

The Role of Social Media in the Fashion Industry: How Fashion Blogging Encourages Two-Way
Symmetrical Communication

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 Degree

Bachelor of Science in Journalism

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June 2014

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ABSTRACT

Over the past few years, social media and digital media have drastically changed how people consume content, especially in the fashion industry. People are no longer picking up magazines as often as they have in the past. Today, content is consumed online and people are not only reading content, but they are offering their feedback through comments and social media. Multiple types of fashion blogs managed by everyday people are giving consumers an inside look into what used to be an exclusive, fashion-experts-only industry. This study looks at fashion blogging and social media within the fashion industry and how it has transformed an elitist industry into a consumer-friendly industry.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Background of the Stated Problem.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	2
Setting of the Study.....	2
Research Questions.....	3
Definition of Terms.....	3
Organization of Study.....	4
Chapter 2.....	5
Literature Review.....	5
Social Media’s Impact in the Fashion Industry.....	5
Fashion Blogging’s Importance in the Fashion Industry.....	6
Fashion Blogging Defined and the Types of Fashion Blogging.....	6
The Impact of Fashion Blogging in Social Media in the Fashion Industry.....	6
How Fashion Blogging Creates a Two-Way Symmetrical Approach in the Fashion Industry.....	7
The Future of Fashion Blogging.....	8
Chapter 3.....	9
Methodology.....	9
Data Sources.....	9
Participants.....	9

Interview Design.....	10
Data Collection.....	11
Data Presentation.....	11
Limitations.....	11
Delimitations.....	11
Chapter 4.....	12
Data Analysis.....	12
Description of Participating Industry Experts.....	12
Social Media and Fashion Blogging Questionnaire.....	13
Fashion Blogging and Social Media Research Questions.....	23
Comparison of Literature and Qualitative Data.....	25
Chapter 5.....	35
Conclusion.....	35
Summary.....	35
Discussion.....	35
Recommendations for Practice.....	40
Study Conclusion.....	40
References.....	42
Appendix A.....	47
Interview Transcript: Aliza Licht	
Appendix B.....	51
Interview Transcript: Jennifer Bett Meyer	

Appendix C.....53

Interview Transcript: Callie Gisler

Appendix D.....55

Interview Transcript: Danika Daly

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. <i>Social Media's Impact in the Fashion Industry</i>	27
Table 2. <i>The Importance of Fashion Blogging Within the Fashion Industry</i>	28
Table 3. <i>Existing Types of Fashion Blogging</i>	30
Table 4. <i>The Impact of Fashion Blogging in Social Media</i>	31
Table 5. <i>How Fashion Blogging Encourages Two-Way Symmetrical Communication in the Fashion Industry</i>	33
Table 6. <i>How Fashion Blogging Will Affect the Fashion Industry in the Future</i>	34

Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

This study discusses how traditional media is no longer encouraging effective two-way communication between fashion brands and consumers. The fashion industry has been known for being extremely exclusive to everyone but the insiders. It was difficult for every day consumers to understand what really goes on within the fashion industry. Traditional media further reiterated this exclusivity.

Today, focus in the fashion industry has drifted toward digital media, specifically fashion blogs and social media. Both fashion blogs and social media have recently made an elitist industry more accessible and relatable to every day consumers. Fashion bloggers are encouraging a two-way symmetrical approach by opening up communication between those in the fashion industry and citizens. Fashion blogger are now using their influence to drive trends, inform the public about the latest fashion news and more. The research collected in this study will demonstrate how fashion blogging and social media have impacted and benefitted the fashion industry and consumers alike.

Background of the Stated Problem

The fashion industry is revitalizing itself through social media and fashion blogging. Social media has created an open channel of communication between organizations and citizens. Organizations can now communicate directly to citizens and vice versa through social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Fashion blogging has also recently become a popular form of communication between designers and brands, and bloggers and citizens. According to Kelly Cutrone, owner of fashion house People's Revolution, "people want to feel connected" (Prabhaker, 2010) and that's exactly what fashion bloggers are helping to accomplish. Fashion bloggers are encouraging two-way communication between those in the fashion industry and consumers. "Fashion bloggers aren't just cool guys with cameras anymore. [...] They are designers, freelance consultants, copywriters, sometimes wannabe stars" (Francois, 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to look at how fashion bloggers are encouraging a two-way symmetrical model of communication between brands and consumers. This can help those in the fashion industry and other industries learn how to target their consumers better and create mutually beneficial relationships with them.

Setting for the Study

This study incorporates data collection for the completion of a senior project at the California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. The experts used for this study have backgrounds in public relations within the fashion industry and have knowledge about fashion blogging and social media use for brands. The experts will be asked questions based on their expertise with public relations, fashion blogging and social media. The goal of the study is to understand how fashion blogging and social media encourage two-way communication within the industry.

Research Questions

The following questions were developed to understand social media's and fashion blogging's current role and impact in the fashion industry. The purpose of the following questions also helps to discover how and why fashion blogging and the use of social media can be beneficial for brands.

1. How does social media impact the fashion industry?
2. Why is fashion blogging important for the fashion industry?
3. What types of fashion blogging are out there and what are their uses?
4. How is fashion blogging impacting social media in the fashion industry?
5. How does fashion blogging create a two-way symmetrical approach in public relations within the fashion industry?
6. How will fashion blogging affect the fashion industry in the future?

Definition of Terms

The terms listed below are presented to the reader to assist in comprehension of the study in its entirety.

Social Media: “Media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques” (Bodnar, 2011).

Two-Way Symmetrical Model: A public relations model that “uses communication to negotiate with the public, resolve conflict and promote mutual understanding and respect between the organization and its stakeholders” (Waddington, 2012).

Blog: “Blogs are usually maintained by an individual or business with regular entries of commentary, description of events, or other material such as graphics or video. ‘Blog’ can also be used as a verb, meaning to *maintain or add content to a blog*” (Bodnar, 2011).

Fashion: “Fashion is about aesthetics, theatre and meaning, not merely comfort” (Rabkin, 2014).

Fashion Blogging: “Fashion blogs are blogs that cover the fashion industry, clothing, and personal style” (2013, Jul 29).

Organization of the Study

This study is divided into five parts. Chapter 1 discusses the problem, background, research questions and terms for this study. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature used for this study. Chapter 3 details the methodology of this study. It will review the data sources, interview design, data presentation and limitations. Chapter 4 includes an analysis from the interviews conducted. This chapter includes descriptions of the interview respondents, research questions and the research data. Chapter 5 is a summary of the study complete with recommendations for professionals in the fashion industry and how they can best encourage communication with their consumers. The final pages will include references that were used to support the thesis in addition to transcriptions of the interviews conducted with the respondents.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This review of literature focuses on the existing materials related to communication tactics used in the fashion industry.

Social Media's Impact in the Fashion Industry

New media is “drastically changing the dialogue about fashion whereby we can upon our on-demand desire for trends and gain access to them anytime, anywhere, and on any platform” (2012, Oct 26). Social media has allowed brands and designers to connect with the public in an instant. “Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, Pinterest and every other form of social media have been inundated with live-streams, tweets, posts and pins – and not just from the brands or designers themselves” (Strugatz, 2013).

“This is fashion in the age of Instagram, a heady era in which digital media is changing the way clothes are presented and even the way they are designed” (Schneier, 2014). According to designer Alexander Wang, the impact of social media today affects the designs. “The way that we shoot it, the way that we showcase it and the way that we make the clothes and design them changed,” Wang said (Schneier, 2014). Large scale fashion events like New York Fashion Week used to be extremely exclusive. But now, if you have an Internet connection, you can follow New York Fashion Week in the comfort of your own home located 5,000 miles away (Dunne, 2014).

Fashion Blogging's Importance in the Fashion Industry

“The web has made it possible for ordinary consumers to reach a mass audience, to ‘grab hold of the megaphone’” (McQuarrie, 2013). Fashion blogging has created a community of influencers. Consumers have said that blogs “rank higher than Twitter for shaping their opinions and higher than Facebook for motivating purchasing decisions” (Redsicker, 2013).

Fashion blogging has had a huge impact on the fashion industry. In the Technorati Digital Influence Report 2013, a study that surveyed influencers, consumers and brand marketers, blogs came in as #3 most likely online service to influence a purchase. Blogs came in right under retail sites and brand sites (Jacob, 2013). In 2013, clothing retailer H&M even created an outlet brand that was influenced by social media and fashion blogging (Rickey, 2013).

