

Public Relations in the Fashion Industry:
The Use of Blogging to Build Customer Relations
Through Accessibility/Approachability

A Senior Project presented to
The Faculty of the Journalism Department
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Bachelor of Science in Journalism

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March 2014

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the platform of blogging and how it can be used as a public relations tool to create relatability and accessibility in the fashion industry, an industry that has notoriously been exclusive to the public. The rise of social media has given audiences a “behind-the-scenes” look into the fashion industry and has provided a voice to the industry. Audiences no longer just view the fashion industry as an exclusive club that no one can join: it has become an industry that anyone with a blogging platform and a smart phone can participate in. As personal style bloggers become more and more influential among the fashion industry, audiences have begun to see real world applications of an industry that used to be veiled behind fashion magazines and fashion shows. This study investigates how blogging benefits the fashion industry, creating a sense of accessibility that was not previously there, changing the way audiences view the industry.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The fashion industry is one that is notoriously exclusive, shut behind golden doors closed to those who cannot afford it. “Fashion shows used to be privately held events for industry professionals, typically editors, to get press for retailers and designers. Like the Paris Salons of yore, it was a venue for the very wealthy and very powerful to gawk at expensive creations and report on their findings to a select elite” (Cavaluzzo, 2012).

Fashion used to never been seen as accessible for the every day person but through the creation of fashion blogging, every day individuals can post daily about fashion and give inspiration to others. The every day person can now become a fashion icon through simply posting photos of their outfits and their candid opinions about fashion trends.

Background of the Problem

The fashion industry has always been more easily accessible to the privileged and wealthy. Being fashionable has boiled down to being able to afford the latest trends. Designers have high price points for their latest collections, and if you cannot afford to wear what just came off the runway, you cannot be fashionable.

However, this has lead to a view of fashion that intimidates the every day person. It is too exclusive for someone like a stay-at-home mom to even dream of being a part of. People who cannot afford to stay on trend get pushed into the background.

Purpose of the Study

By analyzing the impact blogging has had on the fashion industry, professionals in the fashion industry can utilize this knowledge to spread accessibility and approachability to the industry further through blogging, which helps create a two-way symmetrical model between designer and buyer. This can help change the exclusive and intimidating reputation that the fashion industry has built up over time, allowing a larger customer base to participate in the fashion industry and feel comfortable in doing so.

Providing recommendations to fashion industry professionals regarding blogging can open this still fairly knew method of social media and public relations up to a different industry and a new set of users.

Setting for the Study

This study will take part as a data collection for the completion of a Senior Project at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. Interviews will be done with three fashion blogging and industry experts. These experts will be asked questions based on their area of expertise and how it applies to blogging. The

interview content is from a questionnaire structured through the research questions and any additional information the expert can provide about the world of blogging and the fashion industry.

Research Questions

This study was structured around the follow research questions that were created based on articles and literature regarding the world of blogging in the fashion industry. Each research question as formulated to provide insight and recommendations to those looking into the field of blogging as it pertains to fashion and approachability.

1. How has social media impacted the fashion industry?
2. What is blogging's role in the world of social media?
3. How has blogging affected the fashion industry?
4. What types of fashion blogging are out there and what are their uses?
5. How can one become a successful fashion blogger?
6. What is the future of fashion blogging?

Definition of Terms

Social Learning Theory: Theory rooted in the belief that people learn new information by observing other people (Cherry).

Social Media: “Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration” (Rouse).

Blogging: The act of posting content on a blog, a web log or online journal (Duermyer).

Fashion: “A method of utilizing clothing, accessories and hair to show or hide something about yourself” (Nellis).

Fashion Blogging: Blogging that covers the fashion industry, clothing, and personal style. (“Fashion Blogging”, 2013).

Organization of the Study

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the problem that the study is based off of and how the study is organized. Chapter 2 outlines blogging and its influence on the fashion industry through articles and literature. Chapter 3 explains the methodology used for data collection for this study. Chapter 4 includes the data from the interviews conducted and the comparison between the data from the literature and the data from the interviews. Chapter 5 is a summary of the study with recommendations for professionals in the fashion industry in regards to blogging.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The literature review examines existing published material on blogging in the fashion industry and its possible uses as a public relations tool. It focuses on social media in the fashion industry in general, and closes in on blogging as a medium.

Social media's impact on the fashion industry

According to socialmediaweek.org, “brands like American Apparel and TopShop along with emerging designers were the first to adopt social media marketing” and once they become successful, more established and higher end companies followed suit.

According to The Next Web:

“What you wear is inherently meant to be shared, as it's first and foremost a representation of yourself — one that many like to broadcast out for all their friends to see. Fashion is entangled in the photos we take of ourselves, and the brands we embrace are often chosen to help others understand who we are. In other words, social media's natural fit and only makes sense to see major brands getting involved” (Weber, 2012)

Social media has allowed brands to have a relatable voice for its consumers.

“Fashion houses, designers and retailers ‘are tweeting, blogging and updating their profiles in an effort to mold their brand personalities on real-time global platforms” (Akahoshi, 2012, pg. 11). Social media has finally allowed the fashion industry to be an industry that is no longer shut behind closed, exclusive doors. “The proliferation of online fashion portals, live streaming and social media are bridging the gap between brands and consumers, making the rarefied world of high fashion more accessible than it has ever been” (Grinberg, 2012).

Luboc Azria, chief fashion director of BCBG Max Azria, said, “Now with social media, we have a voice. We have a way to express what we feel, why we feel certain things. It's incredible”... “I think it brought a younger crowd and it also brought the crowd that perhaps never knew this or this about the brand. It brings awareness” (“How”, 2014).

Fashion houses now have Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest accounts, etc. Runway shows are available to stream online or are archived on Youtube, allowing millions of viewers around the world to have a front seat view at Fashion Week (“How”).

Blogging's role in social media

Blogging creates a community that drives an influential role among consumers (Redsicker, 2013). Reports find that blogging has become the third most influential digital resource when making overall purchases (Redsicker). Blogging,

just under retail sites and brand sites in ranking, was ranked higher than Twitter in shaping opinions and higher than Facebook in “motivating purchase decisions” (Redsicker). Blogging has taken a very influential role due to its more candid and honest nature. “Bloggers tend to be very honest and sincere in their reviews of products and services” (Redsicker). Blogging has also become an essential form of social media for any media influencer. 86% of media influencers blog and of this percentage, 88% blog for themselves (Redsicker).

Blogging has also become an extremely reliable source as far as an informational tool. “Blogging in general is considered as a new form of online journalism, enjoying great attention of users, based on a personal and interactive approach, versus the standardized treatment through mainstream media” (Sedeke & Arora, 2013).

Blogging’s affect on the fashion industry

Typically the fashion industry is one that is not only hard to access, but also expensive to access. However, after the birth of user generated content like blogs “allows participation in this specific subculture with no material limitations and makes fashion more accessible and democratized” (Sedeke & Arora). “As they furiously tweet images of their favorite looks, proclaiming this skirt or that sweater an absolute must-have, bloggers represent and help translate fashion for a large portion of the buying public” (Cento-Ware, 2014).

