital presences to promote their collections as live runway events evolve amid the coronavirus pandemic, according to industry leaders.

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During a panel at [Launchmetrics](#)' Performance digital summit on Nov. 5, speakers focused on this year's fashion weeks as well as what to expect from brands in future events. Jessica Michault, executive editor of [ODDA Magazine](#), hosted a panel of fashion executives: Carlo Capasa, chairman of the [National Chamber of Italian Fashion](#); Caroline Rush, CEO of the [British Fashion Council](#); Steven Kolb, CEO of the [Council of Fashion Designers in America](#); Pascal Morand, executive president of the [Fdration de la Haute Couture et de la Mode](#).

Future of fashion weeks

The global pandemic has had an irrefutable effect across all sectors and businesses have been adapting their strategies for months in order to survive.

The fashion industry, specifically, is now preparing for the future and addressing how responses to the crisis may actually last well beyond the pandemic.

In October, Launchmetrics released a study examining the online and social posts are articles during the New York, London, Milan and Paris fashion weeks and analyzing how brands succeeded in a global health crisis.

The study determined that brands that chose the hybrid approach, fusing physical and digital, performed better than those produced strictly physical or digital events ([see story](#)).



Christian Siriano backyard garden show at NYFW. Image credit: Christian Siriano

In regards to how smaller brands leveraged the digital opportunities, Ms. Rush witnessed how the merging of physical and digital events evened the playing field for younger designers at British Fashion Week.

Ms. Rush acknowledged how personal interaction and physical presence plays an important role in garnering trust with the industry, but that the "phygital" events widened the audience for many brands.

As the demand for digital grew rapidly over the course of just a few months, brands were forced to quickly and efficiently find creative ways to promote their collections which incited a surge of collaborations in creative arts and filmmaking.

While the industry witnessed unparalleled creative strategies, Mr. Kolb warned that fashion is still a business and brands should not lose sight of what moves that business: clothes.



Gucci's fall/winter 2020 menswear show. Image courtesy of Gucci

Another focus was the consideration of womenswear and menswear merging into singular events a shift away from gendered fashion weeks.

British Fashion Week shifted to this structure in response to the pandemic and production restrictions, however, Ms. Rush explained that it is something that will likely last beyond the pandemic.

As the conversation around diversity and inclusivity gains momentum, brands that merge menswear and womenswear could see success through social consciousness, according to Ms. Rush.

Last week, the British Fashion Council announced that the next iteration of London Fashion Week will stay virtual, in light of the evolving coronavirus crisis.

Running from Feb. 19 to Feb. 23, London Fashion Week will be a digital-first event with scaled back in-person events. In a continued push towards genderless collections, menswear designers are encouraged to participate in February's event rather than London Fashion Week Men's ([see story](#)).

Mr. Morand explained, however, that the Italian fashion industry draws a bold line between women's and men's fashion with menswear carrying substantial weight in the industry. Therefore, merging the two might not be opportune for smaller brands.

Overall, the discussion participants assured that live physical runway events will not completely be replaced by digital alternatives. However, brands must utilize strategies that combine the two platforms to keep up with the

growing demands of digital consumers.

Fashion prevails

Despite changes in the industry's marketing and event strategies, fashion does not seem to be losing traction.

Global fashion shopping platform Lyst released the latest installment of The Lyst Index report on the hottest brands and products in fashion, ensuring that fashion is still in fashion.

While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt the fashion industry and change consumer habits, the report showed that shoppers still love fashion and are prepared to spend on brands and products that bring them joy ([see story](#)).

LVMH Mot Hennessy recorded revenue of \$35.5 billion in the first nine months of 2020 down 21 percent on an organic basis from its record revenue in 2019. However, a few weeks ago, the group recorded only a 7 percent decrease in revenue for Q3, indicating a rebound ([see story](#)).

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