Fashion Blogging Defined & the Types of Fashion Blogging

Fashion blogging is simply just blogging about fashion, but it's that not easy. “Ironically, one of the best things about blogging – that anyone with a computer, a point-and-shoot, and an internet connection can do it – also poses the greatest challenge: how to stand out from the crowd” (Lewis, 2012). Successful fashion bloggers build brands that gain a following and are influential within the fashion community.

The Impact of Fashion Blogging in Social Media in the Fashion Industry

“It is great to see the commentaries from smart bloggers – especially those in countries like China or Russia, where there was, in the past, little possibility of sharing fashion thoughts and dreams” (Menkes, 2013). Fashion blogging has opened up communication between regular people and those high up in the fashion industry. Leandra Medine of popular fashion blog *Man*

Repeller says, “Reading fashion from a person like yourself’s point of view is something really special, and I think it’s great that fashion blogging is letting everyone feel like an insider” (Burcz, 2012).

Fashion bloggers have also stepped into social media and used it to further their influence in the fashion industry. Uri Minkoff, CEO of Rebecca Minkoff, said, “Certain bloggers have a very large following with influencer ability. They have a great power to mobilize their audience as tastemakers” (Grinberg, 2012).

How Fashion Blogging Creates a Two-Way Symmetrical Approach in the Fashion Industry

Fashion blogging encourages the communication between brands, bloggers and consumers. Popular fashion blogger Leandra Medine has created a connection between designer brands and her readers. “It’s that direct line to fans and potential consumers that make Medine a desirable brand to designers and brands” (Grinberg, 2012). Medine takes to social media to connect with her readers and give them an inside look into everything regarding the fashion world. Anna Wintour, the editor-in-chief of *Vogue Magazine* embraces fashion bloggers for bridging the gap between brands and consumers. “[...] what’s interesting to us with this new phenomenon that ‘everyone’s a fashion editor, everyone’s a fashion writer’ is that all of that actually helps *Vogue*, because we have access and the understanding of fashion that, forgive me, but maybe *some* bloggers and *some* of the newcomers to this world have a little bit less experience of [...]” (Goldsmith, 2010).

The Future of Fashion Blogging

Fashion bloggers today are extremely influential and have built brands (Griffith, 2011). Fashion bloggers are now “leveraging their followers to become marketing machines for brands other than their own (in other words, to earn money), augmenting those companies’ advertising and PR strategies” (Griffith, 2011). Brands have caught on and know that fashion bloggers have a large amount of influence to turn readers into consumers. In 2010, handbag retailer Coach recruited four bloggers to custom design limited-edition Coach bags. The bloggers worked with Coach to design their bags and promote them on their blogs and on social media. The bags quickly sold out (Griffith, 2011).

Fashion blogging has proven to be incredibly influential and even beneficial for brands, but it’s difficult to tell where fashion blogging will go from here. In December 2013, NYFW owner IMG said it would make events at NYFW more exclusive (Lorentzen 2013). Though many may believe fashion blogging is “dead,” those in the blogging community just believe that it’s changing. Blogger and founder of Independent Fashion Bloggers (IFB) Jennine Jacob says, “I don’t think blogging is ‘dead.’ It’s more popular now than ever” (Lorentzen 2013). It’s also important to remember that fashion blogging is not strictly for the benefit of brands and for bloggers to make money. Gala Darling, co-founder of The Blogcademy, says, “Blogging used to be about being honest, sharing what was on your mind, and offering something different than the magazines” (Lorentzen 2013).

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter explains the research conducted for this study and the methods used to collect data. This includes the data sources, interview design, presentation and limitations.

Data Sources

The data collected for this study comes from working professionals in the public relations sector of the fashion industry. Four respondents were asked questions about social media within the fashion industry, fashion blogging, and the impact fashion blogging and social media has in the industry. One respondent was asked two extra questions about her direct work in social media for the fashion brand she is currently employed at.

Participants

Aliza Licht, Senior Vice President of Global Communications at Donna Karan International, was interviewed for this study. Licht created and currently runs the “DKNY PR Girl” Twitter account and blog. Callie Gisler, founder and blogger of fashion and public relations blog, Coffee and Cardigans, was interviewed for this study for a blogger perspective. Gisler is a soon-to-be public relations graduate of the University of Oregon. Jennifer Bett Meyer, the founder and president of public relations firm Jennifer Bett Communications, was interviewed for her insight of social media use in the fashion industry. Meyer is a successful public relations professional who has worked in the fashion industry for many years. Danika Daly, founder of fashion, beauty and lifestyle public relations firm Danika Daly Public Relations, was also interviewed.

Interview Design

The following questions were asked to each of the experts and served as data sources for the study. Aliza Licht was asked two additional questions that directly related to her work managing the “DKNY PR GIRL” Twitter and Tumblr account.

1. How does social media impact or affect the fashion industry? Do you have any examples or experience of this impact/affect?
2. Why is fashion blogging important for the fashion industry? What does fashion blogging add to the fashion industry?
3. Can you describe the different types of fashion blogging that are in the industry and what each type provides to the fashion industry? If you are a fashion blogger, what kind of blogging do you do?
4. In what ways is fashion blogging impacting social media within the fashion industry? How is fashion blogging working hand in hand with social media?
5. How do you think fashion blogging is creating and encouraging two-way symmetrical communication in the fashion industry? Can you provide any specific examples?
6. What advice do you have for others who wish to become a successful fashion blogger?
7. What do you think is the future of fashion blogging? Where will fashion blogging go from here? Will it continue to be an important presence and impact the fashion industry? How so?

Two additional questions were asked to Aliza Licht of Donna Karan International to gauge her experience in managing social media for a global fashion brand:

1. How did ‘DKNY PR Girl,’ on Twitter and Tumblr, come to life?
2. How has ‘DKNY PR Girl’ impacted the Donna Karan brand?

Data Collection

Data collection included four individual interviews conducted in mid-May and early June. Three interviews were conducted through email questionnaires and one interview was conducted over the phone.

Data Presentation

Data collection for three of the respondents was through email. The data collected during the phone interview was recorded. All interviews are documented in the appendix through written verbatim notes.

Limitations

Due to location and time conflicts, I had to conduct three interviews through an email questionnaire. This limitation results in impersonal communication. An email interview also resulted in a participant not responding to the full questionnaire. Another limitation was the time frame of this study. This study was done over ten weeks because it is for an undergraduate senior capstone project.

Delimitations

A delimiting factor includes the generalization of the study. I only had time to interview four professionals due to the limited time frame given for this study.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

This chapter provides insights into the data collected for this study. It includes interviews with professionals in the public relations and fashion industry as well as research from the literature review. Data collected for this study have been collected through phone and email interviews. The responses from the respondents have been transcribed and analyzed. The professionals interviewed are based in either the state of New York or Oregon.

Description of Participating Industry Experts

Aliza Licht, Senior Vice President, Global Communications of Donna Karan International, was interviewed on May 28, 2014. Licht is an expert in public relations and the communications field. Donna Karan International is a renowned global fashion brand that is made up of three brands: Donna Karan, DKNY and DKNY Men.

Callie Gisler, founder and blogger at Coffee and Cardigans, was interviewed on May 20, 2014. Gisler is a graduating senior at University of Oregon studying public relations and journalism. She is also the president of the UO chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA).

Jennifer Bett, founder of Jennifer Bett Communications was also interviewed. Bett has worked for 12 years in public relations and marketing for dynamic global brands like fashion magazine Harper's Bazaar and fashion brand Alice + Olivia. Bett then founded Jennifer Bett Communications in January 2013.

Danika Daly, founder of Danika Daly PR, was the fourth person interviewed. Daly founded her own full-service public relations firm. The firm specializes in the fashion, beauty and lifestyle markets.

Social Media and Fashion Blogging Questionnaire

Each of the following correspondents answered the same questions, with the exception of one respondent answering two additional questions about her work managing a brand's social media presence. Each respondent was asked questions about social media and fashion blogging in the fashion industry.

1. How does social media impact or affect the fashion industry? Do you have any examples or experience of this impact/affect?

Question #1 was asked to gain further insight into how social media impacts the fashion industry. Based on the respondents' answers, social media has a huge impact on the fashion industry and allows those within the industry to connect and open the industry up to more people.