Bloggers are now key members of the fashion industry that have become some of the most desirable attendees at notoriously exclusive fashion events like New York Fashion Week. “Typically equipped with just a smartphone, bloggers and tweeters are telling the world about designers' collections for spring/summer 2011 -- which won't be for sale in stores for months -- within seconds of models hitting the runways” (Nichols, 2010).

In an Op-Ed posted in the Business of Fashion, fashion blogger Renata Cento-Ware of Scorpion Disco, described fashion blogging and the precise reasoning behind its influence: relatability (Cento-Ware).

We're not caught up in the delicate politics, diplomacy and more-than-occasional cattiness of the industry. While editors can often be motivated by influential friends or loyalty to advertisers, we are free agents. While there are exceptions, we generally don't appear on our blogs Photoshopped or wearing outfits worth thousands of dollars. We are real men and women, with real bodies and real budgets.

Types of fashion blogging & what they are used for

There are several types of fashion blogs, but among the most popular are personal style blogs, street style blogs, and designer blogs.

Personal style blogs are blogs in which every day individuals post daily photos of their outfits and style. Among the most popular personal style bloggers are Tessa Mu, Julia Engel, Rumi Neely, and Leandra Medine.

The start to street style blogging began in 2005 with Scott Schuman and his street style blog, *The Sartorialist* (Sherman, 2010). He has made his street style photography business into campaigns with Burberry and DKNY Jeans, two best-selling books, and a place in *Time Magazine's* Top 100 Design Influences (Amand, 2011).

Most designers have begun to post regularly to their blogs as a “behind-the-scenes” look on the brand and to post about things related to the brand. Marc Jacobs’ blog, for example, used by the blog medium tumblr, posts all Marc Jacobs related things along with things that go along with the Marc Jacobs aesthetic.

“As a brand, Coach was one of the first to partner with bloggers to design, style and blog about new product and to have them appear in its ad campaigns. To date, the brand has launched nine blogger-centric programs—the first of which occurred in November and December 2009, when 30 bloggers participated in holiday-themed posts ” (Weber).

How to be a successful fashion blogger

Besides being able to take good quality photos and have a blog with a simple and enjoyable aesthetic, there are other aspects to having a successful blog.

One of the most important parts of being a successful fashion blogger is standing out and building your brand. According to popular magazine Teen Vogue, “While creating a blog is easy, garnering a solid following isn't as simple” (Lewis). Having a genuine passion for your topic and having content that you enjoy writing are also key (Lewis).

Utilizing personal style sites like Lookbook.nu and Chictopia are another way to gain readership. Also using another blogging platform, like tumblr which is more visually based, is a good supplement to a fashion blog. Budding style blogger Lindsay was quoted in Teen Vogue saying, “My Tumblr is another extension of my brand as a blogger, and I like that it allows readers to experience my blog in a different medium” (Lewis).

Linking your fashion blog to other social media sites allows different views for different mediums. Posting photos on Instagram with different hashtags can make your post searchable and posting updates on Facebook and Twitter allows for immediacy and updates (12 Secrets).

The future of fashion industry with fashion blogging

There has been controversy rising among the blogging community. The fashion community has begun to resent the blogging community. In September 2013, Fern Mallis, creator of New York Fashion Week, gave a talk and bemoaned the current state of New York Fashion Week, specifically mentioning how fashion bloggers have gained priority over industry leaders in seating at fashion shows (Wang, 2013).

Catherine Bennet, the director of New York Fashion Week, announced in December 2013, that the seating controversy was set to change. Bennet said, "It was becoming a zoo. What used to be a platform for established designers to debut their collections to select media and buyers has developed into a cluttered, often cost-prohibitive and exhausting period for our industry to effectively do business" (Wang). *The Wall Street Journal* reported that IMG, the company that runs New York Fashion Week, planned to cut their media guest list by 20%, most of which were fashion bloggers (Wang).

Chapter 3

Methodology

In this chapter, we will discuss the methodology used to collect data for the study through the use of interviews with professionals in the fashion industry, collection, and presentation of this data.

Data Sources

The data compilation for this study mainly focused on interview responses from professionals in the fashion industry. A fashion blogger and public relations practitioner, two fashion public relations practitioners were interviewed based on a questionnaire tailored to this study. This questionnaire was designed to cultivate responses that would help further the study's focus on blogging and its impact on public relations and its approachability.

Participants

Participants included Crosby Noricks, founder of PRcouture.com, a blog focused on fashion public relations and author of Ready to Launch: The PR Couture Guide to Breaking Into Fashion PR. The second participant is Stephanie Kent, a personal style blogger from thecheapfrills.blogpost.com and entertainment industry public relations practitioner. The third participant is a public relations practitioner at a prominent beauty, lifestyle, and fashion public relations firm.

Interview Design

The following questions were presented to each of the participants based on this study's focus on using blogging as a public relations tool in the fashion industry to make it more approachable and accessible.

Questions

1. How do you think social media has changed the fashion industry? Do you have any examples or experience of this change? Do you think it has changed it for the better or worse?
2. What do you think is the importance of blogging as a social media platform? What does it provide that other platforms don't?
3. How do you think blogging has impacted the fashion industry? Do you think it has changed it for the better or worse?
4. Can you describe the different types of fashion blogging in the industry and what they provide to the industry? If you are a fashion blogger, what kind of blogging do you do?
5. What tips do you have to become a successful fashion blogger? What are the crucial parts of being successful? Please provide specific examples.
6. What do you think is the future of fashion blogging? Do you think it is a growing or dying medium? Why do you think it has received a bad reputation of sorts?
7. How do you think fashion blogging affects approachability in the fashion industry? Do you think it makes the industry more approachable? How so?

Data Collection

The data collection methodology for this study were three individual questionnaires sent out by email to each of the participants. The questionnaire was sent out Monday, March 10, 2014 and would have taken each individual about 30 minutes to answer. This questionnaire contained general questions related to this study including prompts for personal anecdotes and personal insights to the subtopics of the study.

Data Presentation

The correspondence was done through email through a written word document that could be edited by the participants and sent back at their own time.

Delimitations

There are a number of pros and cons to this form of interview style. One pro would be the convenience it serves for both the interviewer and interviewee. This allows a short and simple interaction between both that does not take up much time out of each person's schedule. Another pro would include the fact that the interviewee can provide a very well thought out and thorough answer to each question because they can take the questionnaire at their own pace. However, a con related to that pro is that there is a lack of spontaneity and ingenuity in the answers to the questions. A traditional interview style allows for the most genuine answer since there is no planning beforehand.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Chapter 4 includes background descriptions of the interviewed fashion industry professionals selected for the study along with their individual responses to the questionnaire. The collected data information will be organized according to the research question that it supports and answers in the form of direct quotations and paraphrased ideas. This chapter will include an analysis of the responses compared with the existing literature on blogging in the fashion industry as a public relations tool to create approachability and accessibility.

