

# **Fashion Spectacle**

## **The impact of runway shows on fashion branding**

*Versão final após defesa*

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## Declaração de Integridade

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Universidade da Beira Interior, Covilhã 27 / 12 / 2023

*Rita Petrone*

# **Dedication**

To my family and best friends, for never giving up on me. Also, to my cat.

# Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank my parents for always supporting me in my dreams.

I also could not be more grateful to everyone who listened to me talk about fashion shows for hours on end during these last few months. I am the luckiest girl in the world for being able to call you all my best friends. In particular, I would like to thank Beatriz Vasques for being my constant academic rock and favourite editor – without you, this dissertation would read like a poorly written children’s book. And Diana da Mata, for all the kindness and patience during my moments of insecurity. Thank you for keeping me company during all of the late nights we endured and never shaming me when I would accidentally eat an entire bag of M&Ms in one sitting.

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# Resumo

Os desfiles de moda são uma das ferramentas mais proeminentes que as marcas têm à sua disposição para comunicar os seus valores, pois permitem que os *designers* transmitam as suas ideias, promovam causas sociais importantes para os mesmos e criem universos apelativos ao mesmo tempo que fortalecem a imagem da marca. Os desfiles de moda estabelecem-se como uma forma de arte; fundamentados em práticas de marketing, são cruciais para a disseminação da moda e constituem um método eficaz de comunicação.

Esta dissertação tem como objectivo principal investigar o nível de impacto dos desfiles de moda como ferramenta de *branding*, com foco nas marcas de *designer* e de luxo. Os eventos, que ocorrem tradicionalmente inseridos nas semanas da moda, proporcionam uma plataforma de comunicação entre as marcas e o seu público e estabeleceram-se como prática fundamental para apresentar as novas colecções de uma marca ou designer. Deste modo, esta dissertação analisa como os desfiles de moda comunicam e contribuem para a forma como uma marca de moda é percebida pelo público.

Dividida em duas secções, esta dissertação é composta por uma revisão de literatura e pelo desenvolvimento e aplicação de uma matriz, denominada *Fashion Spectacle Matrix*. A revisão de literatura explora temas como moda, arte, design e o corpo ao analisar perspectivas sociológicas e históricas; explora também os campos do marketing e da comunicação de moda, através da identificação de conceitos-chave e análise da evolução dos *media* e do fenómeno de mediatização da moda.

A secção dedicada à *Fashion Spectacle Matrix* contextualiza e aplica a matriz desenvolvida. Os desfiles de moda representam uma prática imperativa na indústria, pois permitem que as marcas criem mundos imaginários e universos escapistas. Os eventos transmitem valores através de produções impactantes e cenários espectaculares, ao mesmo tempo que celebram a marca e promovem as suas apostas para a nova estação. Deste modo, a matriz foi pensada como uma estrutura capaz de categorizar diferentes tipos de desfiles moda; foram definidas quatro categorias, posicionadas em dois espectros, com o objectivo de identificar quais as mensagens comunicadas durante um desfile, assim como analisar a forma como estas são apresentadas pelos designers e marcas durante o evento. Por fim, a matriz é aplicada através da análise a oito desfiles de moda não relacionados entre si.

Através da produção de eventos inspirados nas artes performativas e construção de cenários impactantes, as marcas expandem o seu universo imaginário junto do seu público. Em suma, os desfiles impactam o *branding* das marcas de moda de luxo e de *designers*, pois permitem a comunicação de valores e identidade visual das mesmas.

## **Palavras-chave**

desfiles de moda;branding;luxo;espetáculo;corpo;comunicação.

# **Abstract**

Fashion shows are powerful tools for brands to convey their values, promote social causes, and strengthen their image. They serve as a form of art and an effective method of communication in the fashion industry. This dissertation examines the impact of fashion shows as a branding tool. It consists of a literature review and the development of the *Fashion Spectacle Matrix*. The literature review explores topics such as fashion, art, design, and the body, as well as fashion marketing and communication. The *Fashion Spectacle Matrix* categorises different types of fashion shows across two spectrums and analyses the messages conveyed by designers and brands during these events. By creating imaginative worlds and visually impactful scenarios, fashion shows allow luxury brands to expand their universe and communicate their values and visual identity to the audience. In conclusion, fashion shows play a significant role in shaping the branding of fashion brands and designers by effectively communicating their identity and engaging with the audience.

# **Keywords**

fashion shows;branding;performance;luxury;body;communication.

# Table of Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Resumo .....	v
Abstract.....	vii
Table of Figures .....	x
Introduction.....	1
Research Question .....	2
Objectives .....	2
Methodology .....	2
Dissertation Structure .....	3
1. A Sociological Approach to Fashion .....	5
1.1 What is Fashion? .....	5
1.1.1 The Field of Fashion.....	6
1.2 The Body .....	7
1.3 Fashion, Art, and Design .....	9
1.3.1 Fashion Design .....	9
1.3.2 Fashion vs. Art.....	10
2. How Fashion Moves .....	13
2.1 Fashion Weeks .....	13
2.2 Fashion Shows.....	15
2.2.1 The Catwalk History.....	17
2.2.2 Elements of the Fashion Show .....	19
2.3 Fashion Trends.....	28
2.3.1 Trends vs. Style vs. Fashion .....	28
2.3.2 The Art and Science of Forecasting.....	30
2.3.3 Theories and Methods of Diffusion.....	32

3. Communicating Fashion.....	37
3.1 Marketing Fashion .....	37
3.1.1 Brands and Branding .....	38
3.1.2 Luxury Brands .....	41
3.2 Fashion Communication .....	42
3.2.1 Print Media .....	43
3.2.2 Digital Media .....	43
4. The Fashion Spectacle Matrix .....	47
4.1 The Matrix.....	48
4.1.1 Categories .....	50
4.2 Analysis of Fashion Shows .....	51
Conclusion.....	71
Limitations and further research.....	72
Bibliographic References .....	73

# Table of Figures

**Figure 1** – Model twirling at a Mary Quant fashion show. Utrecht, Netherlands, 1969 ..... 18

**Figure 2** – Models on stage. Battle of Versailles, Versailles (1973) ..... 19

**Figure 3** – Models (from left to right) Linda Evangelista, Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell, and Christy Turlington during the Versace Autumn/Winter 1991 show..... 22

**Figure 4** – Plexiglass mannequins at Givenchy Couture by Alexander McQueen, Autumn/Winter 1999 ..... 23

**Figure 5** – Christian Dior Couture by John Galliano, Autumn/Winter 1998.....25

**Figure 6** – The Grand Palais reimaged as a cliff for Chanel Spring/Summer 2019. 26

**Figure 7** – Levels of Fashion .....33

**Figure 8** – Front row at Dolce & Gabbana Spring/Summer 2010. The bloggers Bryanboy (third from left) and Tommy Ton (right) alongside fashion editors and journalists, including fashion journalist Suzy Menkes (left) and Vogue’s editor-in-chief Anna Wintour (third from right) .....45

**Figure 9** – The Fashion Spectacle Matrix..... 49

**Figures 10 and 11** – Model Kate Moss as Princess Lucretia (left) and model performing as an actress (right) at John Galliano Spring/Summer 1994 .....52

**Figure 12** – Backstage at John Galliano Spring/Summer 1994.....53

**Figure 13** – Positioning of the John Galliano Spring/Summer 1994 fashion show on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix .....54

**Figure 14** – Model walking during the Christian Dior Couture Autumn/Winter 2012.....54

**Figures 15 and 16** – Set at Christian Dior Couture Autumn/Winter 2012 .....55

**Figure 17** – Positioning of the Christian Dior Couture Autumn/Winter 2012 fashion show on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix.....56

**Figure 18** – Supermarket set at the Chanel Autumn/Winter 2014 fashion show .....56

**Figure 19** – Audience watching the Chanel Autumn/Winter 2014 fashion show .....57

**Figure 20** – Positioning of the Chanel Autumn/Winter 2014 fashion show on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix ..... 58

**Figure 21** – Models walking down the runway during the Jacquemus Spring/Summer 2020 fashion show..... 58

**Figure 22** – Runway at Jacquemus Spring/Summer 2020 .....59

**Figure 23** – Models on set at Jacquemus Spring/Summer 2020.....59

**Figure 24** – Positioning of the Jacquemus Spring/Summer 2020 fashion show on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix ..... 60

<b>Figure 25</b> – Model walking the runway at the Moschino Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show .....	60
<b>Figures 26 and 27</b> – Set (left) and finale (right) a the Moschino Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show .....	61
<b>Figure 28</b> – Positioning of the Moschino Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix.....	62
<b>Figure 29</b> – Finale at the Chanel Spring/Summer 2015 fashion show.....	62
<b>Figure 30</b> – Models walking with signs during the finale at the Chanel Spring/Summer 2015 fashion show.....	63
<b>Figure 31</b> – Positioning of the Chanel Spring/Summer 2015 fashion show on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix.....	64
<b>Figure 32</b> – Shalom Harlow during the finale at the Alexander McQueen Spring/Summer 1999 fashion show .....	64
<b>Figure 33</b> – Coperni Spring/Summer 2023 fashion show .....	65
<b>Figure 34</b> – Positioning of the Alexander McQueen Spring/Summer 1999 and Coperni Spring/Summer 2023 fashion shows on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix .....	66
<b>Figure 35</b> – Model walking down the runway during the Balenciaga Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show .....	66
<b>Figure 36</b> – Water set at the Balenciaga Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show .....	67
<b>Figure 37</b> – Lava set at the Balenciaga Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show.....	67
<b>Figure 38</b> – Positioning of the Balenciaga Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix.....	68
<b>Figure 39</b> – Positioning of all the analysed fashion shows on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix.....	68



# Introduction

The fashion show is an ideal research method  
to share knowledge derived from clothing.  
Barry, 2018, p. 25

Fashion has often been considered frivolous; nonetheless, its various meanings and connotations make it a prestigious subject in academic studies (Bourdieu, 1993). Fashion studies have emerged as a versatile, multidisciplinary, and mercurial field combining arts, social sciences, textile chemistry, and business. However, the field has yet to establish a concrete identity or distinctive character (Tseëlon, 2010). No single discipline can, on its own, disguise itself as fashion theory, as there is no specific conceptual framework able to identify, explore, and critically explain the production and consumption of fashion (Barnard, 2014, p. 19). As Tseëlon (2010) argues:

The task of fashion studies is not merely to record, describe or analyse. It is about engaging by way of innovative research and application of a range of theories in a critical reflection, and challenging and interpreting the received ways of doing fashion, observing fashion, understanding fashion, explaining fashion and talking about fashion (p. 12).

As Barnard (2014) affirms, “both fashion and theory are inescapable. One is always in theory, and one is always in fashion” (p. 217). Thus, studying fashion phenomena, such as the fashion show, requires carefully balancing both social theory and market research.

The fashion show has become one of the most prominent tools brands have on hand to convey their values; they allow designers to broadcast their ideas, promote and support causes that feel dear to them, create captivating escapist realms for their audiences, and further their brand’s imagery. Fashion shows have established themselves as an art form while remaining marketing events; they play a crucial part in the dissemination of fashion (Barry, 2018; Kawamura, 2005; Strömberg, 2021) and are an effective communications tool (Mendes, 2019; Tungate, 2008).

Often perceived as a “theatre without a plot” (Duggan, 2001, p. 246) – where clothing is the protagonist and the designer the director (Gruber & Rech, 2018) – fashion shows create spaces that exist outside of time (Mendes, 2019). Their firm nod to spectacle and performance has created an increasing process of mediatisation (Rocamora, 2016) surrounding the events. Thus, fashion shows have become fundamental in magnifying the consumers’ perception of fashion brands, particularly through the new digital media platforms.

## **Research Question**

Often occurring within fashion weeks, fashion runway shows are an established practice in the fashion industry. It has become the default method of diffusing a brand or designer's newest collection, and the events provide a platform for brands to communicate with their audience. Thus, through the analysis of the intricacies of fashion's sociological connotations, the observation of the inner workings of the industry, and the application of qualitative research methods, this dissertation asks a simple question:

What is the impact of runway shows on the branding of fashion brands?

Specifically, by focusing on luxury fashion brands and designer labels, this dissertation ponders what and how fashion runway shows communicate and in what way these conveyed meanings impact how a fashion brand is perceived by its audience.

## **Objectives**

This dissertation aims to uncover the impact of runway shows on the branding of fashion brands. To achieve this primary goal, several smaller objectives have been established:

- Understand the role of the fashion show;
- Explore the role of branding in the fashion and luxury industries;
- Analyse how fashion brands convey their brand values to their target audiences;
- Categorise the different types of fashion shows.

For the sake of this study, this dissertation focuses on luxury fashion and designer brands, thus refraining from exploring the realm of fast fashion.

## **Methodology**

The attempt to view fashion through several different pairs of spectacles simultaneously - of aesthetics, of social theory, of politics - may result in an obliquity of view, even of astigmatism or blurred vision, but it seems that we must attempt it (Elizabeth Wilson, 2003, p. 11).

In order to achieve its objectives and answer the proposed research question, this dissertation followed investigative methods of a qualitative dimension – which, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), “rely on text and image data, have unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse designs” (p. 254). Qualitative studies are exploratory and allow the gradual understanding

of topics through “contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing, and classifying the object of the study” (p. 278).

Thus, by following this investigative framework, this dissertation begins by reviewing relevant literature – exploring themes such as fashion, art, design, and the body through sociological and historical lenses. Subsequently, this dissertation explored the marketing and communication fields – identifying key branding concepts and principles and analysing how media practices have evolved around the mediatisation of fashion.

Ultimately, through the conglomeration of the information acquired via the exploratory study of the fashion field and its communication and marketing standards, an original framework was conceptualised. In the form of a perceptual map, this dissertation’s investigative efforts culminated in the development of a matrix that allows the categorisation of different kinds of fashion shows – the aptly named Fashion Spectacle Matrix.

## **Dissertation Structure**

This dissertation is divided into two main categories; the first is dedicated to the literature review, and the second is the contextualisation and application of the developed Fashion Spectacle Matrix.

As Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue, “the literature review helps determine whether the topic is worth studying, and it provides insight into ways in which the researcher can limit the scope to a needed area of inquiry” (p. 62). The authors go on to say that the process of reviewing literature “provides a framework for establishing the importance of the study as well as a benchmark for comparing the results with other findings” (p. 66). Thus, across three chapters, the literature review section of this dissertation follows the premise of exploring what fashion is, how fashion moves, and how fashion communicates.

The first chapter, titled *A Sociological Approach to Fashion*, explores the field of fashion through the lens of social sciences theories. In the section *What is Fashion?*, this dissertation attempts to define the concept of fashion and its eponymous phenomenon. This section also explores Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production to better understand the dynamics of the field of fashion by identifying its key players and most prominent practices. The section *The Body* examines the toll clothes take on the human body by analysing it through a Foucauldian approach. Lastly, the *Fashion, Art, and Design* section explores the connection between fashion and art while differentiating fashion design from the fashion phenomenon.

The second chapter, *How Fashion Moves*, considers the ways in which fashion is disseminated; it explores the topics of fashion weeks, fashion shows, and fashion trends. The *Fashion Weeks*

section analyses the inner workings of fashion weeks and ponders how they act as an embodiment of the field of fashion. The *Fashion Shows* section contextualises the importance of fashion presentations; it delves into the history of the catwalk and analyses the several elements that comprise a fashion show. Lastly, the *Fashion Trends* section explores the ever-changing nature of fashion; it ponders the differences between fashion, trends, and style, analyses the process behind trend forecasting, and reviews theories of fashion diffusion, particularly the trickle-down theory.

The final chapter of the literature review section, titled *Communicating Fashion*, explores the field of fashion marketing and communication. The section *Marketing Fashion* considers the field of marketing and branding; it attempts to define key concepts within the field and ponders the way luxury impacts how brands position themselves in the market. The section *Fashion Communication* considers the evolution of fashion media, the concept of mediatisation, and the rise of digital media and its practitioners.

The second section of this dissertation is comprised of a single chapter, titled *The Fashion Spectacle Matrix*. In this section, a matrix of the same name is contextualised, developed, and applied; four categories across two spectrums were identified by exploring connections between the world of performance arts and the practice of showing fashion. Lastly, the final section of this chapter analyses fashion shows by positioning them in the fashion spectacle matrix.