- Aliza Licht (AL): "Well, for an industry that was always elitist, I think its forced brands to think differently. But not everyone is willing to think differently, right. You have brands that are on Twitter who don't reply. They just push out content. I don't think there's a point to that. I think if you're going to be on certain platforms then you have to have a strategy for engagement. So, I think before you talk about what social media has done, I think you almost have to give credit to Project Runway because I think that Project Runway really gave people that first insider view of what goes on with designers in fashion. Before that, there wasn't really anything that gave you kind of a birds-eye

view. So that sort of gave people a taste and obviously people really liked that taste and I think that sort of paved the way for people being really curious about what goes on behind the scenes. But, you know, in general, it also, certainly from a PR perspective, gives us another very effective vehicle to get our message out without having to depend on media which is crazy because, I mean, that was always ... your relationship with the press was always make or break. I mean, it still is, don't get me wrong. But it was always like, if you had a press release and you didn't have a relationship with a reporter to get it out there, then your story's not getting out. I think it's been a great change. I personally think that we're all better for it. And I also think, from a networking perspective, it's been incredible" (Appendix A).

- Callie Gisler (CG): "I think that social media has made the industry more accessible. It is easier for customers to connect with brands and designers they like through channels like Facebook and Twitter. I also think that social media and blogs have helped high fashion translate into a daily context. My favorite bloggers can take designer looks from Fashion Week and recreate a "runway inspired" look from pieces that I can actually afford" (Appendix C).
- Jennifer Bett Meyer (JBC): "Social Media is key for fashion. It allows brands to communicate directly with their consumers, promote various events and initiatives, and build brand awareness. When I was at Alice + Olivia we launched an Instagram account and it is one of the top accounts this day. Consumers can comment on clothing directly - what they like and don't like. It's instant and free!" (Appendix B).
- Danika Daly (DD): "Social media has made fashion more accessible to the masses. For example, once upon a time, Fashion Week was an industry-only event for press and

buyers. The public wouldn't see the collections until a few months later. Now, Fashion Week has become a global event because of social media. The public can stream a show or see photos of brand's collections immediately. This has resulted in sites like Moda Operandi, where people can purchase clothing right off the runway” (Appendix D).

2. Why is fashion blogging important for the fashion industry? What does fashion blogging add to the fashion industry?

Questions #2 is asked to discover why fashion blogging is important for the fashion industry. The respondents all agree that fashion blogging allows people to better access the fashion industry and that fashion bloggers have become influencers in the industry.

- AL: “Well, again, democracy, right. I think that social media, blogging, it’s taken the power to the people essentially. Whereas it used to be a very small group of people that held that power. I think that people can relate maybe better to a blogger than they can a supermodel wearing a look, right? So, it’s just another way. I think it’s an ‘and’ not and ‘or.’ I think it’s great. I think there are tons and tons of blogs that probably make no impact at all but the person that’s doing the blogging feels a sense of creativity. It’s great even just for yourself, you know, just to feel like you have a place to put your thoughts, your feelings, your likes, your dislikes” (Appendix A).
- CG: “Going off my pervious answer, I think fashion blogging continues to translate fashion into daily life. For me, my favorite bloggers have become sources of inspiration for my daily style. They’re influencers, especially through social media. Bloggers drive trends, but they also help consumers connect with style in a way that’s more accessible.

Someone might not be able to buy a \$700 outfit straight from the runway, but she could afford an inspired look that she saw on a blog for \$100” (Appendix C).

- JBM: N/A (Appendix B).
- DD: “Fashion bloggers have become celebrities of the fashion world, and influence sales for many brands. It's easier for a fashion brand to dress a fashion blogger than a celebrity, and work with them on a regular basis. Some bloggers have enough influence for a brand to sell out of a product they've worn” (Appendix D).

3. Can you describe the different types of fashion blogging that are in the industry and what each type provides to the fashion industry? If you are a fashion blogger, what kind of blogging do you do?

Question #3 was asked to learn what the respondents’ thought of the types of fashion blogging and how they impacted the fashion industry. The three respondents who answered this question all agreed that style bloggers were popular and influential. Each respondent then categorized fashion bloggers into two different categories.

- AL: “Well, I think the biggest had always been really – and really starting with Scott Schuman, The Sartorialist – like, you know, the street style and everyone taking pictures of their outfits which is, again, you’re trying to make yourself into that pseudo-model that people can definitely relate to. But at the same time, I like more of the commentary. You know, people like Tom and Lorenzo who, I don’t know if you’re familiar with their blog on celebrity dressing, but I think if you’re a good writer and you have a great point of view, it’s a great way to sort of establish yourself. There’s that. In general, I guess those are the two kinds ... that I focus on” (Appendix A).

- CG: “I think there are so many types of bloggers out there! There are the mainstream blogs like Eat, Sleep, Wear or Brooklyn Blonde. But there are also niche sites, like blogs focused on college fashion or sewing. It might seem obvious that those mainstream bloggers are more involved in the fashion industry. They work directly with designers and brands. But I think smaller blogs also have an impact, since they become relatable resources to their audiences. My own blog, Coffee and Cardigans does have plenty of ‘fashion blogger’ elements. I focus on affordable fashion, and translating a personal sense of style from college to the working world. My blog focuses closely on where I am in my own life and fashion sense” (Appendix C).
- JBM: N/A (Appendix B).
- DD: “There are style bloggers, such as Song of Style, Trop Rouge and Viviere Bella, who feature their outfits. Some bloggers have more of a lifestyle approach, and will feature recipes, their trips, how to's and more. There are also bloggers who take a journalistic approach, such as Style Bubble. Each of these types of blogs serve a major role because it allows for diversity in content” (Appendix D).

4. In what ways is fashion blogging impacting social media within the fashion industry?

How is fashion blogging working hand in hand with social media?

Question #4 asks how exactly fashion blogging and social media is impacting the fashion industry. The two respondents who answered both believe that social media acts as an extension of the blogger’s brand.

- AL: N/A (Appendix A).

- CG: “For many blogs, including my own, social media acts as an extension of the blogger’s brand. I always think about my blog as the “hub” of my brand, and social media channels like Twitter and Facebook as an extension of that hub. Those channels help me promote new content, connect with readers and maintain an active presence even if I haven’t posted new blog content in a while. Social media helps cultivate a community around the blog. It allows readers to keep up with their favorite bloggers between posts, but also interact and engage with the blogger on a personal level – depending on the size of an audience and the blogger’s activeness in two-way conversation” (Appendix C).
- JBM: N/A (Appendix B).
- DD: “Fashion blogging has become even more widespread because of social media promotion. Social media makes it easier for a blogger to direct readers to their site. They can post a photo of their outfit, and send people to see the outfit details on their blog” (Appendix D).

5. How do you think fashion blogging is creating and encouraging two-way symmetrical communication in the fashion industry? Can you provide any specific examples?

Question #5 asks for specific examples to understand how fashion blogging is encouraging two-way communication. The three respondents who answered all believe that fashion blogging is created a conversation.

- AL: “Well, I think the comments section in general. The comments section is one of those things where, you know, if you read those you can very, very, very upset a lot of the times. I think most of the time, people who write in the comments section are, honestly have nothing better to do with their time. I think they’re usually the most nasty

people. So, I think two-way communication is great, but at the time same, you always have to remember kind of who's speaking. For the most part, I would say we get very positive tweets. And I have columns set up even for people who are speaking about the brand who aren't speaking to the brand just to kind of see what's being said. Very, very rarely will all of a sudden will someone bust out with a nasty comment about something. And you always look at that person and they're always, like, 20 followers. Or they're just bitter. You know, there are always going to be those bitter people. I think it's great for people who less so communication. I think from a blog perspective for people who want to consume all day, every day, they'll never run out of content and I think that that's great. Whereas it used to be like you got your monthly magazine and once you finished reading it, there wasn't anything else, right? I mean, it's like you would wait to get your content. And now you can consume, you don't even have enough time to consume what you could consume. I just think that it allows people to be a part of something in a much more connected way" (Appendix A).

- CG: "As mentioned before, social media becomes an extension of a blog and the brand it has cultivated. Social media is focused on conversation, so it creates the perfect opportunity for that two-way communication. Bloggers can interact directly with their readers, and vice versa. I think bloggers like Teika from Selective Potential do this incredibly well – replying to comments, say thanks for a compliment or answering questions. It seems like such a simple thing, but I think that sort of conversations help build up the relationships between a blogger and her audience. It also adds a personal, humanistic touch to brands within the fashion industry by creating meaningful conversation" (Appendix C).