Description of Participating Experts:

Crosby Noricks

One of the most influential people in the fashion public relations world as well as the blogging world is Crosby Noricks. Noricks runs PRcouture.com, a blog with 100k followers for fashion public relations news, job postings, advice, and insight, ranked #5 in the 60 Best Global PR Blogs.

Noricks was included in the “iMedia 25 Class of 2012 as a key influencer in interactive marketing, and is an experienced fashion & consumer marketing strategist” (PRCouture). She also worked at Red Door Interactive, a leading digital market agency and was important in “establishing and growing the award-winning social media department” (PRCouture).

Noricks is also the author of *Ready to Launch: The PR Couture Guide to Breaking into Fashion PR: How to Begin a Successful Career in Fashion Public Relations*. The book has received many accolades from the fashion and public relations community. It was named a “Top 5 Business Book to Read this Summer” by PR Daily and one of the “9 Books Every Style Blogger Should Read” by Independent Fashion Bloggers (IFB).

Stephanie Kent

To get not only a public relations viewpoint but also a fashion blogger viewpoint, Stephanie Kent was interviewed. Kent runs personal style blog, The Cheap Frills, all about being fashionable on a budget. She posts photos of affordable outfits she wears with funny, personality-rich commentary that is extremely relatable to the everyday person. She offers tips on topics like taking outfits from daytime to nighttime and styling for occasions like holidays and events.

Kent also graduated from Chapman University with a degree in public relations and advertising. Currently, she works at Levity Entertainment Group as the Social Media Community Manager. She has interned and worked for numerous entertainment groups in the fields of marketing and public relations.

Jessica Black

The last public relations practitioner interviewed was Jessica Black. Black works for one of the most influential fashion, lifestyle, and beauty public relations

firms in a metropolitan city in Southern California. This firm is bicoastal with offices in another metropolitan city in the East Coast.

This firm focuses on celebrity seeding, digital consulting, and press coverage with clients from leading retailers in the fashion and beauty industry to contemporary fashion and lifestyle and beauty goods. It boasts some of the most reputable and coveted clients in the fashion industry.

Questionnaires

1. *How do you think social media has changed the fashion industry? Do you have any examples or experience of this change? Do you think it has changed it for the better or worse?*

Question 1 was just an introductory question to get a broad answer about how fashion industry has been influenced with the growth of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. Respondents were also asked to provide examples to provide first hand experiences that would display the influence social media has had. Lastly, they were asked to assess whether or not the change was beneficial or detrimental to the fashion community.

- **Crosby Noricks**
 - “Social media has opened up a form of direct communication between brands and fans that was formerly relegated to customer service” (Appendix A).

- “Social media requires brands to pay attention to all social conversations online - not just the perception or interest of traditional media” (Appendix A).
- “In many ways, this has been an incredibly positive thing for the industry. Now that social media has become a perfunctory requirement, we have a new challenge - to cut through the social chatter and continue to produce innovative and buzz-worthy campaigns, opportunities and create PR stories out of experiences and connections rooted in social” (Appendix A).
- **Stephanie Kent**
 - “Social media has exposed the fashion industry to a broader variety of audiences... We can follow fashion bloggers in different countries. This introduces us a to a sense of style informed by a culture we would have otherwise needed to seek out” (Appendix B).
 - “We can also become more involved with the brands we are already familiar with” (Appendix B).
 - “We can talk to them, and consume their content on a daily basis...In some cases, we can even be featured on their social platforms” (Appendix B).
 - “Not only has social media has made fashion more accessible to a broader group of people, and has become more inclusive” (Appendix B).

- “It feels like more of a two way street. Furthermore, websites like Tumblr can create communities for likeminded fashion bloggers who may not have found a place to connect in a more traditional fashion industry” (Appendix B)

- **Jessica Black**

- “Social media has changed every industry and now people have the power of seeing and hearing of everything in ‘real time’” (Appendix C).
- “They are able to express their opinion, and create a powerful voice with an engaged audience in a faster context for better or for worse” (Appendix C).

2. *What do you think is the importance of blogging as a social media platform?*

What does it provide that other platforms don't?

Question 2 tightens the scope from social media to specifically blogging's importance as a branch of social media. It asks specifically what blogging provides the world of social media that other platforms cannot provide.

- **Crosby Noricks**

- “One of the biggest benefits to blogging is how it can improve Search results. It also allows for long or short form text, images, text and audio. In that way it allows for a centralized, multi-media experience” (Appendix A).

- **Stephanie Kent**

- “Blogging allows exploring topics at length” (Appendix B).
 - “The blogger can delve into details that aren’t possible to deliver in 140 characters” (Appendix B).
- “However, this can hurt a blogger just as much as it can help” (Appendix B).
 - “A blogger must be careful to not give more information than necessary—otherwise the reader will move on without reading” (Appendix B).

- **Jessica Black**

- “Blogging has become such a powerful platform, as we have really seen a shift in the power of influence from a celebrity to an ‘everyday’ person” (Appendix C).

3. *How do you think blogging has impacted the fashion industry? Do you think it has changed it for the better or worse?*

Question 3 mimics the structure of question 1. It asks how blogging has influenced the fashion industry as a whole and also whether or not that change has been beneficial or detrimental to the fashion industry. Understanding the specific impact blogging has made in fashion helps lay the groundwork for the study.

- **Crosby Noricks**

- “The rise of fashion blogs...has completely transformed fashion public relations and marketing, chiefly in that there is now an

entirely new set of “media” to consider” (Appendix A).

- “Much like with social media, everyone has an audience now, and influential fashion bloggers are a new target public to pitch and engage with” (Appendix A).
- “I think that in the beginning fashion blogs offered a welcome democratization of fashion, but that lately the focus has turned less from fashion blogging as a form of self-expression and more into a business” (Appendix A).
- **Stephanie Kent**
 - “It’s...been key for communicating directly with an audience” (Appendix B).
 - “The comments section gives the readers a shot at directly giving feedback, which the blogger can use to give content that their audience will like” (Appendix B).
- **Jessica Black**
 - “From a marketing and PR perspective, blogging has heavily changed the fashion industry” (Appendix C).
 - “People are now looking to promote product on bloggers, where their brands can be seen on a personality with a heavy digital footprint” (Appendix C).
 - “Now, everything is trackable; bloggers can promise a post or image with direct link to a specific brand and see immediate sales results” (Appendix C).

4. *Can you describe the different types of fashion blogging in the industry and what they provide to the industry? If you are a fashion blogger, what kind of blogging do you do?*

Question 4 focuses more on blogging and specifically the types of fashion blogging present in the industry currently. Understanding the different types of fashion blogs helps demonstrate that it is a broad field that caters to many audiences and needs.

- **Crosby Noricks**

- “I blog about the role of PR, marketing and social media in the fashion industry” (Appendix A).
 - “I am more of an industry/business/trade blogger than the traditional fashion or style blogger who primarily talks about products and photographs her outfits” (Appendix A).

- **Stephanie Kent**

- “In my professional experience, I’ve noticed that there are lifestyle bloggers; street style bloggers; themed bloggers / cosplay bloggers; and how-to bloggers” (Appendix B).