# 1. A Sociological Approach to Fashion

Fashion discourse is fundamental to guarantee the good functioning and maintenance of the fashion system; it explores narratives about health, sexuality, gender, class, and race and proves that fashion is concurrent with most narratives in any given social framework (J. Tynan, 2016). Thus, this chapter explores the meanings associated with the phenomenon of fashion through a sociological perspective. The first section delves into Bourdieu's theory of cultural production to define the field of fashion, while the second taps into Foucault's work to consider fashion and dress's implications on the body. Lastly, this chapter also seeks to differentiate the concepts of fashion, art, and design by pondering the question of whether fashion can be understood as art.

## 1.1 What is Fashion?

Saying that fashion is meaningful  
is to say that fashion is a cultural phenomenon.  
Barnard, 2020b, p. 21

There are several approaches to defining fashion. In the original sense of the word, *fashion* is linked to the idea of fetish; as a noun, fashion means a kind or a sort; as a verb, it refers to the activity of making or doing (Barnard, 2002, pp. 8–9). From an empirical perspective, fashion is defined as “the process of social diffusion by which a new style (of fashion clothing) is adopted by some group(s) of consumers” (Solomon, 2018, p. 540). However, the concept of fashion is most commonly used when describing styles of clothing presently highly valued, as well as the systems that produce them (Crane & Bovone, 2006). In the contemporary sense, the word fashion alludes to the endless cycle of inherent change in its eponymous industry (Barnard, 2014). It represents a “system of mediation between the individual and society, culture, material and immaterial values, production and consumption” (Ferrero-Regis, 2021, p. 185).

As the concept of fashion evolved, so did its phenomenon. Fashion in the 15<sup>th</sup> century differs entirely from that of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, fashion indicated class status, while in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, those clues were no longer on par with that era's social life. From the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, fashion underwent a period of democratisation – allowing everyone, regardless of status, to access fashionable<sup>1</sup> garments and partake in fashion trends. Conclusively, regardless of the period, the primary essence of fashion is change (Kawamura, 2005, p. 5).

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<sup>1</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary (2023c) defines fashionable as: a) Of persons: Observant of or following *the fashion*; dressing or behaving in conformity with the standard of elegance current in upper-class society (sense 4.a); b) Of things, *esp.* dress: Conformable to fashion; in accordance with prevailing usage; of the kind in vogue among persons of the upper class (sense 4.b).

The terms fashion and dress are often used interchangeably because fashion and clothing are interwoven. Fashion is a belief manifested through clothing and, as sociologist Ingrid Brenninkmeyer notes, “clothing and dress are the raw material from which fashion is formed” (as cited in Kawamura, 2005, p. 1). Nevertheless, “while all clothing is an adornment, not all clothing is fashion, and while all fashion is dress, not all dress is fashion,” Barnard explains (2002, p. 10).

Due to its proximity and association with individual perception, clothing serves as a fundamental tool in studying the relationship between our personal values and the values we attribute to material goods (Crane & Bovone, 2006). Moreover, through a psychological framework, clothing is perceived as a crucial fragment of one’s personality and individuality (Horn & Gurel, 1981). As Entwistle (2020) describes, “getting dressed is an ongoing practice, requiring knowledge, techniques, and skills,” going further to explain the way in which dress is how individuals learn how to live in their bodies and express themselves through it (p. 412). Ergo, as Baudrillard (2020) asserts, “every principle of identity is affected by fashion” (p. 625).

### **1.1.1 The Field of Fashion**

Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production offers a unique perspective on the fashion industry, portraying it as a distinct system capable of establishing its own rules and cultural norms, effectively influencing society. The concept of *field* is both crucial and recurrent within Bourdieu’s work. The author defines a field as “an area, a playing field, a field of objective relations among individuals or institutions competing for the same stakes” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 133). Furthermore, “to think in terms of fields is to think rationally” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 96).

The field of fashion has carved its specific place within social theory. It is best described as “the commodification and sale of dreams,” and it thrives on encouraging aesthetics that grow outside the conventional parameters (Lonergan et al., 2018). Fashion is a field with its own set of players, responsible for all phases in its industry, from designing a garment to retailing it; therefore, it can be considered an intermediary between the artistic and economic fields (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006, p. 739).

Another concept coined by Bourdieu is *capital*, which the author defines as “accumulated labour” (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 46). Capital is bestowed to field players and applies only to a particular field and within its limits; it can only be translated into another kind of capital under certain circumstances (Bourdieu, 1993). Fashion produces its unique capital; drawing on Bourdieu, Rocamora (2002) defines *fashion capital* as the specific capital at play in the field of fashion and consists “essentially of familiarity with a certain milieu and of the quality conferred by the simple fact of belonging to it” (p. 343). Furthermore, like all field-related capitals, fashion capital is imbued with economic, cultural, social, and symbolic connotations (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006).

As a field, fashion has always been linked with status, success, and social class, and thus is intrinsically elitist (English, 2013). Bourdieu (1993) notes:

In a field (and this is the general law of fields), the occupiers of the dominant position, those who have the most specific capital, are opposed in a whole host of ways to the newcomers, the new entrants to the field, parvenus who do not possess much specific capital (p. 133).

In the realm of fashion, it is the clothing that adorns the body that serves as the conveyor of fashion capital, position, and status. The garments one wears are a social expression and distinction method, particularly regarding class (Bourdieu, 1987; Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006). Nevertheless, fashion is an inherent part of human interaction and cannot be controlled without undermining itself and its purpose, which has always been the expression of individual identity (Cannon, 1998, p. 35).

## **1.2 The Body**

Human bodies are dressed bodies.  
Entwistle, 2020, p. 411

Alongside studying fashion as a field, it is indispensable to delve into our bodies' role in it. Most fashion theory has yet to recognise “the way in which dress is a fleshy practice involving the body” (Entwistle & Wilson, 2001, p. 4). According to Barnard (2020b), there are two ways in which fashion relates to the body: firstly – and most evidently – it is the body that fashionable clothing covers or adorns; and secondly, the body may become fashionable in itself. Although adornment is central to the field of fashion, the body is not simply a carrier of clothing, but rather, an item of fashion in itself, to be consumed like any other (Barnard, 2020a; Baudrillard, 1998). “Bodies are also fashion; they are themselves fashionable items and different sizes of body go in and out of vogue as the seasons change, just like the clothes that adorn them” (Barnard, 2014, p. 110).

Mauss (1973) argues that the body is shaped by the culture it is surrounded by, coining the concept *techniques of the body* to describe how “from society-to-society men know how to use their bodies” (p. 70). Mauss's theory expands upon Entwistle's work, which originated the term *fashioned body* to describe how fashion creates a body imbued with cultural connotations (Entwistle, 2000). Entwistle (2000) goes on to say that “bodies are the product of a dialectic between culture and nature” (p. 27), with Barnard (2020a) adding that “the body does not exist until it has been dressed with the values and meanings of culture” (p. 466); it is then possible to conclude that there cannot be an uncultured body. It is also important to note that, generally, the

body must always appear appropriately dressed in order to maintain social stratification. Despite nakedness being considered inappropriate in most social situations, with the public arena requiring appropriate dressing, the undressed body is still likely to be adorned (Entwistle, 2020). This can be demonstrated through Marilyn Monroe's famous quote: during an interview in 1952, the actress revealed she wore "five drops of Chanel No. 5' and nothing else in bed" (Young, 2012). Thus, at no point does the body find itself un-fashioned by the values of the culture that surrounds it (Barnard, 2020a), and "to say that the fashioned body is always a cultured body is also to say that the fashioned body is a meaningful body" (Barnard, 2020b, p. 4), which communicates what we think of ourselves as well as how we experience the world.

Analysing the body through a Foucauldian approach makes it possible to explore how the body is socially processed, as the author's work informs how the body is perceived and acted upon (Entwistle, 2020, p. 424). Per Foucault, the body is interconnected to power, with his notion of the concept laying on the premise of nothing being "more material, physical, [and] corporeal than the exercise of power" (Foucault, 1980, pp. 57–58); he then goes on to say that the body's visible construction shapes political and social discourses (J. Tynan, 2016, p. 186). According to Entwistle (2020), applying Foucault's notion of power to the study of dress allows us to consider how the body "acquires meaning and is acted upon by social and discursive forces and how these forces are implicated in the operation of power" (p. 422). Multiple factors fashion the body; however, by shaping the gestures and actions of the body, garments can also limit the human experience (J. Tynan, 2016, p. 185). Therefore, a Foucauldian perspective on the body is based on the concept of *docile bodies*, coined and defined by the author as "something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body [from which] the machine can be constructed" (Foucault, 1995, p. 135). This notion signifies that the body exists to be imbued with culture and adorned with clothes, moulding it into something that can acquire meanings and facilitate the operation of power.

While Foucault's theory tends to be consistently gender-blind<sup>2</sup> (Entwistle, 2020), Tseëlon's essay *What is Beautiful is Bad* (1992) explores how beauty focuses primarily on the female gender. She argues that "the beauty system is naturalised by the ideology of sexual differences" (p. 302); the author then goes on to explain that while looks are important regardless of gender, they are considered inconsequential for men and defining for women – both on how they see themselves as well as how the world responds to them (p. 295). "A woman's beauty is constantly anticipated, encouraged, sought, and rewarded in a wide range of situations" (Freedman, 1986, p. 10). Women are more willing to undergo practices to improve their appearance than their gender counterparts; thus, the woman is placed in a no-win, paradoxical situation where she is expected to embody a

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<sup>2</sup> Gender blindness is the failure to recognise or make a distinction between genders, which helps to maintain the status quo and deters the transformation of the unequal structure of gender relations (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016, p. 191).

timeless fantasy in an ever-changing world, and the harder she tries to control and mould herself and her body, the more obvious do the cultural signifying practices she obeys become (Tseëlon, 1992; Wolf, 1991). All in all, as Tseëlon (1992) concludes, “to be beautiful is to pursue a picture-perfect moment framed by expectation and fear” (p. 301).

## 1.3 Fashion, Art, and Design

Anyone who thinks fashion is inconsequential  
and does not deserve serious attention must think again.  
Okonkwo, 2007, p. 1

Fashion is essential to human culture; it stimulates self-expression, encourages identity and belonging, and informs the values and actions of people across all segments of society (UNEP & UNFCC, 2023, p. 20). However, where exactly does the boundary lie between fashion and fashion design? Moreover, do we use the term fashion in the same way as we use clothing? According to Barnard (2014), whereas fashion performs the impractical functions of constructing and perpetuating cultural ideas and differences, clothing accomplishes the practical function of protecting our bodies from outside factors (p. 42). However, fashion and clothing are meaningless on their own; it is only in relation to each other and their surrounding discourses that they acquire meaning as objects of study (Barnard, 2002, p. 170). Barnard (2014) furthers his investigation by questioning what would happen if form could not be separated from matter; “What if we argued that matter could never appear except by taking some form? If this were the case, then matter cannot be separated from form,” which would make the relationship between fashion and fashion design much more intricate (p. 15).

### 1.3.1 Fashion Design

Sproles and Burns (1994) define *design* as a “unique combination of silhouette, construction, fabric, and details that distinguishes a single fashion object from all others of the same category or classes” (p. 6), while Stone (2013) defines *fashion designer* as “a person who creates designs, chooses the fabric, texture, and colour for each design. Often, this person is involved with the development of the production model as well as with plans for the promotion of the line” (p. 413).

The terms fashion and clothing are often used interchangeably; nevertheless, fashion refers to a wide range of social and cultural meanings, while clothing is the generic term for the garments people wear (Kawamura, 2005). Furthermore, fashion is highly influential in structuring society’s culture and lifestyle, with luxury fashion also reinforcing the evolution and voice of society (Okonkwo, 2007). Thus, when fashion is seen as an item of clothing imbued with material value, it confuses the notion of fashion (Kawamura, 2005).

Bourdieu (1993) claims that the producers of cultural goods are of extreme importance; in the case of fashion, this role falls onto fashion designers. Fashion designers are the personification of fashion, and their designs its objectification. They are essential figures in fashion production: while their job is to design clothes, they also play an important part in the preservation, reproduction, and diffusion of fashion. Thus, design as a field is inseparable from the notion of fashion (Kawamura, 2005). As Bernard (2014) suggests:

Thinking of fashion as design is to think of it as having a function, or a set of functions. To think of fashion as having a function is to think of fashion as a tool. And to think of fashion as a tool is to think of it as a prosthetic. A prosthetic is something that is not us but which we use, which is added to us, and without which we would consider ourselves incomplete (p. 33).

Designers have the power to define their designs' value through their signature and label; "The creator's signature is a mark that changes not the material nature, but the social nature of the object" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 137). Therefore, the production and consumption of fashion are interconnected (Kawamura, 2005). However, fashion production and consumption are a collective activity; designers alone cannot produce fashion. Here is where the *fashion system* takes place: "Fashion systems transform clothing into fashion. Fashion is a symbolic production while clothes are a material production. Fashion is a symbol manifested through clothing" (Kawamura, 2005, p. 59). It is also significant to state that other producers of fashion, such as advertisers and marketers, also make a crucial contribution to the system.

### **1.3.2 Fashion vs. Art**

Art and fashion have consistently shared a symbiotic relationship throughout history, in which each discipline simultaneously inspires, encourages and competes with the other (Duggan, 2001, p. 243). As McRobbie (1998) notes, many designers perceive themselves as artists (p. 6); in fact, contemporary artists are also starting to look to fashion for inspiration. As Duggan (2001) suggests, "as many patrons of the arts also happen to be enthusiasts of high fashion, it follows that the two industries should feed off one another" (p. 244).

Wilson (2003) believes that "fashion is a branch of aesthetics of the art of modern society" (p. 25), and many artists have turned to fashion as a "living art form" while applying their artistic processes to textiles rather than more traditional mediums (English, 2013). The concept of creativity in fashion is as elusive as any artistic activity (Kawamura, 2005, p. 61). Fashion design involves creative thought, a concern for the aesthetic, and the precedence of form over function – all aspects commonly associated with art (Barnard, 2002). However, creativity is neither given

nor universal, but produced within a social system through which designers express their ideas using fabrics that are, in turn, materialised into clothing (Kawamura, 2005; Wolff, 1993).

During a debate on whether fashion is a true art form, design critic Alice Rawsthorn and fashion designer Zandra Rhodes took different thought approaches (2003). Rawsthorn believes that fashion is design, as it has a practical purpose, whereas art does not; “The result may be as gorgeous as a vintage Balenciaga ballgown or an eloquent political metaphor for its time, but it is still an item of clothing intended to be worn.” She counterpoints that this does not mean that fashion, at its highest form, does not share any qualities traditionally attributed to art or that it is not a suitable subject for museum displays. Rhodes, however, argues that an object having a function and being considered art are not mutually exclusive assessments, adding that fashion can be an art form despite its inherent practicality. When it comes to beauty, Rawsthorn believes it is, at best, a by-product of fashion, while for Rhodes, fashion is always about beauty.

Fashion creativity and business intellect have always been seen as opposites of the same coin (Okonkwo, 2007). Bernard Arnault, founder and CEO of luxury fashion conglomerate LVMH, argues that “The reason for being a designer ... is to sell. Fashion is not pure art. It is creativity with the goal of having as many customers as possible wearing the product” (as cited in English, 2013, p. 164). Consequently, fashion's creative and artistic branches are heightened through fashion shows and exhibitions, while the commercial facet stays mostly out of the media (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006).



## 2. How Fashion Moves

As Barnard (2002) argues, “fashion, dress, and clothing are ways in which people communicate, not only things like feeling and mood, but also the values, hopes, and beliefs of the social groups of which they are members” (p. 39). Thus, this chapter explores the diffusion of fashion. The first section delves into the events of fashion weeks and considers the way in which they act as an embodiment of the field of fashion. The following section contextualises fashion shows and recognises their importance by delving into their history and identifying the several elements that comprise a fashion presentation. The final section focuses on the ever-changing nature of fashion by questioning the differences between the notions of fashion, trends, and style; the section analyses the artistic and scientific processes behind trend forecasting and reviews market diffusion theories to understand how fashion is disseminated.