- JBM: N/A (Appendix B).
- DD: “Fashion blogging has created a voice for the public to start new trends. The designers and press are listening to these voices and creating based on the style on the street. An example of this is the rise of brands collaborating with bloggers to design products” (Appendix D).

6. What advice do you have for others who wish to become a successful fashion blogger?

Question #6 was asked to understand what professionals in the fashion industry believed would make a successful fashion blogger today. The respondents all agreed that fashion bloggers need to differentiate themselves from the rest in order to find success. Daly also recommended that fashion bloggers use social media to their advantage.

- AL: “I think you have to have a very strong point of view. And I think you have to create a brand filter for your blog. When I was starting the Tumblr ... first of all, the Tumblr wasn't my idea. Someone – a Twitter follower – was like ‘Oh, you should have a Tumblr!’ And I was like, ‘What? Why?!’ Like this already takes up so much of my time and I have another job so, you know. So, when they said ... explained to me that, like, oh it would be more of a library of all your content, you know, pictures this and that, you know, I got it. So when I started to think about, ‘Well, if I'm going to have a blog, what is the purpose of that blog?’ Like I needed to frame it for myself to understand why it exists, not just have it, right? Because, for me, I have to feel for it or I can't do it. I'm actually a very bad PR person in that way. Like I'm not a good faker. If I don't like it, I can't push it. So I needed to feel something for it. And how I was able to, sort of, frame it in my own mind was to create the tagline, which in my mind was my brand filter, “140

characters aren't enough." So, already, just by saying that, I was establishing that Tumblr was an extension of Twitter and it was meant to marry back and forth. So you know do we need another street style star? Sure, if you have a really different point of view. You know, Man Repeller is a great example. She has a really specific point of view and everything she does goes through that filter of Man Repeller and I think that's why she's successful. She's not trying to be everything to everyone, you know. That's when you fail. You have to pick a lane and I think that, whatever lane that is, stick to it. Because then you really start to craft everything around your brand and it becomes very clear to you what content you should be posting and what you shouldn't" (Appendix A).

- CG: "I think it's all about maintaining your personal voice, brand, and of course, sense of style. Those are the things that will make a blog unique... especially with so many other fashion blogs out there. I think it's easy to feel overwhelmed with the number of blogs out there, especially if you start comparing your beginning to someone else's middle. It takes time to build awareness and build an audience – don't get impatient" (Appendix C).
- JBM: "Find what makes you different from all the other bloggers out there- and embrace it, promote it, and use it to your advantage. You need to find a way to stand out in the crowd" (Appendix B).
- DD: "Use social media to your advantage, take care in building a nicely laid out blog, be authentic, find your niche and create relationships with brands and publicists" (Appendix D).

7. What do you think is the future of fashion blogging? Where will fashion blogging go from here? Will it continue to be an important presence and impact the fashion industry? How so?

Question #7 was asked to understand if the respondents' believed that fashion blogging will continue to impact the fashion industry. The three respondents who answered believe that fashion blogging is here to stay. However, all three have their own thoughts on the changes that need to be made in order for fashion blogging to continue to make an impact.

- AL: "I don't think fashion blogging's going away. I think that people will have to start to be very creative as to how – if they want it to be a career – how they're going to make money from it. Because there are only a few people who really make a lot of money from it and it comes less so from blogging as it does from collaborations and, kind of, endorsements from brands that are paying to get their message out. And that is an area where I feel that, you know, it's not very transparent. Or, it is transparent. Every day you see a blogger saying like "today I'm reading with so and so!" And the next day it's a totally different brand. So it's getting a little bit like 'enough, already' like I get it. But at the same time I understand because you know, that's the way they're going to make money. But at the same time there's no real loyalty to it either. To a brand. So, I don't know. To me... if I were telling anyone to do this, I would say have your real day job and do this as a side project. I don't think that you can set out and say 'I'm going to be a blogger' as you real job. Because I think it's more difficult. It's like saying you're going to be an actress. You might be, you might get some acting jobs but there's a really long road ahead. I think that it has to start off as a side project. Unless of course, you know, you have the inheritance then money doesn't matter!" (Appendix A).

- CG: “I think blogging will always have a place in the fashion industry – just like magazines, newspapers and other media. But I do think that standards will change as the digital space becomes even more populated. Bloggers that are already well established will probably be just fine, but smaller bloggers will have to find a way to stand out among the crowd if popularity and increased readership are important goals. I think bloggers have become journalists, in a sense. It’s citizen journalism with a fashion twist. Fresh perspectives will always be sought after in the media industry, while readers will always look towards resources they can trust. I think blogs help to fulfill both of those needs” (Appendix C).
- JBM: N/A (Appendix B).
- DD: “Fashion blogging is steering more toward social media - Instagrammers and YouTubers are becoming more powerful than bloggers. With new apps like Like to Know It, readers will no longer have to go to a blog site for details on an outfit they saw on Instagram. It's all directed toward social media. Maybe the blogger phase will die out, but social media will continue to grow and affect the fashion industry. Influencers will continue to shape street style and the fashion industry” (Appendix D).

Fashion Blogging and Social Media Research Questions

The following research questions were designed for this study to discover the importance of fashion blogging and social media in the fashion industry.

Research Question 1: How does social media impact the fashion industry?

- New media is “drastically changing the dialogue about fashion whereby we can upon our on-demand desire for trends and gain access to them anytime, anywhere, and on any platform” (2012, Oct 26).
- “Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, Pinterest and every other form of social media have been inundated with live-streams, tweets, posts and pins – and not just from the brands or designers themselves” (Strugatz, 2013).

Research Question 2: Why is fashion blogging important for the fashion industry?

- “The web has made it possible for ordinary consumers to reach a mass audience, to ‘grab hold of the megaphone’” (McQuarrie, 2013).
- Fashion blogging has created a community of influencers.
- Consumers have said that blogs “rank higher than Twitter for shaping their opinions and higher than Facebook for motivating purchasing decisions” (Redsicker, 2013).

Research Question 3: What types of fashion blogging are out there and what are their uses?

- “Ironically, one of the best things about blogging – that anyone with a computer, a point-and-shoot, and an internet connection can do it – also poses the greatest challenge: how to stand out from the crowd” (Lewis, 2012).

Research Question 4: How is fashion blogging impacting social media in the fashion industry?

- Fashion blogging has opened communication between everyday people and those high up in an industry that used to be elitist and closed-off: the fashion industry.
- “Reading fashion from a person like yourself’s point of view is something really special, and I think it’s great that fashion blogging is letting everyone feel like an insider” (Burcz, 2012).

- “Certain bloggers have a very large following with influencer ability. They have a great power to mobilize their audience as tastemakers” (Grinberg, 2012).

Research Question 5: How does fashion blogging create a two-way symmetrical approach in public relations in the fashion industry?

- “It’s that direct line to fans and potential consumers that make Medine a desirable brand to designers and brands” (Grinberg, 2012).
- Popular fashion blogger Leandra Medine has created a connection between designer brands and her readers through her popular blog.
 - Medine’s blog provides readers with a behind-the-scenes look into the fashion industry.
- “[...] what’s interesting to us with this new phenomenon that ‘everyone’s a fashion editor, everyone’s a fashion writer’ is that all of that actually helps *Vogue*, because we have access and the understanding of fashion that, forgive me, but maybe *some* bloggers and *some* of the newcomers to this world have a little bit less experience of [...]” (Goldsmith, 2010).

Research Question 6: How will fashion blogging affect the fashion industry in the future?

- Fashion bloggers are now “leveraging their followers to become marketing machines for brands other than their own (in other words, to earn money), augmenting those companies’ advertising and PR strategies” (Griffith, 2011).

Comparison of Literature and Qualitative Data

For this study, it was important to understand what current professionals within the fashion and public relations industry knew about fashion blogging and its impact. Social media

and online content is quickly changing as technology improves so it is difficult to get understand how exactly fashion blogging and social media play into public relations without a practitioner's understanding of current media and content trends. The following tables and explanations present the main points of the respondents' answers to selected questions from the questionnaire asked.

Research Question 1: How does social media impact the fashion industry?

This question was asked to bring light to social media in the fashion industry, how it is utilized by brands and consumers and what kind of impact social media has on the industry. The literature stated that social media has become a large, impactful presence in the fashion industry. Brands and consumers alike are going to social media to share their thoughts on fashion news, trends and events. All four respondents agree that social media has created open communication between those in the fashion industry and those not. Each respondent was asked to give an example or share their experience regarding social media's impact in the fashion industry.