5. *What tips do you have to become a successful fashion blogger? What are the crucial parts of being successful? Please provide specific examples.*

Question 5 was asked to outline the requirements to be successful in the blogging world. There is a wide array of fashion bloggers out there, but there are few that are actually considered “successful”.

- **Crosby Noricks**

- “A strong brand, unique voice, consistent posting, strong newsletter list” (Appendix A).

- **Stephanie Kent**

- “To become a successful fashion blogger, you have to learn how to find your audience...you cannot expect them to seek you out” (Appendix B).
- “Familiarizing yourself with search engine optimization (SEO) is a great start; learning how to properly tag a post is crucial if you want to be in someone’s search results” (Appendix B).
- “One key thing is taking the time to reach out to other bloggers and/or readers across as many social networks as possible” (Appendix B).
 - “It will start out with them reading your blog and giving you page views, but they will evolve into loyal commenters” (Appendix B).
 - “You can collaborate with other bloggers to increase your exposure” (Appendix B).
- “The bottom line is to get your name out there, because no one else is going to do it for you” (Appendix B).

- **Jessica Black**

- “Cultivating a sense of who you are....and constantly speaking that voice” (Appendix C).
 - “If you don’t know who you are, how would the average consumer or follower understand what you’re about” (Appendix C).
 - “People want to feel like it’s a privilege peak in to the bloggers world and what inspires their everyday!” (Appendix C).

6. *What do you think is the future of fashion blogging? Do you think it is a growing or dying medium? Why do you think it has received a bad reputation of sorts?*

This is a crucial question in the current state of relations between the fashion industry and blogging. Fashion bloggers have received a somewhat bad reputation among the fashion community and it may create an uncertain future for many bloggers. Understanding the future of this industry will also help explain its impact.

- **Crosby Noricks**

- “The old press guard feels threatened by fashion bloggers - they are an easy target because of all the media attention about bloggers getting paid thousands to wear an outfit” (Appendix A).

- “No one likes to feel like they are sharing front row with people who haven’t earned the right to be there” (Appendix A).
 - “Many former fashion editors have left print to start their own digital media companies, like whowhatwear, which a small fashion blogger from Kansas just can’t compete with” (Appendix A).
 - “I think fashion blogs are here to stay, it’s just becoming increasingly competitive and difficult to really build an audience” (Appendix A).
 - “In the beginning we were excited to connect with one another over a shared interest, now it’s more about figuring out how to make money” (Appendix A).
- **Stephanie Kent**
 - “We are portrayed as lacking substance” (Appendix B).
 - “Sure, the fashion industry is plenty shallow. However, fashion blogging is an escape and its roots are dug deep in self-expression—and there is nothing shallow about that” (Appendix B).
 - “I think the future of fashion blogging is going to evolve into a medium with even less text” (Appendix B).
 - “More and more blogs will have shoppable links included for the ease of the consumer” (Appendix B).
- **Jessica Black**

- “Growing! “ (Appendix C).
 - “The platform is evolving constantly, especially as we see bloggers shift to be more desirable as marketing tools, sit front row at Fashion Shows or collaborate with brands” (Appendix C).

7. *How do you think fashion blogging affects approachability in the fashion industry? Do you think it makes the industry more approachable? How so?*

This question is the main focus of the study. Understanding insider opinions on the fashion industry’s approachability and accessibility will help one understand, as a whole, the deepest affect fashion blogging has on the industry.

- **Crosby Noricks**

- “I think that blogging has provided more ways for the average consumer to get a sense of what goes on behind the scenes and in that way, feel more connected to the brands they love” (Appendix A).
 - “Fashion blogging allows anyone with an interest in fashion to participate....and there is something really nice about that” (Appendix A).
- “True high fashion, couture, etc - I don’t think that level of luxury has really become more approachable through blogging” (Appendix A).

- “It’s the same aspirational focus - just now they might throw a blogger into the mix along with regular models” (Appendix A).
 - “The focus on ‘real girl, real style’ and fashion pubs picking that up, Nicolette Mason having a column in Marie Claire, all of this is the result of fashion bloggers all over the world showing the power of their voices to drive attention, perception and sales for fashion products” (Appendix A).
- **Stephanie Kent**
 - “It’s definitely become more approachable!” (Appendix B).
 - “For example, I follow blogs for women with my body shape, which I thought was hopeless to dress when I was 15. I had no idea I had so many options just a few years ago” (Appendix B).
 - “The world of fashion has expanded beyond its restrictive norms thanks to the internet” (Appendix B).
 - “We no longer have to rely on a handful of sources to tell us what looks good and who it will look good on; now everyone has a fair shot at dictating that” (Appendix B).
- **Jessica Black**
 - “Typically, the average consumer is used to seeing fashion trends set by models in the magazines and on the runways, but

bloggers have the ability to change your perception on the 'everyday' gal or guy, and put their personal spin on trends, which makes it feel more accessible and relatable" (Appendix C).

Blogging in the Fashion Industry Research Questions

The following six research questions were designed for this study to determine the impact blogging has had in the fashion industry and its ability to be a public relations tool for fashion industry professionals to make the industry more approachable and accessible. For this study, data from literary articles and interviews with three different experts in the fashion industry were collected to support this study.

Research Question #1: How has social media impacted the fashion industry?

Research question one is the broadest focus question. It highlights the importance the whole world of social media has on the world of fashion.

- Social media has allowed brands to have a relatable voice for its consumers. "Fashion houses, designers and retailers 'are tweeting, blogging and updating their profiles in an effort to mold their brand personalities on real-time global platforms'" (Akahoshi, 2012, pg. 11).
- Social media has finally allowed the fashion industry to be an industry that is no longer shut behind closed, exclusive doors. "The proliferation of online fashion portals, live streaming and social media are bridging the gap between

brands and consumers, making the rarefied world of high fashion more accessible than it has ever been” (Grinberg, 2012).

- Luboc Azria, chief fashion director of BCBG Max Azria, said, "Now with social media, we have a voice. We have a way to express what we feel, why we feel certain things. It's incredible" ... "I think it brought a younger crowd and it also brought the crowd that perhaps never knew this or this about the brand. It brings awareness" ("How", 2014).

Research Question #2: What is blogging's role in the world of social media?

This question tightens the scope on blogging and its importance in the social media world as a whole. Understanding blogging's key role in social media will explain what it provides to the fashion industry that other forms of social media cannot.

- Blogging creates a community that drives an influential role among consumers (Redsicker, 2013).
- Reports find that blogging has become the third most influential digital resource when making overall purchases (Redsicker). Blogging, just under retail sites and brand sites in ranking, was ranked higher than Twitter in shaping opinions and higher than Facebook in “motivating purchase decisions” (Redsicker).

- Blogging has also become an essential form of social media for any media influencer. 86% of media influencers blog and of this percentage, 88% blog for themselves (Redsicker).
- Blogging has also become an extremely reliable source as far as an informational tool. “Blogging in general is considered as a new form of online journalism, enjoying great attention of users, based on a personal and interactive approach, versus the standardized treatment through mainstream media” (Sedeke & Arora, 2013).

