The New Meaning of Marketing: How Branding Changed the Fashion Industry

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How Branding Changed the Fashion Industry

"For all of its glamour and frivolity, fashion happens to be a relevant and powerful force in our lives. At every level of society, people care greatly about the way they look, which affects both their self-esteem and the way other people interact with them."

-Terri Agins, The End of Fashion, p.7
“Far from being a frivolous subject, fashion is the supreme expression of the contemporary spirit. Sartorial elements embody the pace and rhythm of modern society and culture as few other ideas or commodities do.”

–Ulrich Lehman, Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity

The trickle- down theory of fashion

• Designers played the role of the ‘definer’
• Fashion used to be put on a pedestal. There once was a sharp delineation between ordinary clothes from Sears and true “fashion” from Paris couturiers and boutiques.
• As more options in fashion became available at different price points this divide disappeared and the notion of fashion belonging to the elite was deflated.
The trickle-down theory of fashion

Change is in the nature of fashion

- Fashion, by nature is ephemeral and elusive, a target that keeps moving.

- “change must be to warrant the appellation of fashion.” –Fred Davis
The Current Fashion Environment

• It’s “the end of fashion!” (as we knew it)
• Today a designer’s creativity expresses itself more in the marketing rather than in the actual clothes.
• Fashion has become focused on selling an IMAGE.

“In today’s high-strung, competitive marketplace, those who will survive will reinvent themselves enough times and with enough flexibility and resources to anticipate, not manipulate, the twenty-first-century customer. There’s just no other way.”

- Terri Agins, The End of Fashion, p.16
Is fashion really innovative?

- Innovation has shifted to the marketing aspect
- Fashion design today isn’t about true innovation
- Designers are creative in a very careful way
- This is because fashion is fuelled by conversion, consumers generally won’t be swayed to buy something too outlandish

Looking through the ‘clutter’

- “Consumers are like roaches, you spray them and spray them and after awhile it doesn’t work anymore, we develop immunities.”
  - Naomi Klein
- Marketing 50 years ago – ‘er’ words
- Consumers have become callous to traditional techniques
- Today consumers have evolved, and marketing tactics have evolved along with them
The importance of INCLUSION

- Ralph Lauren vs. Tommy Hilfiger
- In the 1990's there was a shift in fashion
- these brands made consumers want to conform and belong.
The trickle-up theory of fashion

“Brands have a completely different function in my mind, because the producer is not king; the consumer is.” - Douglas Atkin, author of The Culting of Brands

“Fashion must somehow manage on first viewing to startle, captivate, offend, or otherwise engage the sensibilities of some culturally preponderant public, in America the so-called middle mass. It is their acceptance or rejection.. that will determine whether it succeeds as fashion or merely passes from the scene as a futile symbolic gesture.”

– Fred Davis, Fashion, Culture and Identity, p.15

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– Terri Agins, The End of Fashion, p.16
Powers of Persuasion

- Do we really decide?
- Axiom Corporation
  - ‘narrowcasting’
  - Lifestyle segments
- When marketers find a way so strike a chord deep within consumers that speaks to who they are, it no longer feels like persuasion at all.
- **The secret of all persuasion is to induce the consumer to persuade themselves.**

BRANDING

- Consumers nowadays crave more: a connection
- Rationality is -for the most part- absent
- “The brands that can move to that emotional level, that can create loyalty beyond reason, are going to be the brands where premium profits lie.” – Kevin Roberts, CEO of *Saatchi and Saatchi*
- What pushes people from fan to devotee?
- Consumers create their identity through the products they own and the clothes they wear
Our ‘social identity’

- Purchasing behavior can describe identity
- What does a MAC stand for?
  - Non conformity
  - Creativity
- The consumer has ownership, they think “this is my brand”

What can you gather about the ‘social identity’ of these teens?
An individual who has an over inflated sense of self-worth, compounded by a low level of intelligence, behaving ridiculously in front of colleagues with no sense of how moronic he appears.

BRANDING

- It's become easier to produce products, therefore competition is heightened in the marketplace
- Products need added value!
- Branding & Identity = added value
- Selling a lifestyle
BRANDING

• Nike
  – “the essence of sports”

• Starbucks
  – community

BRANDING

• The Body Shop
  – Environmentalism

• Disney
  – Family

• Perrier & Fiji
  – designer water!
BRANDING

"Nowadays, a fashion house has to establish an image that resonates with people – an image so arresting that consumers will be compelled to buy whatever that designer has to offer… logos are the easiest way for each designer to impart a distinguishing characteristic on what amounts to some pretty ordinary apparel."

- Teri Agins, The End of Fashion
How desperate are we for designer merchandise?

Celebrity Branding
Are Accessories keeping designers in business?

- "The perfume business is the worst thing that ever happened to French Fashion." - Agins, p.34
- Once perfume came along, French designers no longer had to worry about selling clothes. If a fashion label has a reasonably successful perfume or accessories line, they would generate enough profit.
- This was like an "opiate" that greatly enriched French fashion houses while handicapping them in the long run.

- Accessories made designer merchandise affordable for a wider market.
- Couture is rarely sold
Conclusion

- New marketing techniques have changed the fashion industry
- Branding and pervasive marketing has become vital to the success of any fashion firm
- Consumers long to connect on an emotional level with an image and often define their social identity through the brands they follow

References