Table 1

Social Media's Impact in the Fashion Industry

Respondent	How does social media impact or affect the fashion industry?	Any examples or experience of this affect?
Aliza Licht	It has forced brands to think differently. From a PR perspective, social media provides a very effective vehicle to get our message out there.	The television show Project Runway gave people the first insider view of what goes on with designers in fashion.
Callie Gisler	It makes the fashion industry more accessible to customers and helps high fashion translate into a daily context.	Bloggers that take designer looks from Fashion Week and recreate a “runway inspired” look with affordable pieces.
Jennifer Bett Meyer	It allows brands to communicate directly with their consumers, promote various events, and build brand awareness.	Managed the Alice + Olivia Instagram account. Consumers can comment on clothing directly – what they like and don’t like.
Danika Daly	It’s made fashion more accessible to the masses.	Fashion Week used to be an industry-only event for press and buyers. Now, it’s a global event because of social media. This has resulted in sites like Moda Operandi, where people can purchase clothing right off the runway.

Research Question 2: Why is fashion blogging important for the fashion industry?

This research question was asked to understand why exactly fashion blogging is important for the fashion industry and what role fashion blogs play in the fashion industry. The literature stated that fashion blogging is making the fashion industry more accessible. The literature also stated that fashion bloggers are now becoming influential figures within the fashion industry. The three of four respondents that answered this question prove that the literature is correct.

Table 2

The Importance of Fashion Blogging Within the Fashion Industry

Respondent	Why is fashion blogging important for the fashion industry?	What does fashion blogging add to the industry?
Aliza Licht	Blogging has taken power to the people.	People can relate better to a blogger wearing a look than they can a supermodel wearing a look.
Callie Gisler	Fashion blogging continues to translate fashion into daily life.	Fashion bloggers are influencers. They drive trends and help consumers connect with style in a more accessible way.
Jennifer Bett Meyer	N/A	N/A
Danika Daly	Fashion bloggers have become celebrities of the fashion world and influence sales for many brands.	It's easier for a fashion brand to dress a fashion blogger than a celeb, and work with them.

Research Question 3: What types of fashion blogging are out there?

This question was asked to better understand the types of fashion blogging that exist and to see how each type affects the fashion industry. The literature didn't necessarily break down fashion blogging into two categories; it just acknowledged that there were indeed many types of fashion blogging.

The below table presents what three of the four respondents believed were the different types of categories fashion blogs fell into. Each of the three respondents broke the types of fashion blogging into two different groups.

Table 3

Existing Types of Fashion Blogging

Respondent	What types of fashion blogging are out there?	What kind of fashion blogging do you do, if you have a fashion blog?
Aliza Licht	1) Street style blogs have always been huge and it really started with Scott Schuman and The Sartorialist. 2) More commentary-focused blogs like Tom and Lorenzo (blog on celebrity dressing).	N/A
Callie Gisler	1) Mainstream blogs (Eat, Sleep, Wear or Brooklyn Blonde). 2) Niche sites (example: blogs focused on college fashion or sewing).	Gisler’s blog, Coffee and Cardigans, focuses on affordable fashion and translating a personal sense of style from college to the working world.
Jennifer Bett Meyer	N/A	N/A
Danika Daly	1) Style bloggers such as Song of Style and Trop Rouge. 2) More lifestyle-focused bloggers. 3) Bloggers with more of a journalistic approach, such as Style Bubble.	N/A

Research Question 4: How is fashion blogging impacting social media in the fashion industry?

This question was asked to prove that fashion blogging is indeed impacting social media within the fashion industry. The literature states that social media is allowing fashion bloggers to further their influence in the industry in addition to allowing for direct communication. Social media allows fashion bloggers to connect with their readers on a personal level.

Table 4

The Impact of Fashion Blogging in Social Media

Respondents	How is fashion blogging impacting social media?
Aliza Licht	N/A
Callie Gisler	Social media is an extension of the blogger's brand and helps to cultivate a community around the blog. It encourages interactivity and engagement with the blogger on a personal level.
Jennifer Bett Meyer	N/A
Danika Daly	Social media makes it easier for a blogger to direct readers to their site.

Research Question 5: How does fashion blogging create a two-way symmetrical approach in public relations in the fashion industry?

This question was asked to help understand how fashion blogging creates and continually encourages open communication between brands and consumers. Three respondents believed

that fashion blogging keeps the conversation going, as opposed to traditional media, like print magazines, where you would have to wait for a the next issue. The literature states that fashion blogging acts as a direct line of communication between the brand and consumer. It also states that fashion blogging allows every day consumers to become a part of the fashion industry. All three respondents were found to agree with the literature.

Table 5

How Fashion Blogging Encourages Two-Way Symmetrical Communication in the Fashion Industry

Respondent	How do you think fashion blogging encourages two-way communication?	Any examples?
Aliza Licht	The comments section in general but you have to remember who's speaking.	Monthly magazines vs. online content. Once you finished your magazine, there was nothing else. You would wait to get your content. Now, you don't even have enough time to consume what you could consume.
Callie Gisler	Social media is an extension of the blog and it creates the opportunity for two-way communication. The conversation helps build a relationship between a blogger and her audience.	Blogger Teika from Selective Potential – replies to comments, says thanks for compliments, and answers questions.
Jennifer Bett Meyer	N/A	N/A
Danika Daly	Fashion blogging has created a voice for the public to start new trends.	Designers and press are listening to these voices and creating based on the style on the street. An example is the rise of brands collaborating with bloggers to design products.

Research Question 6: How will fashion blogging affect the fashion industry in the future?

The purpose of this question was to see what the professionals' thought about the future of fashion blogging and how it will impact the future. According to the literature, fashion blogging has become important marketing platforms for brands. Brand-blogger collaborations have become more apparent in the fashion blogging world. While all the respondents agree that fashion blogging is here to stay, each respondent has their own thoughts about the changes that need to be made in fashion blogging in order to stay influential.

Table 6

How Fashion Blogging Will Affect the Fashion Industry in the Future

Respondent	What is the future of fashion blogging?
Aliza Licht	Fashion blogging isn't going away.
Callie Gisler	Blogging will always have a future in the fashion industry. Bloggers have become journalists in a sense – it's citizen journalism with a fashion twist.
Jennifer Bett Meyer	N/A
Danika Daly	Fashion blogging is steering more toward social media – Instagrammers and YouTubers are becoming more powerful than bloggers. Blogger phase might die out, but social media will continue to grow and effect the fashion industry.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Summary

This study was done to investigate how fashion blogging impacts social media in the fashion industry. Today, fashion blogging plays an incredibly large role for both consumers and brands than it did years ago. Fashion blogging creates two-way communication between consumers and those in the fashion industry. In addition, fashion blogging is a vehicle that provides an outlet for fashion brands to showcase their brand through to consumers.

This study seeks to learn from public relations professionals within the fashion industry. Public relations professionals in the fashion industry were asked the following research questions:

1. How does social media impact the fashion industry?
2. Why is fashion blogging important for the fashion industry?
3. What types of fashion blogging are out there?
4. How is fashion blogging impacting social media in the fashion industry?
5. How does fashion blogging create a two-way symmetrical approach in public relations in the fashion industry?
6. How will fashion blogging affect the fashion industry in the future?

Discussion

The data collected from the respondents and the literature prove that fashion blogging does indeed have an enormous impact on social media and creates an open form of communication between brands and consumers. Based on both the data from the experts and

literature, the following conclusions can be made for the original research questions of this study:

Research Question 1: How does social media impact the fashion industry?

The experts interviewed all agree that social media is key for the fashion industry. The research from the literature paired with the respondents' answers prove that social media has changed the landscape of the fashion industry to become more inclusive.

As Licht said, "for an industry that's always been elitist, [social media] has forced brands to think differently" (Appendix A). Today, most brands are not just pushing content out over social media. Rather, brands are focusing on engagement and creating a conversation with consumers. "It is easier for customers to connect with brands and designers they like through channels like Facebook and Twitter," Gisler said (Appendix C).

Fashion Week, a huge fashion event for designers to present their seasonal collections that happens in New York twice a year, has changed dramatically due to social media. "Fashion Week was an industry-only event for press and buyers. Now, Fashion Week has become a global event because of social media. The public can stream a show or see photos of brand's collections immediately," Daly said (Appendix D). Due to this increase in social media use within the fashion industry, websites like Moda Operandi, that lets people purchase clothing right off the runway, have become increasingly popular.