Research Question #3: How has blogging affected the fashion industry?

This question is closing in on the main focus of the study. Blogging has obviously had an impact on the fashion industry, but understanding the implications of this impact is key.

- Typically the fashion industry is one that is not only hard to access, but also expensive to access. However, after the birth of user generated content like blogs “allows participation in this specific subculture with no material limitations and makes fashion more accessible and democratized” (Sedeke & Arora).
- Bloggers are now key members of the fashion industry that have become some of the most desirable attendees at notoriously exclusive fashion events like New York Fashion Week. “Typically equipped with just a smartphone, bloggers and tweeters are telling the world about designers' collections for spring/summer 2011 -- which won't be for sale in stores

for months -- within seconds of models hitting the runways” (Nichols, 2010).

Research Question #4: What types of fashion blogging are out there and what are their uses?

There are many types of fashion blogging out there and understanding the types is crucial in understanding fashion blogging as a whole.

- There are several types of fashion blogs, but among the most popular are personal style blogs, street style blogs, and designer blogs.
- Personal style blogs are blogs in which every day individuals post daily photos of their outfits and style. Among the most popular personal style bloggers are Tessa Mu, Julia Engel, Rumi Neely, and Leandra Medine.
- The start to street style blogging began in 2005 with Scott Schuman and his street style blog, The Sartorialist (Sherman, 2010). He has made his street style photography business into campaigns with Burberry and DKNY Jeans, two best-selling books, and a place in Time Magazine’s Top 100 Design Influences (Amand, 2011).
- Most designers have begun to post regularly to their blogs as a “behind-the-scenes” look on the brand and to post about things related to the brand. Marc Jacobs’ blog, for example, used by the blog medium tumblr, posts all Marc Jacobs related things along with things that go along with the Marc Jacobs aesthetic.

Research Question #5: How can one become a successful fashion blogger?

Success is what most fashion bloggers strive for. Success can cultivate partnerships with fashion houses, a strong following, and a strong presence in the fashion industry. There are not many successful fashion bloggers out there, but those that are successful have skyrocketed to fame in the fashion industry.

- One of the most important parts of being a successful fashion blogger is standing out and building your brand. According to popular magazine Teen Vogue, “While creating a blog is easy, garnering a solid following isn't as simple” (Lewis). Having a genuine passion for your topic and having content that you enjoy writing are also key (Lewis).
- Utilizing personal style sites like Lookbook.nu and Chictopia are another way to gain readership. Also using another blogging platform, like tumblr which is more visually based, is a good supplement to a fashion blog. Budding style blogger Lindsay was quoted in Teen Vogue saying, “My Tumblr is another extension of my brand as a blogger, and I like that it allows readers to experience my blog in a different medium” (Lewis).
- Linking your fashion blog to other social media sites allows different views for different mediums. Posting photos on Instagram with different hashtags can make your post searchable and posting updates on Facebook and Twitter allows for immediacy and updates (12 Secrets).

Research Question #6: What is the future of fashion blogging?

The future of fashion blogging is one that has recently been under discussion. Many fashion bloggers have received bad reputations among the industry. Understanding the future will help practitioners in the fashion public relations world determine the necessity of blogging.

- In September 2013, Fern Mallis, creator of New York Fashion Week, gave a talk and bemoaned the current state of New York Fashion Week, specifically mentioning how fashion bloggers have gained priority over industry leaders in seating at fashion shows (Wang, 2013).
- Catherine Bennet, the director of New York Fashion Week, announced in December 2013, that the seating controversy was set to change. Bennet said, "It was becoming a zoo. What used to be a platform for established designers to debut their collections to select media and buyers has developed into a cluttered, often cost-prohibitive and exhausting period for our industry to effectively do business" (Wang).
- The Wall Street Journal reported that IMG, the company that runs New York Fashion Week, planned to cut their media guest list by 20%, most of which were fashion bloggers (Wang).

Table 1

Summary of Respondents Answers

Questions	Crosby Noricks	Stephanie Kent	Jessica Black
How has social media impacted the fashion industry?	Social media has opened up a form of direct communication between brands and fans that was formerly relegated to customer service	Social media has exposed the fashion industry to a broader variety of audiences	They are able to express their opinion, and create a powerful voice with an engaged audience in a faster context for better or for worse
What is blogging's role in the world of social media?	One of the biggest benefits to blogging is how it can improve Search results. It also allows for long or short form text, images, text and audio. In that way it allows for a centralized, multi-media experience	Blogging allows exploring topics at length	Blogging has become such a powerful platform, as we have really seen a shift in the power of influence from a celebrity to an 'everyday' person
How has blogging affected the fashion industry?	The rise of fashion blogs...has completely transformed fashion public relations and marketing, chiefly in that there is now an entirely new set of "media" to consider	It's...been key for communicating directly with an audience	From a marketing and PR perspective, blogging has heavily changed the fashion industry

What types of fashion blogging are out there and what are their uses?	"I am more of an industry/business/trade blogger than the traditional fashion or style blogger who primarily talks about products and photographs her outfits	In my professional experience, I've noticed that there are lifestyle bloggers; street style bloggers; themed bloggers / cosplay bloggers; and how-to bloggers	N/A
How can one become a successful fashion blogger?	A strong brand, unique voice, consistent posting, strong newsletter list	The bottom line is to get your name out there, because no one else is going to do it for you	Cultivating a sense of who you are....and constantly speaking that voice
What is the future of fashion blogging?	I think fashion blogs are here to stay, it's just becoming increasingly competitive and difficult to really build and audience	I think the future of fashion blogging is going to evolve into a medium with even less text	The platform is evolving constantly, especially as we see bloggers shift to be more desirable as marketing tools, sit front row at Fashion Shows or collaborate with brands

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendation

Summary

Fashion is an industry that many people admire and want to be a part of, but it gives across an image of exclusivity that intimidates the everyday audience. But, with the rise of social media, and specifically blogging, this cover of exclusivity has slowly been peeled back. This study was created in response to the growth of fashion blogging as a career or hobby to possibility utilize this medium as a public relations tool to make the fashion industry one that is more approachable and accessible to a wider variety of audiences.

Social media has created a greater option for two-way communication between fashion brands and their audiences. This peels back one layer of the exclusivity that the fashion industry is surrounded in. Blogging, specifically, allows for anyone to participate in the fashion world and gives everyone the chance to become influential in this industry. With the rise of fashion bloggers as prominent leaders in the fashion world, blogging has become more and more of a coveted outlet for the everyday person.

To receive a higher understanding of fashion blogging and its potential use as a public relations tool, three fashion industry professionals were interviewed. All three were fashion public relations practitioners. One was not only a practitioner, but also a personal style blogger. Another was not only a prominent practitioner in the fashion public relations world, but also a public relations blogger and author.