### 2.1 Fashion Weeks

Fashion weeks ... have been rethought, reworked, redesigned, reassembled,  
in different forms and, in some cases, totally innovative.  
Linfante & Pompa, 2021, p. 25

Held twice a year, the fashion week season aims to take the newest fashion trends all over the world. The four fashion capitals – New York, London, Milan, and Paris – hold the most prestige when it comes to showcasing the upcoming season’s designer collections (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006); the self-entitled fashion month represents one of the most significant opportunities for the fashion industry, simply due to fashion week’s primary function being to “produce, reproduce, and legitimate the field of fashion and the positions of those players within it” (p. 736). Barry (2018) admits that the fashion show “introduces a new mode to share embodied and multisensory data” (p. 5); therefore, its role is essential in promoting upcoming designers whilst cementing smaller brands within the fashion industry.

According to Entwistle and Rocamora (2006), “one of the major purposes of the fashion show is to see and be seen” (p. 743); thus, around the traditional fashion shows and presentations, there are also co-occurring events operating as an “embodiment of the wider field of fashion” (p. 736). This idea expands on Bourdieu’s theory of the field of cultural production by assuming fashion week as a way to bring together the industry’s leading players into one specific event or location, as well as defining it as an instance of the field of fashion “physically realised or objectified” (p. 736).

In recent years, fashion weeks have become an event where art and business coexist. Through several elements, the fashion show acts as the representative of art, allowing designers to exhibit

their newest creations to their audiences. In this sense, the artistic facet of fashion is celebrated through the catwalk and press coverage, while the commercial facet, which receives little to no press, occurs through a trade show (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006; Gruber & Rech, 2018). Consequently, through the constant interaction between guests, press, and professionals, fashion weeks “alter the everyday configuration of a city by temporarily transforming an environment through the event” (Mendes, 2019, p. 318). Nevertheless, not all members of society are privy to the events that make a Fashion Week:

The temple of fashion though is not open to everyone and only a carefully scrutinised set of fashion editors, photographers, buyers, distinguished clients, and celebrities are allowed into the inner sanctuary. Access to such an event and the seating plan draw a political map of social success and a complex web of interests (Tseëlon, 1995, p. 134).

It is important to note that although fashion weeks have developed into mostly public events and become a “public spectacle and entertainment addressed to a worldwide audience” (Rocamora, 2016, p. 5), they remain intrinsically elitist and exclusive at their core. Fashion insiders and figures exist on a spectrum: from designers, models, and journalists to stylists and buyers, to celebrities and influencers, and, at the very end, fashion students (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006). These all coexist within Bourdieu’s framework of cultural production: by assuming a field of fashion, different individuals contribute with different critical aspects to the success of their industry (Bourdieu, 1993). The events that make up Fashion Week occur in an enclosed space, where only certain fashion industry players are allowed to physically enter (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006). As Findlay (2017) contended, “the presence of notable guests ... adds to the prestige, glamour ... and the legitimacy of fashion weeks” (p. 113).

An integral part of viewing a fashion show is to “participate in the spectacle of seeing and being seen as a guest” (Findlay, 2017, p. 113). Thus, alongside fashion weeks, phenomena like social media and influencing have become an established practice and are essential to the ecosystem of fashion (Pedroni, 2022). Bloggers, who have evolved into influencers, have invented a new occupation with an individual set of practices and represent an intersection between fashion and media culture, shaped around collective narratives that refer to fashion, style, and the body (Pedroni, 2022; Rocamora, 2018; Titton, 2015). Fashion influencers, defined by Pedroni (2022) as “social media practitioners able to exert a charismatic influence on their audience and to monetise the activity involved” (p. 17), are dignified key agents in the “new business of influence in the field of fashion” (p. 2). Essentially, fashion blogging is a helpful tool for understanding contemporary forms of labour and how fashion, as a field, can be perceived through social, cultural, and economic practices (Rocamora, 2018).

Fashion weeks also encourage a conversation surrounding body discourse by viewing fashion modelling as a disciplinary process that “professionalises gender performance” (J. Tynan, 2016, p. 191). Fashion modelling “transforms women’s bodies into commodities” (p. 191); rather than being viewed as significant figures within the spectacle of the fashion show, they are commonly framed as “cardboard-cut-outs,” simply there to fulfil the job of a “walking-clothes-hanger” (Lonergan et al., 2018). As Findlay (2017) states, it is the photographers the models walk toward; it is for them they pose, and it is, primarily, whom they are there for, rather than the in-person guests. This experience can be tracked back and explored through the Foucauldian perspective of docile bodies: the models are there to fulfil a single purpose; they are not meant to be thought of as more than a means to an end (J. Tynan, 2016). Another key concept of Bourdieu’s work can be applied to expand on this analysis: the one of capital (Bourdieu, 1997). Within this framework’s embodied state, the field of fashion exists and plays its cultural role; therefore, fashion modelling is, undoubtedly, one of the key elements contributing to the accumulation of fashion capital. As Lonergan, Patterson, and Lichrou (2018) have concluded, “fashion modelling as a cultural phenomenon is unquestionably linked to the rapid development of consumer culture” (p. 256), who depend on media content to inform their buying and brand-promoting decisions.

Though still physically associated with their respective cities, fashion weeks are expanding in time and space. Digital media have increasingly challenged traditional mediums, with the role of social media practitioners growing in force and influence (Pedroni, 2022), meaning that the fashion calendar is currently defying “temporal and geographical boundaries” and, thus, becoming truly global (Linfante & Pompa, 2021, p. 26). The new mediums available today have made catwalk photography a complementary element of the fashion show, though not the most valuable. As Findlay (2017) asserts, a photograph of a show’s finale does not communicate an essential part of the collection, as the show is performed for an absent audience through recordings and livestreams. For this absent, global audience, this new type of media representation of the fashion show “creates another kind of spectacle, but one with identical aims as those that underpin the live show” (p. 110) to produce the fleeting sensation that every member of said absent audience sat the front row of their favourite brand’s fashion show.

## **2.2 Fashion Shows**

The language of the revived catwalk, the supermodel, and the designer label has become a kind of contemporary Esperanto, immediately accessible across social and geographical boundaries.  
Breward, 1995, p. 229

By definition, fashion shows are an art form through which merchandising is presented on live models, enhanced by performing arts practices and with the aim of diffusing new ideas to fashion consumers (Barry, 2018; Kawamura, 2005). Fashion shows are perceived as marketing events for fashionable clothing and often occur within the framework of fashion weeks (Strömberg, 2021).

According to Strömberg (2021), fashion shows can be typified from promotional press shows to other categories, such as showroom shows directed at buyers or celebrity shows aimed at customers (Strömberg, 2021). For designers, fashion shows are seen as a medium to broadcast their ideas; they also shape designers' individual images and contribute to their label's branding (Duggan, 2001; Tungate, 2008). Thus, fashion shows have played a crucial part in the dissemination of fashion (Kawamura, 2005).

The catwalk represents an intermission within the field of fashion; it bounds to its own rules, which are highly ritualised and relate to finding the perfect location, staging the right atmosphere, and casting the ideal models (Ferrero-Regis, 2021). By drawing on Bourdieu's theory of cultural production (1993), it is possible to conclude that "the fashion show, then, is a purely theatrical ritual designed to reproduce and legitimate a belief in the value of the field as special and ethereal" (Lonergan et al., 2018, p. 264). Additionally, fashion shows, either when taking place as a stand-alone event or within the calendar of a fashion week, produce an element of temporal discontinuity – defined by Foucault (1998) as "heterochronias" (p. 182) – which indicates a space that breaks with the established temporality, a space that exists outside of time (Mendes, 2019, p. 317).

The fashion show is a moving spectacle, a "theatre without a plot" (Duggan, 2001, p. 246) that continually presents fashion in irreverent and alluring ways (Ferrero-Regis & Lindquist, 2021). As Lipovetsky (2002) asserts, "fashion shifts overall appearance into the order of theatricality, seduction and enchanted spectacle" (p. 26). Consequently, the fashion show can be seen as a performance show – where clothing is the protagonist, the designer the director (Gruber & Rech, 2018), and the end product aesthetic value around the presented garments (Entwistle, 2009).

Fashion shows are an effective communication tool; they consolidate the aura of the brand and are often thought of as live advertisements (Mendes, 2019; Tungate, 2008). The primary goal of runway shows is purely commercial: to present new designer collections to fashion buyers while attracting media attention (Strömberg, 2021). As Duggan (2001) suggests, "often, the only element setting fashion shows apart from their theatrical counterparts is their fundamental purpose – to function as a marketing ploy" (p. 245). However, due to its emphasis on novelty and spectacle, the fashion show has also become a "switching station for postmodern identities" (Evans, 2001, p. 306) and "a platform where differences are celebrated and where diverse people engage in the performance of a common pursuit" (Barry, 2018, p. 5). Thus, fashion shows have become vital in positioning clothing as cultural statements (Strömberg, 2021). As Ferrero-Regis (2021) concludes, "the fashion show as a totality mediates between design, production, and consumption, while also framing and aestheticising cultural, political and social issues in an environment that is set apart from daily routines of getting dressed" (p. 187).

### 2.2.1 The Catwalk History

The fashion show has a long and rich history; it has been enhanced and amplified by the development of the moving image, magazines, entertainment culture, corporatisation of fashion, and, lately, live-streaming on the internet (Ferrero-Regis & Lindquist, 2021, p. 1).

As suggested by Diehl (1976), the idea of showing current fashion in inanimate forms began in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. However, the origins of the fashion show date back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century; initially referred to as “mannequin parades” (Evans, 2001, p. 273), fashion shows took place at couture salons and were aimed at the social and financial elite (Halliday, 2021; Kawamura, 2005). The fashion show owes a great deal of its development to the inventiveness of British designer Charles Frederick Worth and the showmanship of French designer Paul Poiret; “while Worth created the modern couture, Poiret extended its range” (Kawamura, 2005, p. 84). The House of Paquin (of French designer Jeanne Paquin) also contributed heavily to the expansion of the fashion show, with the couturier establishing the practice of showing designs at big social gatherings (Diehl, 1976).

With the turn of the century, how to show fashion began to matter. Fashion shows were staged in couture houses and department stores and featured in charity fund-raising events (Evans, 2001; Mendes, 2019). The idea of dressing models and parading them down a runway to show a new fashion collection was born out of Chicago apparel marts in the early days of mass production. By the 1930s, fashion shows were being produced on a grand scale, and the event officially became a publicity tool and a source of entertainment (Diehl, 1976). In the 1950s, Parisian couture shows were typically held in the couturier’s salon, decorated in *ancien régime*<sup>3</sup> style. There was no music, only footsteps as the *vendeuse*<sup>4</sup> announced the name or number of the garment as it was presented (Evans, 2001); the models “gilded along very slowly, turned around delicately, held the pose to allow the spectators time to admire the dress and then left at a slow and majestic pace” (Liaut, 1996, p. 120). There was also a strict order of presentation, of which today’s final wedding dress is a remnant (Evans, 2001).

During the 1960s, sound and light began to integrate runway productions. Alongside the rise of ready-to-wear, menswear, and fashion magazines, the event evolved into the fashion show of today (Diehl, 1976; Strömberg, 2021). Mary Quant’s first fashion show sparked permanent changes to the event’s traditional format; the designer’s innovations underpin the contemporary fashion show. Quant realised that dramatising fashion presentations was crucial and showcased her collections through energised performances; to the sound of jazz music, photographic models – rather than runway – danced down a stairway and around the audience (Diehl, 1976; Evans,

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<sup>3</sup> Regarding French history: the system of government in France before the revolution of 1789; translates to ancient regime (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023a, sense 1).

<sup>4</sup> A saleswoman; specifically, one employed in a fashion house (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023e).

2001) (Figure 1). The designer's shows produced an electric atmosphere. Quant's presentations were hailed as "revolutionary" by Clare Rendelsham, British Vogue's editor at the time (as cited in Evans, 2001, p. 297).



**Figure 1** – Model twirling at a Mary Quant fashion show. Utrecht, Netherlands, 1969

Source: Nationaal Archief (<https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/fotocollectie/ab633216-d0b4-102d-bcf8-003048976d84>)

In 1973, a group of five American designers (Bill Blass, Oscar de La Renta, Anne Klein, Roy Halston, and Stephen Burrows) were invited to Versailles, France, to show their creations alongside five French designers (Pierre Cardin, Yves Saint Laurent, Emanuel Ungaro, Christian Dior, and Hubert de Givenchy), to raise funds for the restoration of the palace. The event, referred to as the *Battle of Versailles*, reframed the fashion show as an entertainment affair, similar to parties and other events attended by celebrities (Ferrero-Regis & Lindquist, 2021).



**Figure 2** – Models on stage. Battle of Versailles, Versailles (1973)

Source: WWD (<https://wwd.com/feature/fashion-seminal-moment-battle-versailles-show-1203657815/>)

The 1990s saw a new form of spectacle emerging on the runway. The increasing association between fashion and art encouraged designers to become creative directors of catwalk presentations; thus, designers started to apply their creative energies to the design of their shows, as well as their collections, in order to attract more media coverage (Stark, 2018). As Duggan (2001) pinpoints, designers such as John Galliano and Alexander McQueen have since earned reputations for fashion shows that read like sequences of dream images or fantastical visions (p. 244). Between the 2000s and 2010s, the fashion show strengthened its connections to the arts through a mutual exchange between architecture, art, film, the digital world, and fashion (Ferrero-Regis & Lindquist, 2021, p. 23).

The fashion show has expanded and redefined itself as a “method that is no longer stable but constantly evolving and experimenting” (Linfante & Pompa, 2021, p. 26). The contemporary fashion show is more than a simple presentation of a collection of garments – it has become the public representation of the brand and designer’s values, with the runway becoming a space for discourse and political protest (Ferrero-Regis & Lindquist, 2021; Mendes, 2019).

### **2.2.2 Elements of the Fashion Show**

Every element of a fashion show aims to communicate the values of the collection shown. As Findlay (2017) argues, all elements within the production of a fashion show are designed “to reinforce the aesthetic concept that imbues the clothing with symbolic meanings and immerses the spectator in a visual and sensory world” (p. 111). Consequently, the fashion show can be assumed to be a performance, as it aims to express, *a priori*, a specific message to a particular

audience; it is a presentation which recurs to several different components, articulated harmoniously, allowing the public to easily understand what is being communicated (Gruber & Rech, 2018). As Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) assert:

The catwalk theatre is a particularly visible realm where identities are created through very visible performances, which in turn constitute part of the way in which struggles in the field are played out. The staging of the catwalk show is a staging of the gaze; the gaze of the participants sitting in the audience, who are at once its object and subject. This gaze contrasts with that of the models, distant and detached, a gaze that does not watch, that is not there to see but only to be seen (p. 744).

Ferrero-Regis and Lindquist (2021) suggest that “the relationship between the moving image and the presentation of fashion can be credited for shaping the way in which the fashion show is traditionally set” (p. 9). Fashion presentations can be staged in a linear way – a central catwalk with an audience at each side – or in a non-linear way – choreographed in seemingly indeterminate ways- Regardless, shows predominantly occur within a controlled environment (Ferrero-Regis & Lindquist, 2021). Geczy and Karaminas (2021) introduced the concept of the *fashion chamber* as a fresh take on the traditional closed setup of a fashion show. They define the fashion chamber as a place that embraces limitless possibilities, unconstrained by norms, historical ties, or established conventions (p. 68). As a result, the fashion chamber can be seen as an immersive fashion experience, offering new perspectives on the world of fashion. It encourages us to shift our focus from the tangible aspects of individual garments to their place within imaginative and constructed realms (p. 59). Therefore, fashion shows are “artistic platforms to tell narratives” – with clothing as their narrator, fashion presentations share numerous facets regarding the human bodily experience (Barry, 2018, p. 10). According to Kawamura (2005), “a good show makes one or more general statements about fashion while at the same time showing individual and specific items to support or illustrate these comments” (p. 83).

The designer’s toolbox of impression-making, as coined by Strömberg (2021), has expanded considerably during the last decades. This phenomenon is observed through the constant experimentation within fashion shows’ production – such as new formats, high-tech and web-based solutions, live music, attendance of public figures, art performances, and the holding of shows in unusual locations. Nevertheless, the four key elements of the fashion show – models, location, theme, and techniques of mediatisation – allow for the show to reflect the values of the collection shown and guarantee that both the brand and the garments translate well into the media.