Research Question 2: Why is fashion blogging important for the fashion industry?

Both Licht and Gisler agree that fashion blogging helps make the fashion industry more accessible and relatable for those who aren't involved in the industry. "Bloggers drive trends, but

they also help consumers connect with style in a way that's more accessible. Someone might not be able to buy a \$700 outfit straight from the runway, but she could afford an inspired look she saw on a blog for \$100" Gisler said.

Designers have even taken to digital media to connect with fashion bloggers and hear their insights. Fashion designer Proenza Schouler chose to take her fashion brand to digital media because it offered an opportunity to present the brand directly to their consumers. "Bloggers offered [the Proenza Schouler brand] not only a faster way to transmit their collections to the public but also immediate feedback from a younger, and more geographically diverse audience" (Jacob, 2011).

In addition to making the fashion industry more accessible to every day consumers, fashion bloggers have "become celebrities of the fashion world" according to Daly. Fashion bloggers influence sales for many brands and "some bloggers have enough influence for a brand to sell out of a product they've worn," Daly said.

Fashion blogging also helps everyday consumers express their opinions and thoughts online. "It is great to see commentary from smart bloggers – especially those in countries like China and Russia, where there was, in the past, little possibility of sharing fashion thoughts and dreams" (Menkes, 2013).

Research Question 3: What types of fashion blogging are out there?

Three of the four respondents categorized the types of fashion blogging differently. Licht and Gisler broke the types down into two distinct categories while Daly broke it down into three. Licht believes that the two types of fashion blogging are street style bloggers, those who take photos of people wearing different styles or trends, and commentary-based bloggers, those who

give feedback on others wearing certain outfits or trends, such as celebrities. For street style blogs “you’re trying to make yourself into that pseudo-model that people can definitely relate to,” said Licht (Appendix A). On the other hand, Gisler split up fashion bloggers into mainstream blogs like Eat, Sleep, Wear and Brooklyn Blonde, and niche sites like those focused on college fashion or sewing. Daly split up the categories into style bloggers, lifestyle-focused bloggers and bloggers with more of a journalistic approach like Style Bubble.

Research Question 4: How is fashion blogging impacting social media in the fashion industry?

Due to the worldwide use of social media, fashion blogging has grown. “Fashion blogging has become even more widespread because of social media promotion,” said Daly (Appendix D).

According to Gisler, social media acts as an extension of her blog. “Those channels help me promote new content, connect with readers and maintain an active presence even if I haven’t posted new blog content in a while,” Gisler said (Appendix C). Fashion blogging and social media go hand-in-hand when it comes to communicating openly with consumers. Both fashion blogging and social media allow people to “interact and engage with the blogger on a personal level – depending on the size of an audience and the blogger’s activeness in two-way communication,” according to Gisler (Appendix C).

Research Question 5: How does fashion blogging create a two-way symmetrical approach in public relations in the fashion industry?

Fashion blogging helps to provide a voice for the public. Fashion bloggers are sharing their insights and thoughts with the world. “The designers and press are listening to these voices and creating based on the style on the street,” Daly said (Appendix D).

Both Gisler and Licht mentioned that there is a conversation happening between the public, the blogger and the brand in fashion blogging.

Even simple gestures between bloggers and their readers can encourage two-way communication and build relationships. Gisler mentioned that saying a simple “thank you” can help develop relationships between a blogger and her audience. “It seems like such a simple thing, but I think that sort of conversations help build up the relationships between a blogger and her audience. It also adds a personal, humanistic touch to brands within the fashion industry by creating meaningful conversation,” Gisler said (Appendix C).

Research Question 6: How will fashion blogging affect the fashion industry in the future?

The three respondents who answered this question all agree that fashion blogging is not going away. As more and more fashion bloggers emerge, all three respondents believe that bloggers will have to be unique and have their own perspective.

Licht answered this question in terms of a career. She believes that people will have to start being creative as to how they are going to make money from fashion blogging. She brought up that blogger and brand collaborations are huge and extremely important, but it’s also an area that is either too transparent or not transparent.

Gisler believes that bloggers have become journalists. She calls it “citizen journalism with a fashion twist” (Appendix C). According to Gisler, fresh perspectives will always be

sought after in the media industry and readers will always look toward resources that they can trust. She believes that fashion bloggers are helping to fulfill both of those needs (Appendix C).

However, Daly does not seem so sure how long fashion blogging can last, especially with the popularity and use of social media growing at a rapid pace. “Maybe the blogger phase will die out, but social media will continue to grow and affect the industry. Influencers will continue to shape street style and the fashion industry,” Daly said.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the research and data collected for this study, it is proven that fashion blogging has a large impact on social media and the fashion industry. Fashion blogging is not only making a formerly exclusive industry more inclusive to outsiders, but it is opening up communication and encouraging conversation between consumers and brand.

Fashion blogging coupled with social media is absolutely necessary for a brand to create a relationship and encourage two-way communication with its consumers. In a broader sense, this also applies to other industries. Blogs become part of the brand and can encourage a conversation so that your consumers can receive an inside look into your industry and your brand, while your brand has the opportunity to better understand your consumer.

Study Conclusion

This study discovers that fashion blogging is an incredibly impactful tool in the fashion industry, especially when paired with social media use. Fashion blogging has made a formerly exclusive industry more inclusive to consumers. Fashion bloggers are using social media heavily and are encouraging two-way communication between themselves and consumers.

Fashion bloggers are not just people giving consumers an insider look into the fashion industry, but today, they are influencers in the industry. They have begun driving trends and brands have begun to understand how important and influential fashion bloggers can be to consumers. Brands are beginning to partner with bloggers on collaborations and bloggers are beginning to charge for their marketing and promotional services.

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Appendix A

Interview Transcript: Aliza Licht

The following interview was conducted to collect an expert opinion on fashion blogging, social media and public relations. The interview was conducted through phone call then transcribed. The respondent was also asked two additional questions to learn more about how she managed a brand's social media presence.

Interviewer: Leila Durmaz

Respondent: SVP, Global Communications of Donna Karan International (Aliza Licht)

Date of Interview: 5/28/2014

Interview Transcription:

Leila Durmaz: "How did 'DKNY PR Girl,' on Twitter and Tumblr, come to life?"

Aliza Licht: "So basically, in 2009, we as a company decided that we were going to start in social media. All of us has Facebook pages, but our own and the company didn't. We sort of, figuring out what we could handle ourselves. Because at that time there really weren't agencies that really handled it. I mean, there probably were but we just knew that we were just going to dabble in it and not really make it this huge thing so we were going to take it on on top of our normal jobs. So, we decided that Facebook was going to be the brand. Each brand would have its own page and that Twitter should be a little bit different because the engagement is different and more constant. So, at the time in 2009, I was obsessed with "Gossip Girl," and I thought that when we were debating, like 'well we don't want it to be Donna Karan and we don't want people to think it's going to be Donna Karan.' So, I was like, 'what if it was like Gossip Girl where it's like anonymous and maybe it could be like a fashion sketch and you don't know who it is?' And that's sort of where it came from. And it was decided that I would be the only one to tweet because, really, from a legal perspective just to have control. You know, obviously I was senior at the company, at the time 11 years. And our legal department wanted to make sure that there was an element of responsibility involved in what was getting put out because we had discussed that. And more from an intuitive level, I just knew that I couldn't deal with having to get approval on tweets because I just felt like, people have meetings, no one has time. It has to be spur of the moment. So, they agreed and that's sort of how it started. And basically when I started tweeting, I taught myself, because who could possibly teach anyone back then to tweet. And when I started tweeting, I realized how the conversation just kept going. On the weekends, at night. And you know, I didn't have to respond. No one told me that I had to respond on the weekends, but I felt compelled to. And I also enjoyed it. So, it took on a life of its own. Albeit at the time, it was supposed to be a pretend character. So we would make up stuff she was doing, almost like Paperdoll. Which was fine, until people started to realize it's the same person all the time and you know, once I started to get into it, I would have to make up stuff she was doing on the weekends and I was doing something totally different. It just became like annoying and difficult, actually. Eventually, two years later, after sort of hiding, making sure no one saw, no one knew what I was wearing if I was at an event because I didn't want anyone to know who I

was. It became this huge secret. And then in 2011, we finally decided maybe it didn't need to be a secret anymore. Teen Vogue had asked me to speak at their Fashion University and I really wanted to although I was still anonymous. People would call and be like 'Oh, we'd love to have DKNY PR Girl come speak' and I would be like 'Oh, she's anonymous so she can't.' But it would be me getting the phone calls... haha hilarious. And then, you know, at the same time, there started to become that need for content constantly, you know, on the website. So we were like, what if we shot behind the scenes at Fashion Week and sort of had little snippets of episodes to put on the website and give people an insider view. So we did that and the footage ended up being boring. And, we spent all this money shooting it for four days so we didn't want to release the footage in 20 webisodes which was the original plan. So, I thought well what if we took some of the footage and made it into a bit of a trailer and that's the way I could reveal myself. And that's what we did, basically. And I just put it on YouTube and never looked back."