They were all sent a questionnaire with carefully constructed questions, designed to answer the following research questions regarding the study:

1. How has social media impacted the fashion industry?
2. What is blogging's role in the world of social media?
3. How has blogging affected the fashion industry?
4. What types of fashion blogging are out there and what are their uses?
5. How can one become a successful fashion blogger?
6. What is the future of fashion blogging?

Discussion

Analysis of the data recovered from Chapter 4 displays that the responses collected during the questionnaires provide supporting evidence to the existing literature in Chapter 2, which allows for conclusions to be drawn about utilizing blogging as a public relations tool to make the fashion industry more approachable and accessible.

Research Question #1: How has social media impacted the fashion industry?

The rise of social media is something that all industries cannot ignore and must take advantage of. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram provide a sense of immediacy that was never present before social media.

All three respondents agree that social media has changed the approach of communication the fashion industry, allowing brands to reach broader audiences in a more direct and quick manner. Kent focuses on the fact that social media allows

for audiences to “become more involved with the brands [they] are already familiar with” (Appendix B).

The literature also focuses on the way social media has changed communication between fashion brands and their audiences. Luboc Azria, chief fashion director of BCBG Max Azria, said, “Now with social media, we have a voice. We have a way to express what we feel, why we feel certain things. It’s incredible” (How, 2014).

“The proliferation of online fashion portals, live streaming and social media are bridging the gap between brands and consumers, making the rarefied world of high fashion more accessible than it has ever been” (Grinberg, 2012). There is no longer a disconnect between the audience and the fashion industry. Social media has allowed for a stronger connection between the two.

Research Question #2: What is blogging’s role in the world of social media?

Blogging is a completely different platform for social media than traditional forms like Facebook. They have the versatility to be as private or as public and searchable as the user would like. Blogging can be utilized in many different forms like a travel blog, a food blog, and a fashion blog.

Blogging has also become an essential form of social media for any media influencer. 86% of media influencers blog and of this percentage, 88% blog for themselves (Redsicker). Blogging, just under retail sites and brand sites in ranking, was ranked higher than Twitter in shaping opinions and higher than Facebook in “motivating purchase decisions” (Redsicker).

One of the main differences blogging has from other forms of social media is its utilization of search engine optimization (SEO). Noricks said “one of the biggest benefits to blogging is how it can improve search results. It also allows for long or short form text, images, text and audio. In that way it allows for a centralized, multi-media experience” (Appendix A).

Research Question #3: How has blogging affected the fashion industry?

Blogging has changed the fashion industry completely. Some of the most influential people in the industry today are fashion bloggers who started from the bottom and were real trailblazers in the rise of blogging. “Influential fashion bloggers are the new target public to pitch and engage with” (Appendix A).

Fashion blogging has allowed the consumer to see fashion in a new light. “Typically, the average consumer is used to seeing fashion trends set by models in the magazines and on the runways, but bloggers have the ability to change your perception on the ‘everyday’ gal or guy, and put their personal spin on trends, which makes it feel more accessible and relatable” (Appendix C).

Fashion blogging has created almost a new celebrity that get some of the most coveted partnerships and opportunities that used to be exclusive to industry-only individuals. “People are now looking to promote product on bloggers, where their brands can be seen on a personality with a heavy digital footprint” (Appendix C).

Now, at notoriously exclusive fashion events like New York Fashion Week, there are a plethora of fashion bloggers that started out as every day people in the

front row of the most coveted shows. “Typically equipped with just a smartphone, bloggers and tweeters are telling the world about designers' collections for spring/summer 2011 -- which won't be for sale in stores for months -- within seconds of models hitting the runways” (Nichols, 2010).

However, this does come with a price. “In the beginning fashion blogs offered a welcome democratization of fashion, but that lately the focus has turned less from fashion blogging as a form of self-expression and more into a business” (Appendix A). The world of fashion blogging has slowly moved from an outlet for personal style and personal expression to a business or a career.

Research Question #4: What types of fashion blogging are out there and what are their uses?

Just as there are many types of blogs in general in the world of blogging, there are many types of blogs within the subset of fashion blogging. The three most widely used fashion blogs are: street style blogs, in which photographers capture inspirational fashion looks from off the street, personal style blogs, where people document outfits they wear daily, and designer blogs that represent the voice of fashion houses.

There are also other forms of bloggers like “themed bloggers/cosplay bloggers” (Appendix B) who have a running theme throughout their blog in which they cater their outfits too, for example, a strictly 1940’s era-inspired blogger who posts photos of themselves in 1940’s style garb as outfit inspiration. There are also

business and trade bloggers, like Noricks, who blogs about the business side of the fashion industry and provides advice to those who want to get into the field.

Research Question #5: How can one become successful fashion blogger?

All three respondents highlighted the importance of having “a strong brand, unique voice, [and] consistent posting” (Appendix A). This creates a sense of personal branding that is crucial to the success of a fashion blogger and allows for potential partnerships and collaborations with other bloggers, fashion houses, etc. Personal branding also allows audiences to get a clear idea of who the fashion blogger is and what makes them stand out amongst the rest. “If you don’t know who you are, how would the average consumer or follower understand what you’re about?” (Appendix C).

Another factor highlighted is outreach. “While creating a blog is easy, garnering a solid following isn’t as simple” (Lewis). With so many people tapping into the world of fashion blogging, being able to make a substantial and lasting impression is key to success. “To become a successful fashion blogger, you have to learn to find your audience...you cannot expect them to seek you out” (Appendix B).

Research Question #6: What is the future of fashion blogging?

The future of fashion blogging is one that has recently come under fire in the press. Professionals in the fashion industry have begun to resent fashion bloggers because bloggers have begun to gain precedence over industry leaders in seating at fashion shows. “It was becoming a zoo. What used to be a platform for established

designers to debut their collections to select media and buyers has developed into a cluttered, often cost-prohibitive and exhausting period for our industry to effectively do business” (Wang).

“The old press guard feels threatened by fashion bloggers - they are an easy target because of all the media attention about bloggers getting paid thousands to wear an outfit.... No one likes to feel like they are sharing front row with people who haven’t earned the right to be there” (Appendix A).

As far as the presence of fashion blogs, they seem to be here to stay. All three interview respondents agreed that the world of fashion blogging is growing and will continue to become valuable in the fashion world. But, though the world of fashion blogging is growing, the success rate may not grow along with it. Fashion blogging is “becoming increasingly competitive and difficult to really build an audience” (Appendix A).

Recommendation for Practice

Through the research of literature on the topic and the answers from professionals in the industry, it is evident that fashion blogging is an extremely invaluable asset to the fashion industry that should be utilized as a public relations tool to reach broader audiences. Recommendations for practice include having a unique voice, have active communication, and utilize various forms of social media.

Create a Unique Personal Brand

Blogging is most effective and relatable when there is a unique brand and voice for followers to get behind. With a sea of rising fashion bloggers, it's easy to fall into the background. Finding a voice that has yet to be spoken will set a blogger apart from all the others, and will be the first step to successfully utilizing blogging for public relations purposes. In the end, blogging is all about "cultivating a sense of who you are...and constantly speaking that voice" (Appendix C).