## Models

The rise of the model began with the invention of the living mannequin by Charles Frederick Worth during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the designer employed mannequins to show his collections to consumers. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, live models showing new designs in fashion shows to private customers and the press became mainstream (Evans, 2001; Kawamura, 2005).

Although mannequins moved between *haute couture*<sup>5</sup> houses, they tended to model primarily for one, as each couturier had their individual style of model and modelling style (Evans, 2001). At Yves Saint Laurent, the mannequins would always use the classic Dior walk, “with slightly slanted back and hunched shoulders, to allow the perfection of detail and execution to be closely studied” (Helvin, 1986, p. 85). Conversely, at Chanel, the mannequins were trained to walk in a style fashioned after the designer, Coco Chanel, herself: “one foot forward, flat belly, head held high, chin up and one hand in the pocket of her skirt” (Liaut, 1996, p. 166). In most houses, the models’ demeanour was “unsmiling, glacial, and immobile; they appeared detached from the proceedings” (Evans, 2001, p. 293). Accordingly, at Balenciaga, the mannequins were perceived to be arrogant and ungracious (Bertin, 1957, p. 229).

From Worth’s implementation of the living mannequin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to today’s models, the image of the woman as a spectacle has become a hallmark of the fashion show (Evans, 2001). Ferrero-Regis and Lindquist (2021) note that “the model’s performance [became] fundamental to the seductive presentation of fashion, [with] her antics on and off the stage making her increasingly visible as a celebrity on her own terms” (p. 21).

In 1991, Gianni Versace sent Naomi Campbell, Cindy Crawford, Linda Evangelista, and Christy Turlington – the world’s four top models – down the runway together, lip-synching to *Freedom!* '90 by George Michael (after the group had starred in the video) (Figure 3). This moment was the beginning of the rise of the supermodel, with its celebrity associations, of the late 1980s and early 1990s (Duggan, 2001; Evans, 2001).

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<sup>5</sup> Meaning high fashion, the term *haute couture* refers to the leading dressmakers and dressmaking establishments collectively, especially those from Paris (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023b).



**Figure 3** – Models (from left to right) Linda Evangelista, Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell, and Christy Turlington during the Versace Autumn/Winter 1991 show

Source: Another Magazine (<https://www.anothermag.com/fashion-beauty/10063/the-gianni-versace-spectacle-that-revolutionised-the-runway>)

In an effort to avoid the predictability of the supermodel show, Alexander McQueen chose to eliminate live models in favour of clear plexiglass mannequins (Figure 4) during Givenchy's couture Autumn/Winter 1999 show (Duggan, 2001).



**Figure 4** – Plexiglass mannequins at Givenchy Couture by Alexander McQueen, Autumn/Winter 1999  
Source: I Love McQueen (<https://ilovemcqueen.home.blog/2013/07/24/givenchy-1999-fallwinter-couture-2/>)

The fashion show has consistently shown its preference – and dependence – for very thin models (Barnard, 2020a). Nevertheless, change is one of fashion’s primary drivers and therefore, larger bodies have started to emerge within the industry, walking down the runway and posing for editorials. As Barnard (2014) observes, “these larger bodies are sometimes called ‘real’ bodies, and they are sometimes said to belong to ‘real women’” (p. 110). Fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld is famous for being disdainful towards women larger than typical models walking the runway; during an interview with German magazine *Focus* in 2009, the designer said that “no one wants to see curvy women” and that only “fat mothers with their bags of chips sitting in front of the television” complain about thin models (Jennings, 2019). Conversely, designer Christian Siriano has admitted that adding larger sizes to his line tripled its revenue. “Do we not think [bigger] women should wear our clothes? ... The whole point of being a designer is to make people feel good,” the designer said in an interview with *Elle* in 2018 (as cited in Krentcil, 2018).

Models have since begun to be chosen for more than just their bodies. As Evans (2001) concludes, the new models in demand are the ones who can bring in the press and sell the clothes to the buyers (p. 300).

## **Location**

The location and setting of a fashion show are a fundamental part of its conceptuality (Strömberg, 2021). A large number of shows are performed in post-industrial spaces that have been converted to spaces meant for art exhibitions or cultural events. As Strömberg (2021) asserts:

The pragmatism of choosing unusual locations such as lofts, factories, and warehouses cannot be underestimated. Availability, lighting, low rents, vast spaces, logistics, adjacent distance to the fashion fairs, etc. all play an important part in the selection of an optimal location (p. 119).

There is an extensive practice of locating runway shows all over the fashion capitals, feeding into fashion's inherent mechanism of perpetual reinvention. However, searching for unique and irreverent locations highlights the disparity between brands and designers who can afford such endeavours and those who cannot. Regardless, an essential strategy for emerging designers remains to show their collections *off-schedule* and *off-location* – separated from the official structure of the fashion week they are showing at (Ferrero-Regis & Lindquist, 2021; Strömberg, 2021).

According to Duggan (2001), non-traditional shows, like those of fashion designer Martin Margiela, are often staged within confrontational or uncomfortable environments, “whereby the designers risk alienating many of the people who could potentially foster their careers, essentially choosing art over business” (p. 244). Additionally, it is worth noting that, due to the rise of digital media, designers currently aim to present their new collections in digital-friendly locations to maximise the show's online visibility (Mendes, 2019).

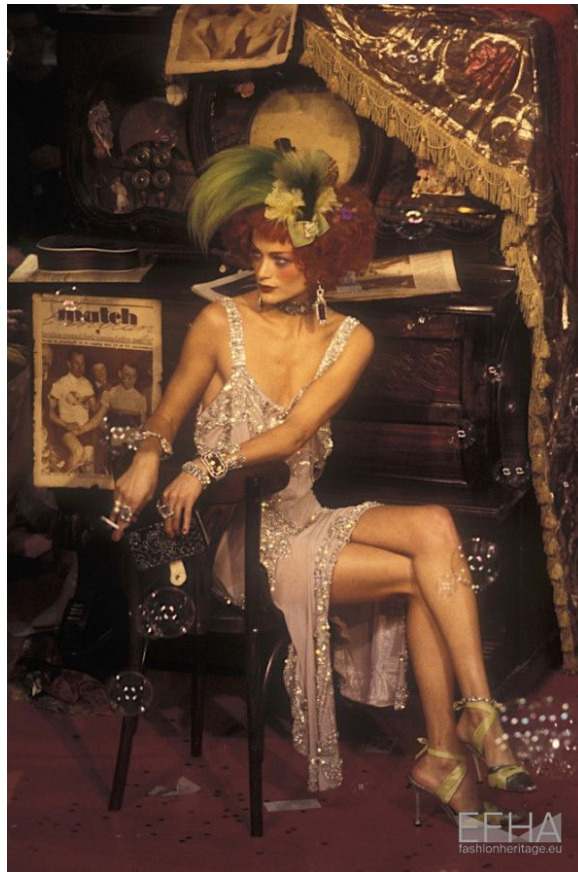
## **Theme**

Introducing a theme enhances the production and experience of fashion shows. These are often chosen from the myriad of inspirations collected during the season and can be either specific or abstract (Duggan, 2001). Additionally, fashion shows often share the name of the collection they are presenting – as if the two are synonymous (Findlay, 2017, p. 114).

One of the most significant challenges when producing a fashion show is crafting its mood and atmosphere (Tungate, 2008). As Böhme (2017) argues, “atmospheres shape a person's being-in-the-world as a whole: the relationships to environments, to other people, to things, and to works of art” (p. 70). The desire to create a visually enticing fashion show prompts designers to borrow aesthetic features from the performing arts (Mendes, 2019). Thus, fashion shows that celebrate the connection between fashion and performance feature more than garments (Duggan, 2001), as many designers imbue their presentations with greater values, creating “spaces where the

design process, history, and memory are the focus of the show” (Ferrero-Regis, 2021, p. 183). Consequently, as with major theatrical performances, shows produced around a specific theme tend to be extremely expensive.

Themes have multiple purposes within the fashion show – they influence the show’s invitation, its production, and the collection itself; themes must also be easily identifiable and memorable (Duggan, 2001, p. 248). For instance, designer Elsa Schiaparelli was one of the first fashion designers to create thematic collections. However, it was during the 1990s, with designers John Galliano and Alexander McQueen (for their respective shows for Dior and Givenchy), that the tradition of using spectacle techniques to demonstrate excess and showmanship was established (Evans, 2001). Galliano’s Autumn/Winter 1998 haute couture show for Christian Dior (Figure 5) remains a prime example of a thematic production, while McQueen constantly challenged the boundaries between spectacle and performance by imbuing his shows with social, cultural, and political commentary (Duggan, 2001; Ferrero-Regis, 2021).



**Figure 5** – Christian Dior Couture by John Galliano, Autumn/Winter 1998

Source: European Fashion Heritage Association

(<https://fashionheritage.eu/browse/record/905cc05168d75c2ec98bb58ae2af5b4f5d277dd667a03b8b08c774d8b18839b8/>)

Other fashion designers, such as Hussein Chalayan, Viktor and Rolf, and Henrik Vibskov, have also established reputations for creating presentations that “collapse fashion and the fashion

show into art” (Ferrero-Regis, 2021, p. 105). Marc Jacobs is also said to be a “master of suggestion and mood” due to his regular collaborations with film, photography and print artists, dating back to the 1990s (Lindquist, 2021, p. 106). Conversely, Yohji Yamamoto’s use of “brute space and minimalist intervention” has likewise set a trend for shows to rely on austere atmospheres that “explore the force of light, installation, material, and movement” (p. 106).

Starting in 2005, French house Chanel has hosted its fashion shows at the Grand Palais in Paris (Lindquist, 2021). Lagerfeld, who was the brand’s creative director until his death in 2019, reimagined the site in numerous ways – such as the launch pad of a rocket ship (Autumn/Winter 2017), a recreation of the Eiffel Tower (Autumn/Winter 2017), a carousel (Autumn/Winter 2009), a beach (Spring/Summer 2019), and a cliff (Spring/Summer 2019) (Figure 6). These shows are incredibly resource-heavy and are physical representations of microcosms: “they are based on sensorial experiences and have been defined by the press as ‘outwardly’, ‘extravaganzas’, ‘outlandish’, ‘over-the-top’ and ‘immersive’” (p. 177). By constantly producing spectacular fashion shows, Chanel has recreated environments and narratives that serve as commentary on politics, the environment, and the future; the presentations thus juxtapose spectacle with commodity (Ferrero-Regis, 2021). Through the striking, oftentimes theatrical sets it constructs, Chanel has consistently guaranteed media attention for their shows by promoting the “dissemination of images that showcase – often hyperbolically – the stylistic codes of the house” (Mendes, 2019, p. 318).



**Figure 6** – The Grand Palais reimagined as a cliff for Chanel Spring/Summer 2019

Source: Vogue France (<https://www.vogue.fr/fashion/fashion-inspiration/diaporama/the-most-spectacular-chanel-sets-in-the-grand-palais/49129>)

Fashion and the performance of spectacle are analogues; They are intended to be superficial but are designed to captivate and allure, allowing for a multiplicity of meanings (Findlay, 2017, p. 105). As Lindquist (2021) observes, fashion shows that invest in creating a visual impact “make space for the ineffable through productive atmospheres. They dilate time and space, extending moments where affective relations between phenomena, the viewer and the viewed, emerge providing deeper access to sartorial authenticity, mastery and material themes” (p. 110).

Lastly, this type of fashion show cannot be fully understood without exploring its finales. Finales are often designed to bid *adieu* to the audience with a strong and explosive ending that highlights the performance's most memorable visual element – thus cementing fashion's relation to theatre (Duggan, 2001). All in all, despite the financial and sometimes monetary concerns, fashion shows that bow to the performance genre are highly effective in marketing a brand.

### **Mediatisation**

Since its inception, as brands have experimented with multiple degrees of theatricality in their presentations, the fashion show has worked as a means of communication between producers and consumers of fashion goods (Halliday, 2021). The rise of the internet has triggered a progressive spectacularisation of the fashion show (Ferrero-Regis & Lindquist, 2021). As fashion show producer Alexandre de Bétak explains:

[The internet] has totally changed how we frame what we show, not just visually, but also in time. It is about total immediacy now. We are in an age of more, faster, bigger. [...] Even the way I direct the models is affected by where some of the cameras for the webcast are placed (as cited in Anaya, 2013).

With the inception of the digital age, Evans (2001) argues that “fashion shows have moved into the realm of pure entertainment” (p. 301), with shows delivering visually heightened and sensorial experiences (Ferrero-Regis & Lindquist, 2021, p. 23). The bigger a fashion show – as in, the more famous the guests and the more controversial and unusual its set and production – the more memorable it is for the audience, the more they are perceived as social-media-friendly and attract more press coverage (Findlay, 2017, p. 112). Social media has thus become a staple of the social show, as digital platforms have become legitimate spaces for diffusing fashion (Rocamora, 2016).

Today, fashion shows are perceived as a combination of in-person and remote events; however, each presentation is designed to be experienced primarily through digital social channels (Linfante & Pompa, 2021). Consequently, this mediatisation of fashion is concurrent with the mediatisation of fashion design, with some designers admitting that collections are being conceived by considering the status quo of social media (Rocamora, 2016).

## 2.3 Fashion Trends

Fashion is about change and the illusion of novelty.  
Kawamura, 2005, p. 73

The ever-changing values surrounding what is fashionable at any given time create a space for the fashion system: a process that explains the cycle of trends and allows for fashion to continually take place (Kawamura, 2005). Nonetheless, while the contents of fashion are a perpetual manifestation of their epoch (König, 1973), fashion as a field is evolutionary rather than revolutionary, meaning that the progressional seasonal change of styles results in identifiable fashion trends (E. Kim et al., 2011, p. XIII). It is also worth noting that the increasingly rapid change of fashion can be explained by its universalisation nature, which cheapens its value and forces the system to restart the process, accelerating the fashion cycle once again (Sapir, 2020).

However, fashion is not a trend, and trends are not the same as style. The subtle differences between each concept are what makes the field of fashion an interesting one to study: different concepts, despite being innately connected, move and are moved by different aspects of our individual and societal lives.

### 2.3.1 Trends vs. Style vs. Fashion

The word fashion represents a wide field of concepts, theories, and phenomena. Although it can be considered an umbrella term, it is worthwhile to differentiate the multiple concepts that underpin the fashion system.

Fashion is a phenomenon that can be described as a style of behaviour or consumption that is temporarily adopted by a broad audience due to the perception and belief that said style is socially appropriate, both for the time and situation in which it occurs (Sproles & Burns, 1994, p. 4). Fashion can also be seen as public consumption through which people communicate the image they wish to project (Holbrook & Dixon, 1985, p. 110). Fashion has developed an attraction to imitation, “the attraction of a simultaneous beginning and end, the charm of novelty coupled to that of transitoriness” (Simmel, 1904, p. 139), and, as such, while on the one hand, it represents union and uniformity of those within a specific group, on the other, it acts as a shield of exclusion towards all other groups (p. 134).

*Style*, while sometimes the equivalent of fashion – which is never stationary and perpetually changing – stays consistent with an established standard, thus being intrinsically conservative and traditional, representing the opposite of what is “in fashion” or considered trendy (Kawamura, 2005; Polhemus, 1994). Broadly speaking, style is “a characteristic mode of presentation that typifies several similar objects of the same category or class” (Sproles & Burns,

1994, p. 7); pretraining to apparel, style is the “distinctive appearance of a garment, the combination of features that makes it different from other garments” (Stone, 2013, p. 416).

Lastly, a *trend* refers to a general direction or movement (Stone, 2013, p. 417). This is notoriously different from a *fad*, defined as a short-lived fashion (p. 411). Different categories can trigger the beginning of a new trend, such as economic conditions, social changes, world events, technological innovations, subcultural influences, entertainment, and fashion leaders (E. Kim et al., 2011). Trends have also expanded beyond fashion (Tungate, 2008, p. 83); according to Simmel (1904), “changes in fashion reflect the dullness of nervous impulses” since “the more nervous the age, the more rapidly its fashions change” (p. 138).