LD: "How has 'DKNY PR Girl' impacted the Donna Karan brand?"

AL: "I feel like that's always a question that I get and I feel like it's always a question best answered by the people who follow. I mean, my perspective is I feel a connection to the consumer that I could've never felt before doing normal PR. Yeah, you get stuff in a magazine but you don't know what it feels like to have someone on the other side open that page and see your stuff or dress someone on the red carpet and know how they feel. So, I think it's ... for me, with any good social media platform that has an engaged audience, it makes it feel more, I don't know, more connected. My goal has always been engagement and if you really analyze, which I'm sure you're going to do in your report now, it's so much less about selling anything than it is about people connecting to the brand. Even the world of PR, I feel like that's the part I also love showing because I do feel like there's not a place where you can sort of learn about what goes on behind the scenes or how a brand does market themselves without getting that kind of insider view. So, it's fun for me too. But I think, you know, the people who are fans of the brand would really best be the people to answer."

LD: "How does social media impact the fashion industry and do you have any specific examples or experience of that impact?"

AL: "Well, for an industry that was always elitist, I think its forced brands to think differently. But not everyone is willing to think differently, right. You have brands that are on Twitter who don't reply. They just push out content. I don't think there's a point to that. I think if you're going to be on certain platforms then you have to have a strategy for engagement. So, I think before you talk about what social media has done, I think you almost have to give credit to Project Runway because I think that Project Runway really gave people that first insider view of what goes on with designers in fashion. Before that, there wasn't really anything that gave you kind of a birds-eye view. So that sort of gave people a taste and obviously people really liked that taste and I think that sort of paved the way for people being really curious about what goes on behind the scenes. But, you know, in general, it also, certainly from a PR perspective, gives us another very effective vehicle to get our message out without having to depend on media which is crazy because, I mean, that was always ... your relationship with the press was always make or break. I mean, it still is, don't get me wrong. But it was always like, if you had a press release and you didn't have a relationship with a reporter to get it out there, then your story's not

getting out. I think it's been a great change. I personally think that we're all better for it. And I also think, from a networking perspective, it's been incredible."

LD: "Why is fashion blogging important for the fashion industry?"

AL: "Well again, democracy, right. I think that social media, blogging, it's taken the power to the people essentially. Whereas it used to be a very small group of people that held that power. I think that people can relate maybe better to a blogger than they can a supermodel wearing a look, right? So, it's just another way. I think it's an 'and' not an 'or.' I think it's great. I think there are tons and tons of blogs that probably make no impact at all but the person that's doing the blogging feels a sense of creativity. It's great even just for yourself, you know, just to feel like you have a place to put your thoughts, your feelings, your likes, your dislikes."

LD: "Can you describe the different types of fashion blogging that are within the industry and what each type provides to the fashion industry?"

AL: "Well, I think the biggest had always been really – and really starting with Scott Schuman, The Sartorialist – like, you know, the street style and everyone taking pictures of their outfits which is, again, you're trying to make yourself into that pseudo-model that people can definitely relate to. But at the same time, I like more of the commentary. You know, people like Tom and Lorenzo who, I don't know if you're familiar with their blog on celebrity dressing, but I think if you're a good writer and you have a great point of view, it's a great way to sort of establish yourself. There's that. In general, I guess those are the two kinds ... that I focus on.

LD: "How do you think fashion blogging is creating and encouraging two-way symmetrical communication within the fashion industry and do you have any specific examples?"

AL: "Well, I think the comments section in general. The comments section is one of those things where, you know, if you read those you can very, very, very upset a lot of the times. I think most of the time, people who write in the comments section are, honestly have nothing better to do with their time. I think they're usually the most nasty people. So, I think two-way communication is great, but at the time same, you always have to remember kind of whose speaking. For the most part, I would say we get very positive tweets. And I have columns set up even for people who are speaking about the brand who aren't speaking to the brand just to kind of see what's being said. Very, very rarely will all of a sudden will someone bust out with a nasty comment about something. And you always look at that person and they're always, like, 20 followers. Or they're just bitter. You know, there are always going to be those bitter people. I think it's great for people who less so communication. I think from a blog perspective for people who want to consume all day, every day, they'll never run out of content and I think that that's great. Whereas it used to be like you got your monthly magazine and once you finished reading it, there wasn't anything else, right? I mean, it's like you would wait to get your content. And now you can consume, you don't even have enough time to consume what you could consume. I just think that it allows people to be a part of something in a much more connected way."

LD: "What advice do you have for others who wish to become a successful fashion blogger?"

AL: “I think you have to have a very strong point of view. And I think you have to create a brand filter for your blog. When I was starting the Tumblr ... first of all, the Tumblr wasn’t my idea. Someone – a Twitter follower – was like ‘Oh, you should have a Tumblr!’ And I was like, ‘What? Why?!’ Like this already takes up so much of my time and I have another job so, you know. So, when they said ... explained to me that, like, oh it would be more of a library of all your content, you know, pictures this and that, you know, I got it. So when I started to think about, ‘Well, if I’m going to have a blog, what is the purpose of that blog?’ Like I needed to frame it for myself to understand why it exists, not just have it, right? Because, for me, I have to feel for it or I can’t do it. I’m actually a very bad PR person in that way. Like I’m not a good faker. If I don’t like it, I can’t push it. So I needed to feel something for it. And how I was able to, sort of, frame it in my own mind was to create the tagline, which in my mind was my brand filter, “140 characters aren’t enough.” So, already, just by saying that, I was establishing that Tumblr was an extension of Twitter and it was meant to marry back and forth. So you know do we need another street style star? Sure, if you have a really different point of view. You know, Man Repeller is a great example. She has a really specific point of view and everything she does goes through that filter of Man Repeller and I think that’s why she’s successful. She’s not trying to be everything to everyone, you know. That’s when you fail. You have to pick a lane and I think that, whatever lane that is, stick to it. Because then you really start to craft everything around your brand and it becomes very clear to you what content you should be posting and what you shouldn’t.”

LD: “What do you think is the future of fashion blogging? Where will fashion blogging go from here? Will it continue to be an important presence and impact the fashion industry? How so?”

AL: “I don’t think fashion blogging’s going away. I think that people will have to start to be very creative as to how – if they want it to be a career – how they’re going to make money from it. Because there are only a few people who really make a lot of money from it and it comes less so from blogging as it does from collaborations and, kind of, endorsements from brands who are paying to get their message out. And that is an area where I feel that, you know, it’s not very transparent. Or it is transparent. Every day you see a blogger saying like “today I’m reading with so and so!” And the next day it’s a totally different brand. So it’s getting a little bit like ‘enough, already’ like I get it. But at the same time I understand because that’s the way they’re going to make money. But at the same time there’s no real loyalty to it either, to a brand. So, I don’t know. To me... if I were telling anyone to do this, I would say have your real day job and do this as a side project. I don’t think that you can set out and say ‘I’m going to be a blogger’ as you real job. Because I think it’s more difficult. It’s like saying you’re going to be an actress. You might be, you might get some acting jobs but there’s a really long road ahead. I think that it has to start off as a side project. Unless of course, you know, you have the inheritance then money doesn’t matter!”

Appendix B

Interview Transcript: Jennifer Bett Meyer

The following interview was conducted to collect an expert opinion on the effect of social media in the fashion industry. The interview was conducted over email for the respondent's convenience.

Interviewer: Leila Durmaz

Respondent: Founder and President of JBC (Jennifer Bett Meyer)

Date of Interview: 5/20/2014

Interview Transcription:

Leila Durmaz: "How does social media impact or affect the fashion industry? Do you have any examples or experience of this impact?"

Jennifer Bett Meyer: "Social Media is key for fashion. It allows brands to communicate directly with their consumers, promote various events and initiatives, and build brand awareness. When I was at Alice + Olivia we launched an Instagram account and it is one of the top accounts this day. Consumers can comment on clothing directly - what they like and don't like. It's instant and free!"