Consistency in that voice is also key to success. Having five different voices for one blog would be confusing and hard for readers to follow and understand. Readers feel that they can relate to someone who is always consistent; no surprises, just exactly what the reader expects when clicking upon the blog.

The most successful bloggers are those who have had unique voices that stood out. "The focus on 'real girl, real style' and fashion pubs picking that up, Nicolette Mason having a column in Marie Claire, all of this is the result of fashion bloggers all over the world showing the power of their voices to drive attention, perception and sales for fashion products" (Appendix A).

Communicate, communicate, communicate.

Along with having a consistent voice, having a voice that goes beyond just writing on the blog is key. One of the biggest benefits of blogging is its ability to open up communication between fashion brands/professionals and their audiences. Blogging has "been key for communicating directly with an audience...The

comments section gives the readers a shot at directly giving feedback, which the blogger can use to give content that their audience will like” (Appendix B).

Finding an audience and other bloggers to communicate with is also key to successful blogging “You have to learn how to find your audience...you simply cannot expect them to seek you out” (Appendix B). You must “build a network of supporters” (Appendix B). They will then start out by “reading your blog and giving you page views, but they will evolve into loyal commenters...comment on other people’s posts, like someone’s photo, start a Twitter conversation. Find them and engage them – that’s how you’ll keep them” (Appendix B).

Having this level of engagement destroys the golden walls the fashion industry used to hide behind because now there are voices associated with different fashion houses and brand, and these voices respond to everyday voices.

Be a Jack of All Social Media Trades

To be successful in blogging, one must have a strong social media presence to back it up. Being present in all other forms of social media leads to a level of connectivity that makes it easier for the audience to access at any time. For example, posting photos onto Instagram with different hashtags makes posts searchable in the Instagram world. Posting Facebook and Twitter updates allows for immediacy and updates that a blog cannot supply (12 Secrets).

There are also communities on the internet for those who are interested in fashion and personal style bloggers. Utilizing personal style sites like Lookbook and Chictopia are another way to gain readership. Posting photos on a profile can

attract people to click further into the blog. Another blogging platform, Tumblr, is extremely visual. It is typically not used as a traditional blogging platform, but more as a supplement to display the blogger's aesthetic and taste, rather than just their writing. A blogger interviewed on Teen Vogue mentioned her Tumblr as "another extension of my brand as a blogger, and I like that it allows reader to experience my blog in a different medium" (Lewis).

Study Conclusion

In conclusion, with the collected findings in the study, blogging should be utilized as a public relations tool to add relatability and accessibility to the fashion industry. The rise of social media has allowed the industry to add a "behind-the-scenes" feel and blogging will provide another personal touch to this already growing public relations tool. Blogs, such as personal style blogs and street style blogs, provide a "real life" look at the fashion industry and its applications outside of magazines and runways. The study provided opinions from various public relations practitioners in the fashion industry along with an extensive review of the current literature on the topic. There is currently not extensive literature on the subject, however, because blogging is a fairly new trade that has only gained precedence in the fashion industry within the last few years. The study and overall recommendations for using blogging as a public relations tool in the fashion industry is of subjective findings and may not be applicable to all individuals and experts within the fashion industry. This study is used as an educational tool for those interested in fashion public relations and can serve as a guide to those

individuals who are interested in fashion blogging and getting into the fashion industry.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire Responses: Crosby Noricks

The following questionnaire was sent out to professionals in the fashion industry to collect opinions about social media and blogging and their affects on the fashion industry.

Questionnaire Creator: Jordana Shiau

Respondent: Creator of PRCouture.com (Crosby Noricks)

Questionnaire Distribution Date: 03/03/2014

1. How do you think social media has changed the fashion industry? Do you have any examples or experience of this change? Do you think it has changed it for the better or worse?

Social media has opened up a form of direct communication between brands and fans that was formerly relegated to customer service. Social media has given those working behind the scenes (aka DKNY PR Girl) a voice and in some cases, these individuals have become personalities in their own right. Social media requires brands to pay attention to all social conversations online - not just the perception or interest of traditional media. In many ways, this has been an incredibly positive thing for the industry. Now that social media has become a perfunctory requirement, we have a new challenge - to cut through the social chatter and continue to produce innovative and buzz-worthy campaigns, opportunities and create PR stories out of

experiences and connections rooted in social.

2. What do you think is the importance of blogging as a social media platform? What does it provide that other platforms don't?

One of the biggest benefits to blogging is how it can improve Search results. It also allows for long or short form text, images, text and audio. In that way it allows for a centralized, multi-media experience.

3. How do you think blogging has impacted the fashion industry? Do you think it has changed it for the better or worse?

The rise of fashion blogs (setting aside the idea of company blogs for a moment), has completely transformed fashion public relations and marketing, chiefly in that there is now an entirely new set of “media” to consider. Much like with social media, everyone has an audience now, and influential fashion bloggers are a new target public to pitch and engage with. I think that in the beginning fashion blogs offered a welcome democratization of fashion, but that lately the focus has turned less from fashion blogging as a form of self-expression and more into a business. Just like when punk rock ended up in Hot Topic stores in the mall, there is always something a bit sad about a subculture hitting the mainstream.

4. Can you describe the different types of fashion blogging in the industry and what they provide to the industry? If you are a fashion blogger, what kind of blogging do you do?

First question could be 10 pages. I blog about the role of PR,

marketing and social media in the fashion industry. In that way, I am more of an industry/business/trade blogger than the traditional fashion or style blogger who primarily talks about products and photographs her outfits.

5. What tips do you have to become a successful fashion blogger? What are the crucial parts of being successful? Please provide specific examples.

A strong brand, unique voice, consistent posting, strong newsletter list.

6. What do you think is the future of fashion blogging? Do you think it is a growing or dying medium? Why do you think it has received a bad reputation of sorts?

The old press guard feels threatened by fashion bloggers - they are an easy target because of all the media attention about bloggers getting paid thousands to wear an outfit. No one likes to feel like they are sharing front row with people who haven't earned the right to be there. That said, many former fashion editors have left print to start their own digital media companies (like who what wear) which a small fashion blogger from Kansas just can't compete with. I think fashion blogs are here to stay, it's just becoming increasingly competitive and difficult to really build and audience. In the beginning we were excited to connect with one another over a shared interest, now it's more about figuring out how to make money.

7. How do you think fashion blogging affects approachability in the

fashion industry? Do you think it makes the industry more approachable? How so?

It's hard to generalize - I think that blogging has provided more ways for the average consumer to get a sense of what goes on behind the scenes and in that way, feel more connected to the brands they love. Fashion blogging allows anyone with an interest in fashion to participate (even with little to no impact), and there is something really nice about that. True high fashion, couture etc - I don't think that level of luxury has really become more approachable through blogging - its the same aspirational focus - just now they might throw a blogger into the mix along with regular models (as long as that blogger looks almost like a model, of course!). That said, the focus on "real girl, real style" and fashion pubs picking that up, Nicolette Mason having a column in Marie Claire, all of this is the result of fashion bloggers all over the world showing the power of their voices to drive attention, perception and sales for fashion products.