As an ever-changing phenomenon, fashion has taken different forms throughout history, and although new fashions are seen as innovations, most are simply modifications of previous ones (E. Kim et al., 2011). While fashion was born in Paris at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, British designer Charles Frederick Worth pioneered the industry as we know it. Before Worth, dressmakers were mere clothing suppliers; they did not create styles or dictate fashion. As suggested by Tungate (2008), Worth was the “prototype celebrity fashion designer,” as he was the first couturier to impose, through his designs, his own taste on women (p. 9). Coco Chanel and her eponymous label took fashion into the 20<sup>th</sup> century alongside formidable competitor Elsa Schiaparelli. The world wars precipitated social change; the end of World War I, in 1918, marked the start of mass fashion, and style began to be influenced by fashion designers from not only Paris but Milan, New York, and London. By the time peace broke out after World War II, Paris’s hegemony as the world’s fashion capital was being heavily challenged (Sorensen, 2009; Tungate, 2008).

The 1950s gave way to Christian Dior, the designer behind the *New Look*<sup>6</sup> and one of the first to realise that luxury could be repackaged as a mass product, which has become key to the survival and profitability of brands (Tungate, 2008, p. 14). The democratisation of fashion continued throughout the 1970s, with *anti-fashion*<sup>7</sup> movements becoming prevalent and fashion “clutching its chest and keeling over” in the 1990s. Tungate argued that “clothing became a commodity, spare and functional” during this time” (p. 19).

Today, “styles proliferate and are utterly fragmented” due to brands’ tendency to both overproduce and limit production in the name of marketing-based sustainability (d’Aura, 2020, p. 121). Notwithstanding, while contemporary fashion cultivates itself in all classes of society, fashions for women still show greater variability than those for men; and not only do they change

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<sup>6</sup> The New Look is a style of clothing introduced by Dior in 1947. Featuring rounded shoulders, a cinched waist, and a full skirt, the style celebrated ultra-femininity and opulence in women’s fashion after years of sartorial restrictions and shortages (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, n.d.).

<sup>7</sup> Bonnie English (2013) defines anti-fashion as a form of nihilism, a revolutionary break with tradition; when it inevitably becomes accepted as mainstream, the notion of avant-garde disappears (p. 111).

more rapidly, but also, the range of allowed forms and silhouettes is wider for women than for men (Sapir, 2020).

### **The Fashion Cycle**

As fashion is continuously in motion, it is essential to map out its cycle. Stone (2013) defines the term *fashion cycle* as “the rise, widespread popularity, and then decline in acceptance of a style” (p. 412). Kawamura (2005) looks at the fashion cycle as an oxymoron: a style of dress has to be widely diffused and accepted to be considered fashion; however, a specific type of apparel must be labelled as fashion before it reaches the consumption stage (p. 1). Atik and Firat (2013) argue that the fashion principle is that all products must be renewed frequently through the fashion cycle for the market to grow and rejuvenate (p. 839); the cycle of fashion helps forecasters and retailers anticipate how and for how long trends are received (E. Kim et al., 2011).

The progression of a trend mirrors changes in central factors within a society, such as social and cultural, yet fashion repeatedly returns to old forms (E. Kim et al., 2011; Simmel, 1904). Like living things, fashions are born, go through their life cycle, and die; after a certain period, some are revived and branded as new. Although the rate and duration of use may fluctuate, how a specific trend is diffused through the market tends to follow a predictable cycle (E. Kim et al., 2011). The first step in the life cycle of a trend is its introduction stage, where a new style is presented to the market and begins to gain acceptance. During its growth stage, the style, or its adaptations, is exposed to a growing number of consumers, and competition increases. The maturity stage is typically the longest in a trend’s life cycle: when a style is at the height of its popularity and can be mass-produced, mass-distributed, and sold at prices that appeal to the mass market – it is also when competition becomes more intense. The decrease in consumer demand triggers the decline stage in a trend: the style is losing popularity due to widespread use. Finally, the obsolescence stage occurs when a style can no longer be sold at any price (E. Kim et al., 2011; Stone, 2013).

### **2.3.2 The Art and Science of Forecasting**

Fashion is hardly preoccupied with the present (Okonkwo, 2007); while it looks to the past for inspiration, it focuses on the future in order to meet contemporary needs. The fashion system is a dialogue between the leading players in the industry, and many fashion brands use forecasting firms to provide insights into upcoming styles. These companies observe emerging trends from around the world and gather information through interviews with visionaries in multiple fields, such as art, music, architecture, politics, culture, technology, and marketing (E. Kim et al., 2011). *Forecasting* can thus be defined as “a creative and analytical process, involving not only the observation of changes in fashion but also the analysis and synthesis of information from an array of sources inside and outside of the fashion business” (2011, p. XIII–XIV). Forecasting starts approximately two years ahead of the current market, as forecasters consult fabric designers and identify colours and materials (Brannon, 2010; Kawamura, 2005). Predicting new trends in

fashion is a challenging and complex process, mainly due to fashion's constant need for change; according to Sproles and Burns (1994), it is both an art and a science: it is an art because forecasts are often made entirely on intuitions and past experiences, and a science when forecasters use analytical methods to analyse forthcoming trends in systematic ways (p. 284).

Today, trends are set by fashion forecasters, fashion editors, and department store buyers; industrial manufacturers are consumer driven, and market trends originate in many types of social groups. Consequently, fashion stems from a myriad of sources and diffuses in various ways to different publics (Crane, 1999, p. 13). Forecasting holds a substantial influence on many important business decisions; while in some cases, forecasts simply provide information, in many others, they are vital in deciding which products or lines to create, how expansively to invest in their production, and how aggressively they should be promoted (E. Kim et al., 2011, p. 152).

However, where do trends come from? Tungate (2008) enquires:

Why are the stores full of pink one season, green the next, blue the season after that? ... Do the fashion companies get together in a top-secret location every autumn and decide what they are going to foist on us the following year? Not quite – but almost (2008, p. 83).

The fashion trend analysis and forecasting process bases itself on three components: environment, product, and market; all these components reflect the spirit of the times. Thus, the zeitgeist must always be considered when forecasting new fashion products (E. Kim et al., 2011). The results from these analyses are shared through *trend books*, which compile predictions of forthcoming trends and act as inspiration prompts for designers and brands (Tungate, 2008).

Fabric suppliers have excellent marketing skills and sit at the top of the fashion chain; they can create a specific fabric for a designer while slipping details to a rival (Tungate, 2008). Similarly, if an influential designer has decided on a particular fabric, fabric merchants may tactfully encourage other clients to follow suit. In addition, technology also plays a hand in predicting trends. As Tungate (2008) exemplifies, “the resurgence of tweed was provoked by manufacturing developments,” and “every year there is a new way of treating denim” (p. 84). If the fashion industry agrees to support the predicted colour and fabric trends, it will guarantee a higher consumer demand, resulting in more sales and less shelved stock. This practice of coordinating trends reduces incertitude:

If the same intelligence [is given] to those who sell the clothes, those who design them, those who buy the fabrics and those who supply them, there are enormous economic

advantages for the fabric manufacturers, because they know what material will be in demand and where to concentrate their efforts (Tungate, 2008, p. 85).

However, it is worth pointing out that forecasting trends will become increasingly complex in the future, as they diversify due to the aforementioned flux in fashion (E. Kim et al., 2011). Consumers constantly absorb fashion shows, art events, exhibitions, literature, and other phenomena. In turn, trends are communicated to consumers through mass media; as mentioned by Okonkwo (2007), fashion media has abundantly occupied itself with featuring various luxury fashion brands and advice on how to wear them. Therefore, a strong argument can be made for producing a trend book that can be updated daily instead of seasonally (e.g. WGSN) (Tungate, 2008).

As previously mentioned, trends tend to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary; sometimes, what may seem like new elements are, in fact, reinterpretations of older styles that have faded into obscurity, appearing fresh and innovative upon their revival (d'Aura, 2020, p. 125). This assumption leads us to Laver's theory of the erogenous zone, which draws from psychoanalysis and suggests that fashion changes are driven by erogenous zones' shifts, which result in style changes that highlight different aspects of the female body (Kawamura, 2005; E. Kim et al., 2011).

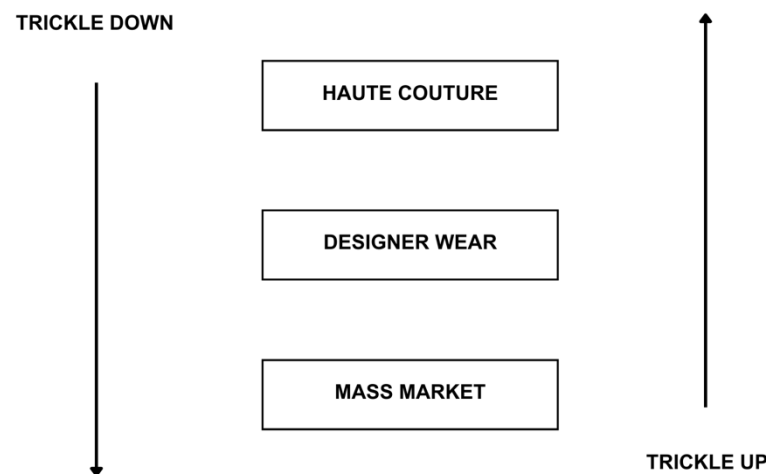
According to Laver, a certain part of the female body is highlighted by a fashion but goes out of fashion when it loses its erotic power due to repeated exposure. Another part, previously unexposed, then becomes the focus of interest. Therefore, erogenous zones shift to maintain interest (E. Kim et al., 2011, p. 16).

Today, fashion is conceived as something created through the symbiosis between the designs that brands offer and a semi-spontaneous selection process; it cannot be reduced to runway shows, nor can it be thought of as something independently decided by the masses. More than ever, fashion brands are paying attention to their customers' desires and needs (d'Aura, 2020). The industry is undergoing the early stages of a seismic shift, where products are "pulled" into the market based on actual demand rather than "pushed" based on forecasts and insights (The Business of Fashion & McKinsey & Company, 2019).

### **2.3.3 Theories and Methods of Diffusion**

The way trends are diffused has become increasingly more arduous to study due to the decentralisation and universalisation of fashion (Kawamura, 2005). As Simmel (1904) argues, "fashion plays a more conspicuous role in modern times, because the differences in our standards of life have become so more strongly accentuated" (p. 137). People have been learning about the newest trends and styles by looking at shop window mannequins and fashion magazines since their inception (Barnard, 2020b). Today, global consumers inspire fashion innovations by sharing

new trends online, accelerating fashion change across time and space (E. Kim et al., 2011). This cross-platform sharing of trends results in the sources of fashion, leading to a growing number of emerging designers whose designs are based around specific subcultures. Thus, fashion is no longer confined to the elites or those who consider themselves socially or financially superior to the masses (Kawamura, 2005). Nonetheless, a clear structure remains around fashion, making it essential to define its market network parameters (Barnard, 2020b).



**Figure 7** – Levels of Fashion

Source: Sorensen, 2009, p. 21

Although this approach to structuring the fashion market may seem simplistic, it serves as an introductory foundation for learning about how the industry works and how trends are disseminated.

At the top of the chain lies *haute couture* (pronounced *oat-koo-TOUR*); the French term translates literally to fine sewing and has become synonymous with high fashion (Stone, 2013, p. 412). Haute couture houses are the epitome of luxury fashion and are headed by internationally renowned designers. These houses solely sell individual garments to the affluent elites and showcase their collections twice a year. However, for haute couture houses, fashion shows are essentially a means to harness publicity for the goods sold under their name – such as perfume and accessories (Sorensen, 2009).

Designer wear, which sits directly below haute couture, is shown at the *pret à porter* (a French term translating to ready-to-wear) fashion weeks. This move towards ready-to-wear clothing means that designers are more at liberty to offer stylish and high-quality pieces to a broader audience while maintaining a high price tag. Although the garments offered by these brands are not exclusive in design or material, they are produced in limited numbers under a rigorous quality control policy (Sorensen, 2009).

Lastly, at the bottom of the chain sits the most extensive level: the mass market. This is where most people buy their clothes; nowadays, new styles can be found in high-street stores exceptionally quickly, and what these consumers lose in exclusivity, compared to designer wear and haute couture, they can make up for in value for money (Sorensen, 2009).

In contemporary fashion, there is a particular agreement amongst trend forecasters and fashion scholars regarding the diffusion of styles; trends can originate and spread following multiple, not necessarily mutually exclusive, models. All these methods of trend diffusion work simultaneously, with trend forecasters tracing all their possible paths to identify potential developments. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to better understand how trends reach consumers, three theories emerged. These theories suggested that trends could follow a trickle-down movement, a trickle-up movement – also referred to as bubble-up – or appear simultaneously in different echelons of society (trickle-across) (d’Aura, 2020; E. Kim et al., 2011). Each theory has been criticised and revised to reflect the current social and market conditions. Whereas these three theories have undoubtedly provided valuable insight into fashion adoption and diffusion, fashion change is far more complicated than these theories explain (E. Kim et al., 2011).

### **The trickle-down theory**

The trickle-down model was first introduced during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and was developed by Veblen and Simmel. For these theorists, fashion is a movement that falls from above and is copied by the masses in imitation (d’Aura, 2020). Simmel depicted the model in his famed essay, *Fashion* (1904):

Social forms, apparel, aesthetic judgement, the whole style of human expression, are constantly transformed by fashion, in such a way, however, that fashion – i.e. the latest fashion – in all these things affects only the upper classes. Just as soon as the lower classes began to copy their style, thereby crossing the line of demarcation the upper classes have drawn and destroying the uniformity of their coherence, the upper classes turn away from this style and adopt a new one, which in its turn differentiates them from the masses; and thus the game goes merrily on (p. 135).

According to this theory, trends are adopted by the elite class to differentiate itself from the lower classes, thus reflecting its individuality and leaving the lower classes to reflect their conformity by imitation (E. Kim et al., 2011). Moreover, McCracken (1985) described the trickle-down theory as an error in metaphor. According to the anthropologist, an upward movement, rather than a downwards, “chase and flight” pattern drives this diffusion dynamic; the lower classes chase status markers of the elite class for imitation, while simultaneously, the upper class moves on to

new styles in a hasty flight (p. 40). It is also noteworthy to include Bourdieu's theory of capital to validate the trickle-down trend diffusion model more thoroughly. Bourdieu claims that all forms of capital are subject to inflation, for if anything has a value, then a limited amount of people must possess it; however, the wider the group that possesses something, the less valuable it becomes (Bourdieu, 1997; d'Aura, 2020).

The trickle-down model has been shelved as the epitome of elitism and snobbery. Whilst alternative suggestions to it – such as “trickle-up” or “trickle-across” – should not be entirely dismissed, the theory remains a valuable tool that gives insight into a system deeply rooted in capitalism and consumerism, such as fashion. Still, as we witness radical changes in social mobility, a redefinition of genders and classes, and a democratisation of education, it can be argued that, rather than being outdated, the trickle-down model is still prevalent in disguise (d'Aura, 2020). In the contemporary fashion landscape, the trickle-down model has thus been updated rather than discarded and can be seen when luxury fashion products exhibited during the four primary fashion weeks are essential in creating new fashion trends that spread from luxury to mass markets (Furukawa et al., 2019). Styles continue to cascade from above, even when inspiration is drawn from the masses. In line with Kawamura's oxymoronic take on the fashion cycle, an intervention of a designer or established trendsetter remains essential to set a trend in motion; it is not until a style appears on the catwalks or is featured in prominent fashion media that earns the label of fashionable (d'Aura, 2020; Kawamura, 2005). Moreover:

Different trend experts may apply a slightly different graph, calling the demographic segments in a different way, however in all these cases the pyramid of trend-diffusion can be seen, to some extent, as an evolution of the trickle-down principle as proposed by Simmel (d'Aura, 2020, p. 123).

Ultimately, when it comes to trend diffusion, alternative theories to the trickle-down model are better suited to justify exceptions in the system rather than represent a new norm.



## 3. Communicating Fashion

Everything a brand does can be classified as communication (Feldwick, 2009). This chapter focuses on communication practices within the fashion industry – as fashion communication is a cultural phenomenon that influences global behaviours (UNEP & UNFCCC, 2023). While the first section explores marketing and branding principles in order to comprehend how these are reflected in luxury fashion brands, the second section ponders the evolution of fashion media – from fashion magazines and their transition to the digital format to the rise of social media practitioners.

