

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Fashion partnerships can boost cultural relevancy: IMG exec

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New York State is helping emerging designers next fashion week. Image credit: NYFW/IMG

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Brand partnerships and collaborations have the power to extend the reach of fashion events and activations.

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During a LinkedIn Live hosted by **Launchmetrics**, an executive from IMG, the owner and producer of New York Fashion Week, discussed how sponsors from multiple sectors can successfully leverage fashion partnerships. Fashion weeks have taken on extra relevance as they have evolved to become more consumer-facing events.

"You can't just buy your way into culture," said Patrick Connors, senior vice president for global brand partnerships at **IMG**, New York. "You really have to have it through a lens of people who understand that pillar of culture that we're talking about, in particular for us, obviously, through fashion."

The conversation was moderated by Alison Bring, chief marketing officer at Launchmetrics, London.

Fashionable support

Finding the right partnership for the right event for the right brand is crucial. A good fit can payoff, however, with the most successful partners generating more than 60 percent in sales than the designers at NYFW.

According to Mr. Connors, many sponsors collaborating with NYFW or specific designers are just looking to reach a broader fashion consumer.

The advent of social media also changed NYFW from an industry event for editors and buyers to a more accessible showcase for consumers as well. This has made partnering with fashion weeks more appealing to other brands as well.



Afterpay is the presenting partner for NYFW. Image credit: Afterpay

For instance, flexible payment provider Afterpay was a natural fit, Mr. Connors explained, because a growing number of consumers were engaging with NYFW content and seeking to buy pieces sooner rather than later.

Through a multiyear agreement with IMG, **Afterpay** became the event's presenting sponsor last September.

Afterpay has introduced new interactive concepts to support NYFW's digitalization push. This includes partnering with certain designers on see-now, buy-now shows, which allow shoppers to purchase items directly from the runway and pay through installment plans ([see story](#)).

"This has been a great benefit to the consumer audience," Mr. Connors said. "It's been a great benefit to designers as well, because designers can now include pieces in their collection that are see-now, buy-now.

"Which doesn't mean the entire collection has to be see-now, buy-now, but there can be some elements that consumers can purchase directly and at a higher price point than the consumer is used to paying at because they can make payments over the next few months," he said. "They're able to increase their base of consumers who are now able to afford some of the items in the collection."

Supporting the shows

Brands can generate plenty of buzz at fashion weeks, Mr. Connors explained, but marketers need to be clear about their goals and objectives. Some brands, such as retailers, may want to work with emerging designers to capitalize on their name recognition or fill a product offering need, while other brands may want to work with content creators and influencers to amplify key messages.

For its part, Launchmetrics has also served as designer partner.

Last September, Launchmetrics made its NYFW runway debut with American clothing brand Negris LeBrum.

The Black-owned and operated clothing brand paid homage to the fashion tech company by creating the first runway-exclusive look for the brand. Travis Hamilton, designer and founder of Negris LeBrum, approached Launchmetrics when designing his spring/summer 2022 collection, proposing partnership to show his appreciation of how the cloud platform has helped his brand maintain global visibility ([see story](#)).

That same season, BMW of North America was the official automotive partner of NYFW. Building off its existing partnership with IMG, BMW has launched a custom content series focusing on the future of fashion, design and luxury ([see story](#)).

Now is the time for brands to partner with large fashion events, as the COVID-19 pandemic has revived industry interest and enthusiasm.

"New York Fashion Week is more exciting than it ever has been," Mr. Connors said. "You're so excited to get out to see people, being in touch with people and being in a physical place together is really, really driving consumers right now in things that they do."