Appendix B

Questionnaire Responses: Stephanie Kent

The following questionnaire was sent out to professionals in the fashion industry to collect opinions about social media and blogging and their affects on the fashion industry.

Questionnaire Creator: Jordana Shiau

Respondent: Fashion Blogger and Public Relations Practitioner (Stephanie Kent)

Questionnaire Distribution Date: 03/03/2014

1. How do you think social media has changed the fashion industry? Do you have any examples or experience of this change? Do you think it has changed it for the better or worse?

Social media has exposed the fashion industry to a broader variety of audiences. Be it through the massive number of street style blogs available to look at, or perusing hashtagged Instagram posts (#ootd), we are suddenly million's of people's wardrobes in just a few passive clicks. We can follow fashion bloggers in different countries. This introduces us a to a sense of style informed by a culture we would have otherwise needed to seek out.

We can also become more involved with the brands we are already familiar with. We can talk to them, and consume their content on a daily basis (as opposed to waiting for a monthly fashion spread). In

some cases, we can even be featured on their social platforms. That's amazing!

Not only has social media has made fashion more accessible to a broader group of people, and has become more inclusive. It feels like more of a two way street. Furthermore, websites like Tumblr can create communities for likeminded fashion bloggers who may not have found a place to connect in a more traditional fashion industry. (Examples: curvier women, goth women, etc.)

2. What do you think is the importance of blogging as a social media platform? What does it provide that other platforms don't?

Blogging allows exploring topics at length. The blogger can delve into details that aren't possible to deliver in 140 characters. However, this can hurt a blogger just as much as it can help. A blogger must be careful to not give more information than necessary—otherwise the reader will move on without reading.

3. How do you think blogging has impacted the fashion industry? Do you think it has changed it for the better or worse?

Blogging has been fantastic for breaking down a look piece by piece. It's also been key for communicating directly with an audience. The comments section gives the readers a shot at directly giving feedback, which the blogger can use to give content that their audience will like.

4. Can you describe the different types of fashion blogging in the industry and what they provide to the industry? If you are a fashion blogger, what kind of blogging do you do?

In my professional experience (ie: I am not a professional), I've noticed that there are lifestyle bloggers (people who document their day-to-days); street style bloggers (those who write about other people on the street); themed bloggers / cosplay bloggers (these bloggers dedicate their work to dressing up like fictional characters, or dress in a niche style, such as someone from the prohibition era); and how-to bloggers (those who demonstrate how to put together a look for a specific occasion).

5. What tips do you have to become a successful fashion blogger? What are the crucial parts of being successful? Please provide specific examples.

To become a successful fashion blogger, you have to learn how to find your audience. You simply cannot expect them to seek you out. Familiarizing yourself with SEO is a great start; learning how to properly tag a post is crucial if you want to be in someone's search results. One key thing is taking the time to reach out to other bloggers and/or readers across as many social networks as possible. This will build a network of supporters. It will start out with them reading your blog and giving you page views, but they will evolve into loyal commenters. You can collaborate with other bloggers to increase your exposure. Comment on other people's posts, like someone's photo,

start a Twitter conversation. Find them and engage them--that's how you will keep them. Link to your own blog EVERYWHERE. Putting it in your LookBook signature? Yep! Linking to it in a comment on a random Neopets forum? Sure! The bottom line is to get your name out there, because no one else is going to do it for you.

6. What do you think is the future of fashion blogging? Do you think it is a growing or dying medium? Why do you think it has received a bad reputation of sorts?

As a fashion blogger, I can say this with full confidence: We are portrayed as lacking substance. Which isn't completely untrue! Sure, the fashion industry is plenty shallow. However, fashion blogging is an escape and its roots are dug deep in self-expression—and there is nothing shallow about that. (Other than posting 30 selfies in a row to show off your new beanie. That's a teensy bit shallow.) I think the future of fashion blogging is going to evolve into a medium with even less text. More and more blogs will have shoppable links included for the ease of the consumer. Fashion bloggers will need to be more business savvy, and that's a great way to accomplish that.

7. How do you think fashion blogging affects approachability in the fashion industry? Do you think it makes the industry more approachable? How so?

It's definitely become more approachable! For example, I follow blogs for women with my body shape, which I thought was hopeless to

dress when I was 15. I had no idea I had so many options just a few years ago. Now I have an entire world of choices at my fingertips. The world of fashion has expanded beyond its restrictive norms thanks to the internet. We no longer have to rely on a handful of sources to tell us what looks good and who it will look good on; now *everyone* has a fair shot at dictating that.

Appendix C

Questionnaire Responses: Jessica Black

The following questionnaire was sent out to professionals in the fashion industry to collect opinions about social media and blogging and their affects on the fashion industry.

Questionnaire Creator: Jordana Shiau

Respondent: Public Relations Practitioner (Jessica Black)

Questionnaire Distribution Date: 03/03/2014

- 1. How do you think social media has changed the fashion industry? Do you have any examples or experience of this change? Do you think it has changed it for the better or worse? What do you think is the importance of blogging as a social media platform? What does it provide that other platforms don't?**

Social media has changed every industry and now people have the power of seeing and hearing of everything in "real time." They are able to express their opinion, and create a powerful voice with an engaged audience in a faster context for better or for worse. Blogging has become such a powerful platform, as we have really seen a shift in the power of influence from a celebrity to an 'everyday' person.

- 2. How do you think blogging has impacted the fashion industry? Do you think it has changed it for the better or worse?**

From a marketing and PR perspective, blogging has heavily changed the fashion industry. People are now looking to promote product on bloggers, where their brands can be seen on a personality with a heavy digital footprint. Previously, brands relied on celebrities to wear their clothes for random paparazzi shots. Now, everything is trackable; bloggers can promise a post or image with direct link to a specific brand and see immediate sales results.

- 3. Can you describe the different types of fashion blogging in the industry and what they provide to the industry? If you are a fashion blogger, what kind of blogging do you do?**

N/A

- 4. What tips do you have to become a successful fashion blogger? What are the crucial parts of being successful? Please provide specific examples.**

Whether it is a blog or a company, cultivating a sense of who you are (what your style is, aesthetic, branding, etc) and constantly speaking that voice. If you don't know who you are, how would the average consumer or follower understand what your about. People want to feel like it's a privilege peak in to the bloggers world and what inspires their everyday!

- 5. What do you think is the future of fashion blogging? Do you think it is a growing or dying medium? Why do you think it has received a bad reputation of sorts?**

Growing! The platform is evolving constantly, especially as we see bloggers shift to be more desirable as marketing tools, sit front row at Fashion Shows or collaborate with brands (fashion, accessories, etc).

6. How do you think fashion blogging affects approachability in the fashion industry? Do you think it makes the industry more approachable? How so?

Typically, the average consumer is used to seeing fashion trends set by models in the magazines and on the runways, but bloggers have the ability to change your perception on the 'everyday' gal or guy, and put their personal spin on trends, which makes it feel more accessible and relatable.