### 3.1 Marketing Fashion

There is no luxury brand without storytelling.  
Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, p. 222

Easey (2009) defines *marketing* as a “business philosophy or way of thinking about the firm from the perspective of the customer or the potential customer” (p. 5). Marketing involves different techniques and activities and works as a management process that aims to anticipate, identify, and satisfy consumer needs, focusing on accomplishing brands’ predefined short and long-term goals. A *strategy* can be defined as an “overarching plan for long, medium, or short-term achievement of a company’s objectives” (Lea-Greenwood, 2013, p. 8). The first step to any strategy begins with the *marketing mix*, which describes “the range of variables that can be controlled ... to meet the needs of buyers profitability;” it refers to getting the right product to the right market at the appropriate time, in the right place and for the right price (Easey & Sorensen, 2009, p. 141).

The conventional marketing mix analyses what is known as the four Ps of marketing – product, price, place, and promotion. It is only when the first three have been suitably accessed that brands can start planning a promotional strategy. However, it is important to consider that outside factors, such as economic changes, can easily undermine the best marketing plans and strategies. These events are usually unforeseen and not anticipated (Easey, 2009).

*Fashion marketing* is “the application of a range of techniques and a business philosophy that centres upon the customer and potential customer of clothing and related products and services in order to meet the long-term goals of the organisation” (Easey, 2009, p. 7). Fashion marketing also differs from all other areas of marketing, and its practice has yet to reach uniformity across markets. Nevertheless, designers Issey Miyake and Martin Margiela are considered pioneers in the contemporary fashion marketing setting by experimenting with different marketing approaches (Strömberg, 2021).

As a field, fashion marketing recognises the interdependence of marketing and design, resulting in various strategic approaches (Easey, 2009). With fashion and change being inextricably linked, many marketers insist that “the visual seduction in the fashion industry is based on the desirability of innovation and change” (English, 2013, p. 24). Therefore, the design facet of fashion is a critical factor when creating marketing strategies, as it plays multiple roles in acquiring and retaining consumer demand (Easey, 2009).

### **Design vs Marketing**

Fashion marketing strategies exist in a careful balance, where the design of garments coexists with the desire to sell them to the broadest possible audience. As explained by Easey (2009), there is a rift between marketers and designers, which allows for two different perspectives when designing fashion marketing strategies: *design-centred* and *marketing-centred*. For instance:

The designer may see the marketing person as one who constrains freedom and imagination, while the marketer may see the designer as undisciplined and oblivious to costs and profitability. Such views are stereotypes fostered by differing experiences and training, and which are often held by those who do not understand the perspective of both the designer and the marketer (Easey, 2009, p. 8).

Within this perspective, for the author, a design-centred strategy views fashion marketing as promotion, with those two concepts being interchangeable. According to this approach, designers are the backbone of the industry, while marketers’ only purpose is to sell ideas to the public. Conversely, a marketing-centred strategy views design as research; per this approach, marketing is the dominant force, while designers represent a means to respond to consumers’ needs identified through marketing research (Easey, 2009).

### **Digital Marketing**

In today’s primarily virtual world, a brand’s online presence must reflect its offline values and intentions. The online buyer behaviour is entirely different from the offline behaviour. Therefore, brands must adjust their strategies according to the different operating mediums while remaining consistent with their brand values (Okonkwo, 2007). Regarding social media, marketing communications using platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have been recognised as a crucial take-off tool for luxury fashion brands (A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012).

#### **3.1.1 Brands and Branding**

Finding a universal definition for what a brand is and represents remains a task at work (C. Tynan et al., 2010). Okonkwo (2007) defines a *brand* as “the sum of all experiences and communications

received by the consumer resulting in a distinctive image in their mindset based on perceived functional and emotional benefits, which makes it intangible” (p. 9). From a holistic perspective, brands are perceived as the DNA of the organisation, its fundamental building block and expression of its existence (Smith, 2009, p. 182).

Brands are expressed through relevance and individuality; according to Frampton (2009), “behind every brand is a compelling idea, which captures customers’ attention and loyalty” (p. 125). Brands have become more important than their products – they embody the promise of something. Hayes (2003) defines the concept of *brand equity* as “the value a company gains from its name recognition when compared to a generic equivalent” and identifies its three basic components: consumer perception, negative or positive effects, and the resulting value. When consumers choose a branded product, they know what to expect. Therefore, a brand represents a guarantee and credibility that what consumers purchase will deliver its pledge (Gibbons, 2009; Okonkwo, 2007; Van Gorp, 2012). As Blackett (2009) suggests, “brands allow the consumer to shop with confidence, and they provide a route map through a bewildering variety of choices” (p. 58). Consequently, a brand is considered successful when it meets customers’ expectations, indicating a promise kept.

Brands consist of powerful and symbolic elements; they have the power to influence cultures, societies, and generations (Okonkwo, 2007). Frampton (2009) argues that “great brands are founded on hard numbers as well as imagination” (p. 136). Nevertheless, a brand emerges when its stories, plots, and characters become firmly established. Brand stories rely heavily on metaphors to communicate with consumers and stimulate their imaginations. It is through these stories that brands can become iconic; according to Holt (2004), “brands become iconic when they perform identity myths: simple fictions that address cultural anxieties from afar, from imaginary worlds rather than from the worlds that consumers regularly encounter in their everyday lives” (p. 29).

Iconic brands encourage people to think differently, though this is only possible when a brand’s identity, alongside its elements, has been meticulously planned and cemented (Allen & Simmons, 2009). The combination of verbal and visual elements allows a brand to succeed. A brand’s *visual identity* encapsulates all graphic components – such as logotypes, symbols, colours, and typefaces – and creates a framework for effortless brand identification and representation. A brand’s *verbal identity* is represented by the elements – such as name, products’ naming system, sub-brands, use of stories, and tone of voice – that distinguish the brand’s language (Allen & Simmons, 2009). However, the name of a brand is the most valuable element of a brand’s identity, since its use provides a universal reference point. As Blackett (2009) explains, while all other components might change, the name is the one element of a brand that should never be altered (p. 54).

According to Kotler, Keller, and Chernev (2022), the concept of branding can be defined as:

The process of endowing products and services with the power of a brand. It is all about creating differences between products. ... Effective branding creates mental structures that help consumers organise their knowledge about products and services in a way that clarifies their decision making and, in the process, provides value to the firm (pp. 235–236).

While the branding and marketing concepts are mutually exclusive, their application is entirely distinctive. Branding plays an essential role in the generation of intangible assets; it has advanced from its previously crude methods of differentiation and has evolved into a refined and indispensable business concept for any company that aims to achieve its long-term goals. The process of building a successful brand is extensive, wearisome, and costly; it requires dedication from all within the brand (Okonkwo, 2007). As Frampton (2009) questions, “If those who make and sell the brand are not committed to it, why should anyone else be?” (p. 128). Nonetheless, the rewards associated with branding are overwhelmingly positive and render the process highly beneficial.

Fashion is ever-changing, and so is the industry that surrounds it. What remains consistent through every iteration are the branding principles and strategies applied to luxury fashion (Okonkwo, 2007). Within the fashion branding landscape, there is no escaping the name of Tom Ford. The American designer was one of the first contemporary designers to realise the power of branding. As Carine Roitfeld, former editor-in-chief of *Vogue Paris* (2001-2011), suggests, “there is definitely a pre-Tom Ford and a post-Tom Ford period” (as cited in Tungate, 2008, p. 20). During his tenure as creative director at Gucci, Ford understood that the key to a successful fashion brand lies in the unique combination of the garments and the universe surrounding them. As Roitfeld observes, “[Ford] created clothes people wanted to wear, and then he explained to them that if they could not afford the dress, they could at least buy the sunglasses.”

### **The decay of modern branding**

Modern branding is heading towards a crisis: the rise of the online world has intensified the pressure on brands, and this new digital era is creating a brand-new world which will need a new kind of brand (Gibbons, 2009; Hobsbawm, 2009). Nowadays, brands and customers communicate without restrictions in time, place, and medium. One-way communication has evolved into interactive two-way communication; consequently, brands and customers work together to develop new products, services, and values, gaining exposure and strengthening relationships with their audience (A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012). Nonetheless, “the future of brands is inextricably linked to the future of business” (Clifton, 2009, p. 444). The existence of brands is a positive reflector on the health of the economy; the more brands there are and the more they evolve in the name of competing in the market, the more the consumers benefit. Ultimately, as

Ahmad (2009) explains, “power in the consumer industry rests with consumers not brands” (p. 333).

### **3.1.2 Luxury Brands**

Kapferer and Bastien (2009) have defined *luxury* as the “symbolic desire to belong to a superior class, which everyone will have chosen according to their dreams, because anything that can be a social signifier can become a luxury” (p. 19). According to C. Tynan, McKechnie, and Chhuon (2010), luxury exists on a spectrum; “luxury goods exist at one end of a continuum with ordinary goods, so where the ordinary ends and luxury starts is a matter of degree as judged by consumers” (p. 1157). Over the years, the notion of luxury has changed, yet it has remained socially ambiguous. Thus, new terms have emerged in academic and practitioner literature, such as *old luxury* – which relates to the good itself and is defined by brands – and *new luxury* – which is experiential and defined by consumers (Florin et al., 2007, p. 220).

Fashion and luxury represent two worlds, overlapping marginally in the haute couture sector (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). The fashion luxury industry has always played a prominent social and economic role. Currently, it is a global multi-billion-euro sector comprising a multitude of high-relevance brands, such as Louis Vuitton, Hermès, Gucci, and Chanel (Okonkwo, 2007).

The price of luxury goods should be calculated based on the brand’s imaginary rather than on its production costs. Consequently, rarity and exclusivity are essential dimensions of a luxury brand (Van Gorp, 2012). For brands, luxury is qualitative rather than quantitative; “luxury is the expression of a taste, of a creative identity, of the intrinsic passion of a creator; luxury makes the bald statement ‘this is what I am’” (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, pp. 21, 62) When consumers purchase luxury fashion items, “they do not just buy the product but a complete parcel that comprises the product and a set of intangible benefits that appeal to the emotional, social, and psychological levels of their being” (Okonkwo, 2007, p. 2).

Luxury brands represent one of the purest examples of branding, as without it, luxury goods would not exist (Van Gorp, 2012). While design and creativity are the pillars of the luxury industry, branding is considered its lifeline. According to Okonkwo (2007), “luxury brands recognise that the art of product design, innovation, and aesthetic beauty can only be effectively portrayed through creating strong brands that appeal to the psychology of consumers” (p. 10). Thus, a luxury brand is a brand first and luxury second (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

A brand is only considered luxury when perceived as such, recognising consumers as the primary drivers of the luxury sector (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Okonkwo, 2007). The current luxury fashion consumer is brand literate, fashionable, and intensely aware of their tastes and preferences. In turn, they expect luxury brands to be innovative in their products’ designs

(Okonkwo, 2007). Furthermore, for a product to be considered luxury, it must come from a luxury brand. Consequently, Kapferer and Bastien (2009) argue that luxury brands must stay true to their roots in order to maintain their products' legitimacy. The authors conclude that "by remaining faithful to its origins, the luxury product offers an anchor point in a world of cultural drift, trivialisation and deracination" (p. 14).

### 3.2 Fashion Communication

Media have become intrinsic to and informative of all human experiences and communication to the point that society cannot be brought outside of it.  
Ferrero-Regis & Lindquist, 2021, p. 9

The need to become fashionable is constantly fuelled by the mass media, specifically through fashion magazines, the entertainment industry, and social media. New fashion trends emerge every season, are interpreted in various ways, and are promptly communicated and diffused through the media (Okonkwo, 2007). Fashion communication is the by-product of the mediatisation of fashion. Coined by Rocamora (2016), *mediatisation* is "the idea that the media have become increasingly central to the shaping and doing of institutions and agents, to their practices and experiences;" it is different from mediation – whereas the concept of mediation allures to the media as conveyors of meaning, mediatisation explores their transformative power (pp. 3–4).

In the field of fashion, mediatisation means that all practices of fashion – from production, consumption, and distribution – are "articulated through the media and, more crucially, are dependent on the media for their articulation" (Rocamora, 2016, p. 5). Fashion weeks – namely those of the four fashion capitals: New York, London, Milan, and Paris – are now a beacon of communication; they hold a prime spot in the fashion communications calendar and are a brand in their own right, attracting sponsorships and promoting their values (Lea-Greenwood, 2013). Mediatisation has become crucial in understanding how fashion and media practices, specifically digital media, meet and intertwine. The mediatisation of fashion has also altered the industry's hierarchy; the system now accommodates digital media practitioners, such as influencers, allowing them to create and share content via social media platforms, where their followers help them generate and accumulate fashion capital (Halliday, 2021; Rocamora, 2016). Lastly, it is important to note that different mediatisation types depend on different media genres, such as print versus digital outlets (Lea-Greenwood, 2013).

### **3.2.1 Print Media**

Magazines are a fundamental communication tool in the field of fashion; they are a trusted source of information and act as style tutors that readers can look up to – thus, they are empowered to solve their readers’ fashion crises and simultaneously entertain them (Lea-Greenwood, 2013).

Consumers have remained captivated by the pages of fashion magazines, which, in turn, cemented magazines as an extension of fashion companies’ marketing departments. Over the years, the fashion press has wielded its power by gifting designers great success, proving its remarkable marketing influence (Tungate, 2008). This, however, raises the question of objectivity in fashion media. Masoud Golsorkhi, founder and editor of Tank magazine, asserts:

The fashion press is very much gagged. The connection between fashion brands and the media is based on relationships, and fashion PR people work very hard to stimulate friendships with journalists. It is very difficult to write nasty things about your friends (as cited in Tungate, 2008, p. 130).

Nicholas Coleridge, former managing director at Condé Nast Britain (1991-2017), counteracts by saying: “Fashion magazines do not exist to be overly critical; although they can criticise by exclusion. Our job is to cover trends” (as cited in Tungate, 2008, p. 131). This issue of transparency in the fashion media has become balanced through the democratisation of fashion observed in digital media; though fashion magazines remain a crucial part of brands’ marketing strategies, digital media is recognised as a space where consumers’ voices can be heard. Nowadays, most magazines have developed an online version in which readers are provided with short bursts of information to remind them to purchase the physical version (Lea-Greenwood, 2013).

### **3.2.2 Digital Media**

From social media to PR-driven content, digital media have increased the exposure, experience and diffusion of fashion (Ferrero-Regis & Lindquist, 2021; Lea-Greenwood, 2013). Digital media have gifted fashion an open stage for disseminating designers, fashion weeks, and fashion shows (Ferrero-Regis & Lindquist, 2021). Before the rise of digital platforms, praise, criticism, and overall feedback would take days to reach brands; nowadays, feedback is received by fashion companies in a fraction of a second, at the same time that is seen by thousands of people worldwide (Lea-Greenwood, 2013).

As this facet of the communications industry grows and becomes mainstream, business opportunities for digital practitioners have also exponentially emerged; however, monetising the internet is not a task easy to quantify (Lea-Greenwood, 2013). Their role within the industry has

consolidated over the past two decades, starting with the launch of blogs and, more recently, through social media platforms such as Instagram (2013).

Before the rise of social media, blogs represented the epitome of having an online presence. Blogging is an active and interactive activity that has turned bloggers into the de facto fashion journalists of digital media; as argued by Lea-Greenwood (Lea-Greenwood, 2013), “blogging has become the fashion commentary of the moment” (p. 184). Bloggers, who have evolved into influencers, occupy the front-row seats of fashion shows. Thus, they can create up-to-date visual content and offer commentary faster than practitioners of traditional mediums ever could. In addition, they are also hired for campaigns, have become contributors in magazines and newspapers, and their opinions on trends and the fashion industry are highly valued (Lea-Greenwood, 2013).

“Fashion blogs are shaped in a network of collective cultural narratives and forms of representation which refer to fashion, style, and the body, but also to digital technologies and identities” (Titton, 2015, p. 206). According to Rocamora (2020), personal fashion digital spaces are also spaces of surveillance by oneself and others. Blogging, alongside fashion and photography, is perceived as a technology of the self, reflected through the computer screen, which the author dubs as a contemporary space of individual expression (p. 697); “like mirrors, and thanks to the transfer of images onto computers new technologies have enabled, digital screens allow one to look at oneself” (p. 699).