LD: "Why is fashion blogging important for the fashion industry? What does fashion blogging add to the industry?"

JBM: N/A

LD: "Can you describe the different types of fashion blogging that are in the industry and what each type provides to the fashion industry? If you are a fashion blogger, what kind of blogging do you do?"

JBM: N/A

LD: "In what ways is fashion blogging impacting social media within the fashion industry? How is fashion blogging working hand in hand with social media?"

JBM: N/A

LD: "How do you think fashion blogging is creating and encouraging two-way symmetrical communication in the fashion industry? Can you provide any specific examples?"

JBM: N/A

LD: "What advice do you have for others who wish to become a successful fashion blogger?"

JBM: “Find what makes you different from all the other bloggers out there- and embrace it, promote it, and use it to your advantage. You need to find a way to stand out in the crowd.”

LD: “What do you think is the future of fashion blogging? Where will fashion blogging go from here? Will it continue to be an important presence and impact the fashion industry? How so?”

JBM: N/A

Appendix C

Interview Transcript: Callie Gisler

The following interview was conducted to collect an expert opinion on fashion blogging, social media and public relations. The interview was conducted over email for the respondent's convenience.

Interviewer: Leila Durmaz

Respondent: Founder and Blogger at "Coffee and Cardigans" (Callie Gisler)

Date of Interview: 5/26/2014

Interview Transcription:

Leila Durmaz: "How does social media impact or affect the fashion industry? Do you have any examples or experience of this impact/affect?"

Callie Gisler: "I think that social media has made the industry more accessible. It is easier for customers to connect with brands and designers they like through channels like Facebook and Twitter. I also think that social media and blogs have helped high fashion translate into a daily context. My favorite bloggers can take designer looks from Fashion Week and recreate a "runway inspired" look from pieces that I can actually afford."

LD: "Why is fashion blogging important for the fashion industry? What does fashion blogging add to the fashion industry?"

CG: "Going off my previous answer, I think fashion blogging continues to translate fashion into daily life. For me, my favorite bloggers have become sources of inspiration for my daily style. They're influencers, especially through social media. Bloggers drive trends, but they also help consumers connect with style in a way that's more accessible. Someone might not be able to buy a \$700 outfit straight from the runway, but she could afford an inspired look that she saw on a blog for \$100."

LD: "Can you describe the different types of fashion blogging that are in the industry and what each type provides to the fashion industry? If you are a fashion blogger, what kind of blogging do you do?"

CG: "I think there are so many types of bloggers out there! There are the mainstream blogs like Eat, Sleep, Wear or Brooklyn Blonde. But there are also niche sites, like blogs focused on college fashion or sewing. It might seem obvious that those mainstream bloggers are more involved in the fashion industry. They work directly with designers and brands. But I think smaller blogs also have an impact, since they become relatable resources to their audiences. My own blog, Coffee and Cardigans does have plenty of 'fashion blogger' elements. I focus on affordable fashion, and translating a personal sense of style from college to the working world. My blog focuses closely on where I am in my own life and fashion sense."

LD: “In what ways is fashion blogging impacting social media within the fashion industry? How is fashion blogging working hand in hand with social media?”

CG: “For many blogs, including my own, social media acts as an extension of the blogger’s brand. I always think about my blog as the “hub” of my brand, and social media channels like Twitter and Facebook as an extension of that hub. Those channels help me promote new content, connect with readers and maintain an active presence even if I haven’t posted new blog content in a while. Social media helps cultivate a community around the blog. It allows readers to keep up with their favorite bloggers between posts, but also interact and engage with the blogger on a personal level – depending on the size of an audience and the blogger’s activeness in two-way conversation.”

LD: “How do you think fashion blogging is creating and encouraging two-way symmetrical communication in the fashion industry? Can you provide any specific examples?”

CG: “As mentioned before, social media becomes an extension of a blog and the brand it has cultivated. Social media is focused on conversation, so it creates the perfect opportunity for that two-way communication. Bloggers can interact directly with their readers, and vice versa. I think bloggers like Teika from Selective Potential do this incredibly well – replying to comments, say thanks for a compliment or answering questions. It seems like such a simple thing, but I think that sort of conversations help build up the relationships between a blogger and her audience. It also adds a personal, humanistic touch to brands within the fashion industry by creating meaningful conversation.”

LD: “What advice do you have for others who wish to become a successful fashion blogger?”

CG: “I think it’s all about maintaining your personal voice, brand, and of course, sense of style. Those are the things that will make a blog unique... especially with so many other fashion blogs out there. I think it’s easy to feel overwhelmed with the number of blogs out there, especially if you start comparing your beginning to someone else’s middle. It takes time to build awareness and build an audience – don’t get impatient.”

LD: “What do you think is the future of fashion blogging? Where will fashion blogging go from here? Will it continue to be an important presence and impact the fashion industry? How so?”

CG: “I think blogging will always have a place in the fashion industry – just like magazines, newspapers and other media. But I do think that standards will change as the digital space becomes even more populated. Bloggers that are already well established will probably be just fine, but smaller bloggers will have to find a way to stand out among the crowd if popularity and increased readership are important goals. I think bloggers have become journalists, in a sense. It’s citizen journalism with a fashion twist. Fresh perspectives will always be sought after in the media industry, while readers will always look towards resources they can trust. I think blogs help to fulfill both of those needs.”

Appendix D

Interview Transcript: Danika Daly

The following interview was conducted to collect an expert opinion on fashion blogging, social media and public relations. The interview was conducted over email for the respondent's convenience.

Interviewer: Leila Durmaz

Respondent: CEO of Danika Daly PR (Danika Daly)

Date of Interview: 6/2/2014

Interview Transcription:

Leila Durmaz: "How does social media impact or affect the fashion industry? Do you have any examples or experience of this impact/affect?"

Danika Daly: "Social media has made fashion more accessible to the masses. For example, once upon a time, Fashion Week was an industry-only event for press and buyers. The public wouldn't see the collections until a few months later. Now, Fashion Week has become a global event because of social media. The public can stream a show or see photos of brand's collections immediately. This has resulted in sites like Moda Operandi, where people can purchase clothing right off the runway."

LD: "Why is fashion blogging important for the fashion industry? What does fashion blogging add to the fashion industry?"

DD: "Fashion bloggers have become celebrities of the fashion world, and influence sales for many brands. It's easier for a fashion brand to dress a fashion blogger than a celebrity, and work with them on a regular basis. Some bloggers have enough influence for a brand to sell out of a product they've worn."

LD: "Can you describe the different types of fashion blogging that are in the industry and what each type provides to the fashion industry? If you are a fashion blogger, what kind of blogging do you do?"

DD: "There are style bloggers, such as Song of Style, Trop Rouge and Viviere Bella, who feature their outfits. Some bloggers have more of a lifestyle approach, and will feature recipes, their trips, how to's and more. There are also bloggers who take a journalistic approach, such as Style Bubble. Each of these types of blogs serve a major role because it allows for diversity in content."

LD: "In what ways is fashion blogging impacting social media within the fashion industry? How is fashion blogging working hand in hand with social media?"

DD: "Fashion blogging has become even more widespread because of social media promotion. Social media makes it easier for a blogger to direct readers to their site. They can post a photo of their outfit, and send people to see the outfit details on their blog."

LD: “How do you think fashion blogging is creating and encouraging two-way symmetrical communication in the fashion industry? Can you provide any specific examples?”

DD: “Fashion blogging has created a voice for the public to start new trends. The designers and press are listening to these voices and creating based on the style on the street. An example of this is the rise of brands collaborating with bloggers to design products.”

LD: “What advice do you have for others who wish to become a successful fashion blogger?”

DD: “Use social media to your advantage, take care in building a nicely laid out blog, be authentic, find your niche and create relationships with brands and publicists.”

LD: “What do you think is the future of fashion blogging? Where will fashion blogging go from here? Will it continue to be an important presence and impact the fashion industry? How so?”

DD: “Fashion blogging is steering more toward social media - Instagrammers and YouTubers are becoming more powerful than bloggers. With new apps like Like to Know It, readers will no longer have to go to a blog site for details on an outfit they saw on Instagram. It's all directed toward social media. Maybe the blogger phase will die out, but social media will continue to grow and affect the fashion industry. Influencers will continue to shape street style and the fashion industry.”