Fashion blogs and the practice of blogging set the norm for how social media is currently used. Today, the term fashion influencer has supplanted blogger, and “fashion influencers are consecrated as the powerful agents of the new business of influence in the field of fashion” (Lea-Greenwood, 2013). Social media platforms have grown into valuable communication tools due to their immediacy and ability to become deeply personal. In many cases, social media has gone so far as to reduce both costs and distance between many fashion companies and their audiences (Lea-Greenwood, 2013).

Although social media is presently one of the most essential tools in promoting and communicating a brand, most luxury fashion brands were reluctant to join the digital world (A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012). One of the turning points in the relationship between fashion and social media was Dolce & Gabbana’s September 2009 fashion show. For its Spring/Summer 2010 collection showing, the brand invited fashion bloggers to sit on the front row alongside fashion editors and journalists (Figure 8); this step was seen as a sure inaugurating sign of the rise of the digital influencer as a critical player within the fashion field, one who wields both economic and cultural power in contemporary fashion (Mendes, 2019).



**Figure 8** – Front row at Dolce & Gabbana Spring/Summer 2010. The bloggers Bryanboy (third from left) and Tommy Ton (right) alongside fashion editors and journalists, including fashion journalist Suzy Menkes (left) and Vogue’s editor-in-chief Anna Wintour (third from right)

Source: The New York Times (<https://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/27/fashion/27BLOGGERS.html>)

The industry has since started to regard technology as an opportunity instead of a threat. The usage of social media does not reflect poorly on a brand’s reputation; rather, social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook have helped cultivate a beneficial relationship between brands and consumers, thus stimulating their desire for consumption (A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012). Most recently, TikTok has emerged and established itself as one of the main social media platforms. Ultimately, as Pedroni (2022) asserts, the phenomenon of influencing has become an established practice integral to the healthy functioning of the fashion industry and, thus, a worthy area of study for fashion field scholars (pp. 14, 20).



## 4. The Fashion Spectacle Matrix

The fashion show ... can be seen as an ideal example of the spectacle of fashion.  
Woodward & Fisher, 2014, p. 7

The fashion industry, particularly in the contemporary setting, is image-driven, conceptual, and increasingly aware of branding strategies; thus, the importance of an impactful fashion show is constantly reinforced (Strömberg, 2021). Wilson (2003) argues that it is through spectacle that the relationship between fashion and academic study blooms and refers to fashion shows as a “twice yearly spectacle, another ‘tournament of value’, and appear closer to performance art than to mere displays of the latest designs” (p. 267).

Fashion inhabits many spaces and places (Ferrero-Regis, 2021); however, little to no attention is given to how fashion and the spaces in which it is presented interact. The symbiosis between them has been transformed by different fashion approaches, performance, spatial arts and design, and film and digital media – in turn, it has revolutionised the fashion industry (p. 2). Thus, the space of the fashion show is “a site of testing the interrelationships of structure, space, or dwelling, whether through subliminal interventions – such as Yohji Yamamoto’s shows – or purpose-built arenas – like Prada’s Transformer Pavilion” (Ferrero-Regis & Lindquist, 2021, p. 24).

“Fashion draws on adjacent aesthetic realms such as art and architecture in order to push the boundaries and exaggerate the aesthetic conventions encoded in other artistic forms” (Craik, 2009, p. 175). Moreover, designers exploit thematic shows to tap into their fantasies.

Fashion shows prioritise the visual; the spectacle is materialised through lighting, set design, music, and choreography of the models (Duggan, 2001; Woodward & Fisher, 2014). Both producers and performers aim to gather a positive, hopefully enthusiastic response from the audience, which requires “one to move the clothes and the other to observe the clothes being moved” (Findlay, 2017, p. 110). Essentially, as Baudrillard (2020) observes, the fashion show is the representation of spectacle in fashion and is “an intensified and reduplicated sociality enjoying itself aesthetically, the drama of change in place of change” (p. 627).

There is a permanent struggle within the field of fashion due to the rarity of the producer having surpassed the rarity of the product as a deciding factor for the consumer (Bourdieu, 1993). Consequently, new entrants and those within the field who struggle for dominance trigger its transformation and are able to disrupt the established order as a result of the system’s perpetual need to restructure. As Bourdieu (1993) suggests, “the opposition between right and left, rear guard and avant-garde, the consecrated and the heretical, orthodoxy and heterodoxy, constantly changes in content but remains structurally identical” (p. 135). The author also affirms that:

On the basis of the positions that the various agents or institutions occupy in the structure of the field, ... it is possible to predict, or at least to understand, the aesthetic positions they will adopt, as expressed in the adjectives used to describe their products or in any other indicator (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 134).

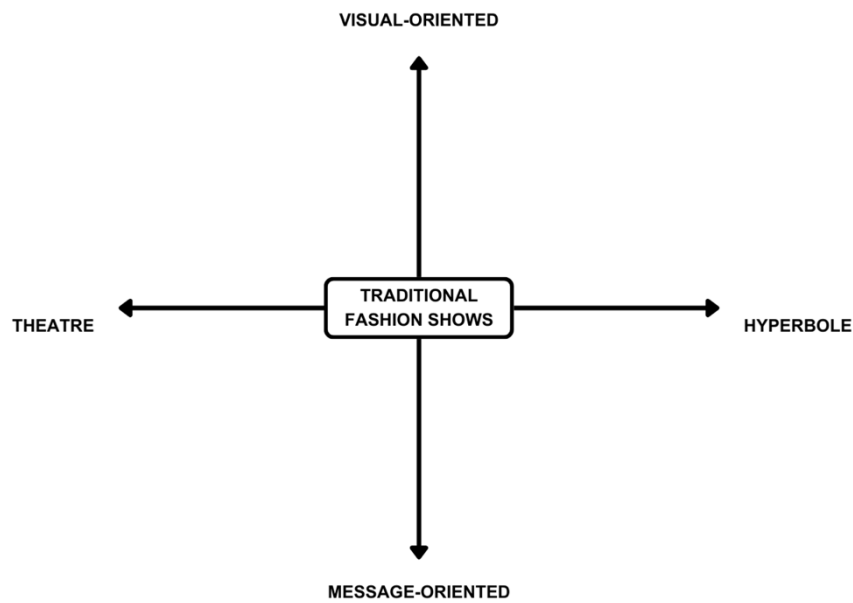
Thus, drawing on Duggan (2001), whose work divides fashion designers into five categories, a framework was created with the objective of categorising fashion shows and reflect their impact when sharing brands and designers' values with their audiences.

According to Duggan (2001), there are five types of fashion designers: spectacle, substance, science, structure, and statement. Spectacle designers are often closely connected to the performing arts, such as theatre and opera; Alexander McQueen and John Galliano are two of the most significant representatives of this category (p. 245). Designers in the substance category, such as Hussein Chalayan and Viktor & Rolf, emphasise process over product; the concept behind a collection is central to its understanding (p. 250). Science designers, like Issey Miyake and Junya Watanabe, look to technology as an inspiration and, through experimentation, aim to depart from traditional designs and fabrics (p. 255). Structure designers' primary concern is form, and their creations are meant to be seen in flux; their collections are built around concepts but realised in concrete, rather than abstract, manifestations. Great examples of this category are designers Rei Kawakubo and Martin Margiela (p. 260). Lastly, designers in the statement category either use clothing, the show or a combination of both to express their messages; this category mainly applies to emerging designers (p. 268).

Instead of analysing designers, the framework developed focuses on analysing individual fashion shows and placing them on a categorising spectrum.

## **4.1 The Matrix**

Conceptualised as a tool to categorise fashion shows, the framework developed – henceforth referred to as the *fashion spectacle matrix* – aims to explore how every element of a fashion show interacts, producing a spectacle that reflects both the designer and the brand's values. In order to position fashion shows within the matrix, the following aspects of runway events have been taken into consideration: models, location, theme, and techniques of mediatization.



**Figure 9** – The Fashion Spectacle Matrix

As Wainer (1992) observes, “graphs work well because humans are very good at seeing things.” They are essential to how we perceive the world and, therefore, have become basic to our understanding (p. 15). Well-drawn graphs efficiently answer commonly asked questions, promoting deeper inquiries and discourses. Additionally, graphical representations can also act as diagnostic tools (Gower et al., 2010).

Following the perspective of the importance of graphs – and inspired by the format of a marketing matrix<sup>8</sup> – the fashion spectacle matrix was developed according to the principles of perceptual mapping. When used correctly, a perceptual map is able to identify opportunities, boost creativity, and stimulate marketing strategies (Hauser & Koppelman, 1979, p. 495). Stamatis (2012) defines perceptual mapping as a:

Visual representation of a respondent’s perceptions of objects on two or more dimensions. Each object then has a spatial position in the perceptual map that reflects the relative similarity or preference to other objects with regard to the dimensions of the perceptual map. (p. 403)

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<sup>8</sup> Stamatis (2012) defines matrix as: “a two-dimensional structure in which the horizontal and vertical intersections form cells or boxes. In each cell may be identified a block of knowledge whose interface with other blocks is determined by its position in the structure” (p. 383). Alternatively, a marketing matrix is understood as a visual planning tool for building marketing campaigns and strategies (Hancock, 2023).

In its simplest form, a perceptual map consists of a set of points on a two-dimensional plot, allowing for information to be displayed in ways in which it can be quickly and correctly assimilated. This type of graph relies on the human ability to interpret graphical data and is extensively used in marketing as a visual tool to explore how two or more elements interconnect (Gower et al., 2010; Hauser & Koppelman, 1979).

#### **4.1.1 Categories**

Divided into four categories over two spectrums, the fashion spectacle matrix (Figure 9) focuses on exploring the level of grandeur in a fashion show as well as the type of meanings it tries to convey. Traditional fashion shows – which can be understood as linear presentations with a simple, central catwalk with an audience at each side – sit on the apex of the matrix. From there, two different spectrums can be observed. On the vertical axis (y-axis), the categories visual-oriented and message-oriented form a spectrum that considers a fashion show's primary focus, whether it may be to communicate a particular message or to create a pleasurable aesthetic set production. Conversely, on the horizontal axis (x-axis), the categories theatre and hyperbole explore the connection between every element that comprises a fashion show – such as location and theme – and how they contribute to the level of opulence and spectacle of the event.

##### **Visual-Oriented vs Message-Oriented**

The vertical axis on the fashion spectacle matrix explores the primary objective of a fashion show. The visual *versus* message dichotomy identifies what a show communicates; on opposite sides of the spectrum, a show can either focus solely on expressing a particular message or, alternatively, on creating a strong visual impact through an aesthetic atmosphere.

Visual-oriented shows focus on creating an aesthetic experience, transporting the audience into the imaginary realm conceptualised by the creative director at the helm. These shows are often incredibly social-media-friendly due to their image-centric nature and rely heavily on set design and production.

Message-oriented shows aim to promote causes, stories, and values close to those of the brand or designer. Shows focusing on conveying a message utilise every component available – such as theme and choreography – to articulate meanings and rely heavily on press releases to further share the collection manifesto.

##### **Theatre vs Hyperbole**

The horizontal axis delves into how a fashion show's primary focus is demonstrated and communicated. The categories theatre and hyperbole delve into the level of spectacle and

grandeur afforded to the event; the spectrum explores how, and at what level, the message or atmosphere of the show is conveyed.

Fashion shows on the theatre side of the spectrum embrace a full-bodied storyline. The models are seen as the actors, while the garments act out the plot of the collection. During these shows, the audience is able to follow a line of thought and acknowledge a purpose. Similarly, to message-oriented shows, theatrical shows rely on press releases and the media to communicate the deeper and underlying meanings of the show.

Hyperbole<sup>9</sup> fashion shows are an extravagant exaggeration. They create a strong and long-lasting impression on the audience, often through opulent sets and productions. These shows do not follow a comprehensive plot. Instead of following the traditional order of storylines (beginning, middle, and end), they construct an imaginary realm based on abstract inspirations. Thus, exclusively hyperbolic shows are not intended to be understood in a literal sense.

## **4.2 Analysis of Fashion Shows**

The fashion spectacle matrix is a powerful tool capable of analysing what and how brands communicate through their fashion shows. To better comprehend how the matrix functions, as well as explore different levels and combinations of categories, the following fashion shows were analysed: John Galliano Spring/Summer 1994, Christian Dior Couture Autumn/Winter 2012, Chanel Autumn/Winter 2014, Jacquemus Spring/Summer 2020, Moschino Autumn/Winter 2020, Chanel Spring/Summer 2015, Alexander McQueen Spring/Summer 1999, and Balenciaga Autumn/Winter 2020. The selected shows were chosen solely due to being good representations of different categorical combinations on the fashion spectacle matrix. Therefore, though the analysed runway shows are not connected between season, category, year, brand, or designer (with the exception of both Chanel by Karl Lagerfeld shows), and although this particular analysis is not meant to allow the drawing of specific conclusions, it aims to show how the matrix can become a powerful tool to study what and how brands are communicating with their audiences, season after season, through the staging of their fashion shows.

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<sup>9</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary (2023d) defines hyperbole as “a figure of speech consisting in exaggerated or extravagant statement, used to express strong feeling or produce a strong impression, and not intended to be understood literally” (sense 1.a).

## John Galliano Spring/Summer 1994



**Figures 10 and 11** – Model Kate Moss as Princess Lucretia (left) and model performing as an actress (right) at John Galliano Spring/Summer 1994

Source: Another Magazine (<https://www.anothermag.com/fashion-beauty/8611/the-spectacular-romance-of-john-galliano-s-s94>)

Once upon time, there was a princess called Lucretia ... The young princess [fell] desperately in love with one of the estate's many serfs and [plotted] an escape from the claustrophobic theatrics of St. Petersburg society. One snowy evening, she departs ... Lucretia goes as far as the railways will take her, allowing herself to drift through the continent ... She chances upon the dotty Duke and Duchess, eccentric polka-dot covered Brits who immediately take an affectionate liking to her ... [Princess] Lucretia is introduced to British society ... It is not long, though, before she meets her dashing young Lord, falling in love once again and living happily ever after in her softly hued, slinky bias-cut silk dresses and jewel-embellished sashes (Ahmed, 2016).

For the Spring/Summer 1994 season, and after missing the previous season due to financial difficulties, designer John Galliano chose to show his collection at the Cour Carrée du Louvre in an effort to impress the fashion industry elites. The show, entitled *Princess Lucretia*, was a fashion fairy-tale; it was inspired by Russia's lost princess Anastasia Romanov, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Jane Campion's *The Piano*, the Duke of Edinburgh, and Madeleine Vionnet's 1920s bias cut. The event was a masterpiece in drama and storytelling. The models posed as actresses and the clothes as costumes, and the show established a firm narrative from beginning to end,

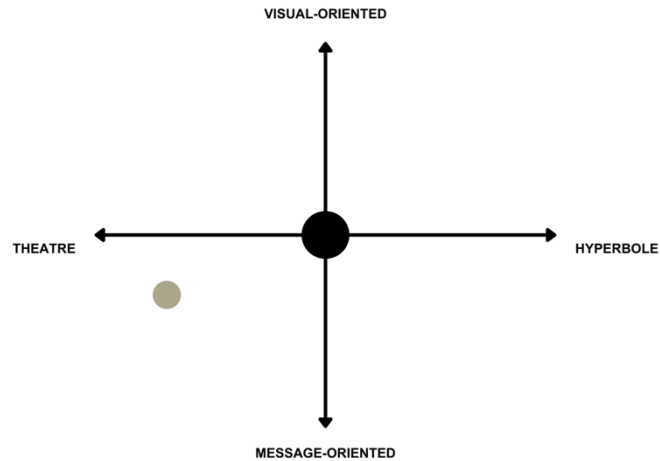
with the audience embarking on a journey through the realms of romance and history (Ahmed, 2016; Hall, 2016).



**Figure 12** – Backstage at John Galliano Spring/Summer 1994

Source: Another Magazine (<https://www.anothermag.com/fashion-beauty/8611/the-spectacular-romance-of-john-galliano-s-s94>)

The John Galliano Spring/Summer 1994 fashion show is an ode to both theatre and fashion. It follows a storyline and conveys it to the audience. Therefore, when positioning it on the fashion spectacle matrix (Figure 13), the show ranks primarily in the theatre category. It is also slightly positioned as message-oriented, as while the show has a message it wants to pass on to the audience, its main objective is not to communicate it but to act it out.



**Figure 13** – Positioning of the John Galliano Spring/Summer 1994 fashion show on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix

**Christian Dior Couture Autumn/Winter 2012**



**Figure 14** – Model walking during the Christian Dior Couture Autumn/Winter 2012

Source: The New York Times (<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/05/fashion/raf-simons-first-dior-collection.html>)

Immortalised in the 2014 documentary film *Dior and I*, Raf Simons’s first collection for the French couture house was a stunning visual experience. The Christian Dior Couture Autumn/Winter 2012 collection represented Simons’ debut at Dior as well as the designer’s first adventure in the couture world. The collection was made in eight weeks and generated a great sense of anticipation within the industry.

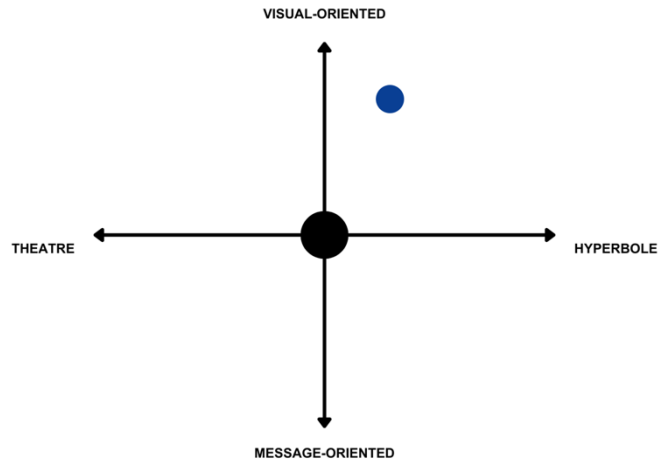
Hosted at a classic Parisian mansion, the collection's fashion show spanned five rooms; 150 workers carefully lined each room with fresh flowers from floor to ceiling. Christian Dior loved flowers. Thus, there were rooms covered in blue delphiniums, yellow mimosas, pink peonies, white orchids, and a wide range of coloured roses – the colours reflecting the hues that appeared down the runway. The covered walls provided an eclectic background for the clothes, which were the perfect balance of modernity and romance (Horyn, 2012; Menkes, 2012).



**Figures 15 and 16** – Set at Christian Dior Couture Autumn/Winter 2012

Source: Dior (<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.382284085159596>)

The Christian Dior Couture Autumn/Winter 2012 fashion show was a beautiful visual experience. It paid homage to the history of the French house while cementing a shift in creative leadership. When positioning the show on the fashion spectacle matrix (Figure 17), it becomes clear that the presentation is primarily visual-oriented. However, due to the exuberance of its flower-covered walls, the show is also slightly positioned on the hyperbole side of the horizontal spectrum.



**Figure 17** – Positioning of the Christian Dior Couture Autumn/Winter 2012 fashion show on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix

**Chanel Autumn/Winter 2014**



**Figure 18** – Supermarket set at the Chanel Autumn/Winter 2014 fashion show

Source: The New York Times (<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/05/fashion/channels-supermarket-chic.html>)

In 2005, Chanel began to show its fashion shows at the Grand Palais in Paris. The French house has consistently reimagined the site in numerous ways to produce spectacle sets that, oftentimes, gather more attention than the presented collection itself (Fury, 2014; Menkes, 2014a).

For its Autumn/Winter 2014 show, Chanel created a supermarket set titled *Chanel Shopping Centre*. Complete with *Délice de Gabrielle* tuna tins, *Cambonay* cheese – a wordplay on Rue

Cambon, the street on which Coco Chanel once worked and where Chanel still has a boutique – *Jambon Cambon* ham, and *Elsa's black rice* – forbidden to great couturiers – alluding to an argument between Chanel and Elsa Schiaparelli, the shelves were fully stocked with faux Chanel-branded products. The show was a conjunction of both high and low and funny and expensive. The plastic trolleys in eclectic colours and the extravagant-looking products were accompanied by signage that paid homage to the house's heritage; “plus 30 percent,” read a poster with a figure resembling Coco Chanel, pushing a trolley in her tweed suit and hat, drawn above a cash machine.

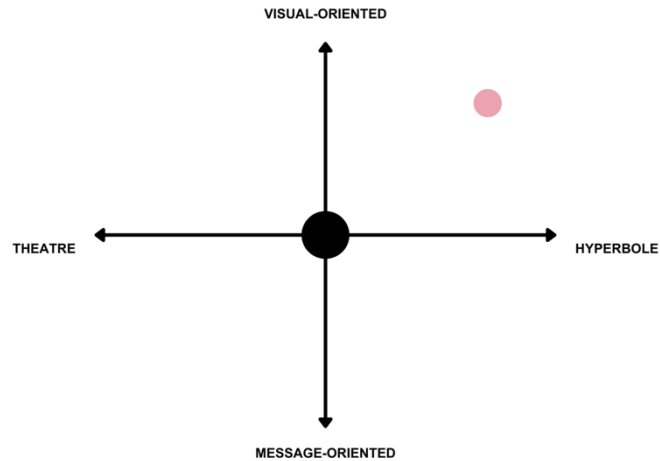
Karl Lagerfeld established himself as a master at creating immersive atmospheres. The designer, creative director for the brand at the time of the collection, justified the creation of a supermarket set as “it is something of today's life and even people who dress at Chanel go there – it is a modern statement for expensive things” (as cited in Menkes, 2014a). After Lagerfeld's final bow, the audience was invited to browse the set shelves and take home the *Chanel-ised* products.



**Figure 19** – Audience watching the Chanel Autumn/Winter 2014 fashion show

Source: The Independent (<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/news/paris-fashion-week-is-karl-lagerfeld-off-his-trolley-audience-strips-shelves-after-chanel-show-9169290.html>)

The Chanel Autumn/Winter 2014 fashion show was a lesson in exaggeration. The set does not function as a complementary element to the collection but as a parallel way to guarantee the audience's attention. By creating such a powerful, visually intense set, the show positions itself on the fashion spectacle matrix as both visual-oriented and hyperbole (Figure 20). The supermarket, although alluring to notable references to the fashion house's history, is not part of a specific plot and, thus, is not meant to be interpreted literally or in depth.



**Figure 20** – Positioning of the Chanel Autumn/Winter 2014 fashion show on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix

### Jacquemus Spring/Summer 2020



**Figure 21** – Models walking down the runway during the Jacquemus Spring/Summer 2020 fashion show  
 Source: Bureau Betak (<https://blog.bureaubetak.com/post/185864746424/jacquemus-ss20-set-design-and-production-by>)

In celebration of the designer’s eponymous label’s 10th anniversary, Simon Jacquemus invited his audience to his hometown in Provence, France, for the showing of the brand’s Spring/Summer 2020 collection, entitled *Le Coup de Soleil*. The fashion show, produced by Bureau Betak, was staged in a field of lavender:

A shocking-pink fabric catwalk unfurled between rows of lavender, shimmering purple like a Van Gogh painting, along which beautiful people marched in archaic, whimsical

get-ups against a cloudless, cornflower-blue sky. Art references abounded: the catwalk looked like a Christo installation, the scenography like Magritte (Fury, 2019).

“I wanted something very poetic,” Jacquemus confessed (as cited in DeLeon, 2019). During the show, the field bloomed against the models as they walked down the catwalk in pieces that epitomised the designer’s aesthetic. The idyllic scenography quickly captured the audience’s attention, and images of the show were heavily broadcast on social media platforms (DeLeon, 2019; Fury, 2019).



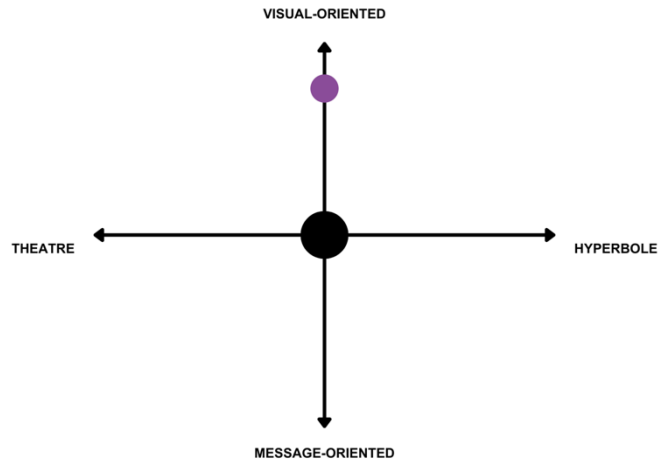
**Figure 22** – Runway at Jacquemus Spring/Summer 2020

Source: Bureau Betak (<https://blog.bureaubetak.com/post/185864737504/jacquemus-ss20-set-design-and-production-by>)

**Figure 23** – Models on set at Jacquemus Spring/Summer 2020

Source: Dazed (<https://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/45074/1/simon-porte-jacquemus-ss20-10th-anniversary-fashion-show-provence-lavender>)

The Jacquemus Spring/Summer 2020 fashion show was a visual phenomenon that instantly invaded social media. It featured stunning scenography and produced beautiful imagery, ideal for creating digital content. Therefore, when positioning the show on the fashion spectacle matrix (Figure 24), it falls exclusively on the visual-oriented category. The show’s production was simple yet striking. Although it celebrated the values most closely associated with the brand, it did not aim to convey a specific message to the audience – as the show’s primary goal was to create a visual experience.



**Figure 24** – Positioning of the Jacquemus Spring/Summer 2020 fashion show on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix

**Moschino Autumn/Winter 2020**



**Figure 25** – Model walking the runway at the Moschino Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show  
 Source: The New York Times (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/21/style/milan-fashion-week-prada-moschino.html>)

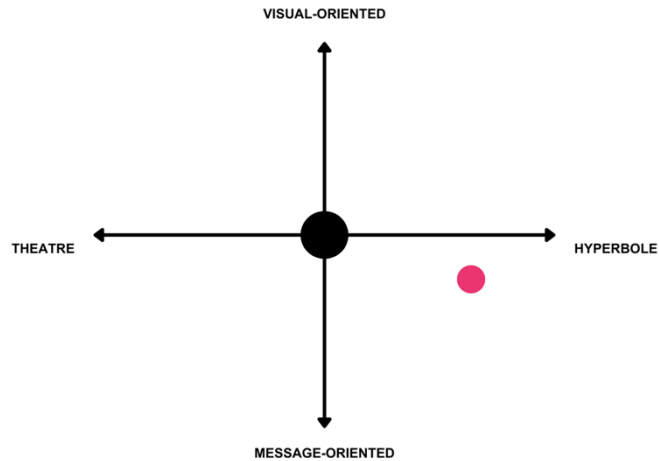
Jeremy Scott has long established himself as an adept of obvious visual jokes. For Moschino’s Autumn/Winter 2020 collection, the designer drew inspiration from Marie Antoinette – the last queen of France before the French Revolution and, arguably, one of the most fashionable historical figures. The show’s extravaganza began with its invitations, which took the form of giant pink cakes and were attached to elaborate nonedible pastries. At the event, the audience was transported to the Palace of Versailles through a baroque-inspired set complete with crystal

chandeliers, velvet curtains, and a catwalk covered in antique mirrors. Versailles-era corsets and pastry dresses walked down the runway – paying homage to the queen’s famous saying, “Let them eat cake!” in macaron shades – and the opulence and exaggerated extravagance of the show’s set offered the audience a sense of escapism, transporting them into a realm full of fantasy, fun, and satire (Davidson, 2020; Friedman, 2020a). The show depicted a cartoon of France during the 1700s, and the collection was “for those that want to have their cake and eat it too” (Petty, 2020).



**Figures 26 and 27** – Set (left) and finale (right) a the Moschino Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show  
Source: Satore Studio ([https://satorestudio.com/portfolio\\_page/moschino-aw20/](https://satorestudio.com/portfolio_page/moschino-aw20/))

The Moschino Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show was ruled by baroque-inspired escapism. With exaggerated and opulent elements comprising the event’s production, the show aimed to create a cartoon world where everything is bigger, bolder, and more colourful. Thus, the show falls primarily into the hyperbole category when positioned on the fashion spectacle matrix (Figure 28); however, it can also be slightly observed as message-oriented due to its strong inspiration on the historical figure of Marie Antoinette.



**Figure 28** – Positioning of the Moschino Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix

### Chanel Spring/Summer 2015



**Figure 29** – Finale at the Chanel Spring/Summer 2015 fashion show

Source: Glamour (<https://www.glamourmagazine.co.uk/article/chanel-show-protest-during-paris-fashion-week-ss15>)

For the presentation of the Chanel Spring/Summer 2015 collection, Karl Lagerfeld – creative director of the French house at the time – transformed the Grand Palais into a magnificent street. The site was recreated into a replica of Parisian streets in the 1970s, complete with pedestrian sidewalks, potholes, Haussmann buildings, and a street sign that read *Boulevard Chanel*. For the show’s finale, 85 models took the faux street as if in protest; led by model Cara Delevigne (who was one of the designer’s muses), the models rioted on the catwalk with loudspeakers – chanting

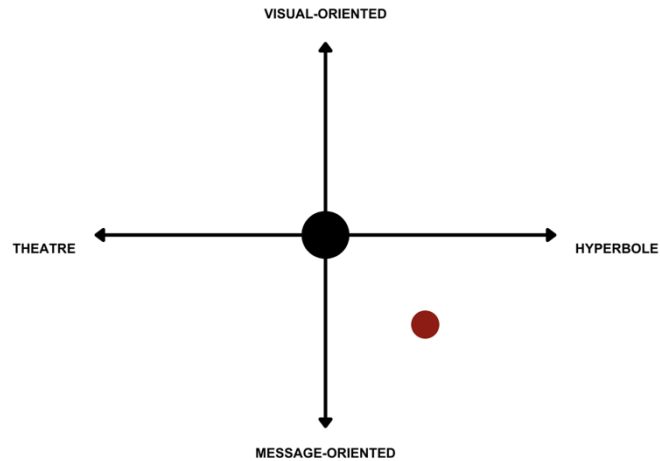
slogans – and waving signs that read “women’s rights are more than alright,” “make fashion, not war,” “vote for you,” and “history is her story,” among others. As Chanel has accustomed its audience, the fashion show provided an immersive experience that carefully balanced realism with escapism (Friedman, 2014; Menkes, 2014b).



**Figure 30** – Models walking with signs during the finale at the Chanel Spring/Summer 2015 fashion show

Source: The New York Times (<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/01/fashion/paris-fashion-week-chanel-karl-lagerfeld-valentino-saint-laurent-hedi-slimane.html>)

The Chanel Spring/Summer 2015 fashion show delivered another spectacular set. As is custom with the brand, the show’s production was opulent and extravagant, creating a detailed avenue for the sole purpose of staging a protest. While the set does not necessarily work in tandem with the collection, it conveys a message to the audience. The show’s finale, a choreographed feminist rally, communicated the brand’s support of the women’s rights movement. Therefore, when positioning the show in the fashion spectacle matrix (Figure 31), it can be categorised almost equally as hyperbole and message oriented.



**Figure 31** – Positioning of the Chanel Spring/Summer 2015 fashion show on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix

### Alexander McQueen Spring/Summer 1999



**Figure 32** – Shalom Harlow during the finale at the Alexander McQueen Spring/Summer 1999 fashion show

Source: Another Magazine (<https://www.anothermag.com/fashion-beauty/9225/the-magnificent-impact-of-alexander-mcqueen-ss99>)

For his 13<sup>th</sup> show – aptly named *No. 13* – designer Alexander McQueen firmly nodded to the performance arts, paying tribute to the Arts and Crafts Movement. Hosted at Gatliff Warehouse, an unused former bus depot in Victoria, London, the show did not include a celebrity front row; McQueen believed his team had worked too hard to risk sharing the media’s attention with a show’s guest. The set was ground-level, made out of unvarnished floorboards with a lowered, lit ceiling. During the finale, the car-manufacturing machine occupying the set came alive. Shalom Harlow, a former ballerina, emerged in a white strapless dress and began dancing between the two metal robots. The interaction began softly, carefully choreographed before the level of

intensity grew and the dress was sprayed black and yellow. The moment, which has been interpreted and explored in numerous ways, was inspired by *High Moon*, an art installation by Rebecca Horn and established No. 13 as one of the most impactful fashion shows in contemporary history (Frankel, 2016; Runway, 1998). It was “the only one that actually made me cry,” said McQueen (as cited in Frankel, 2016).

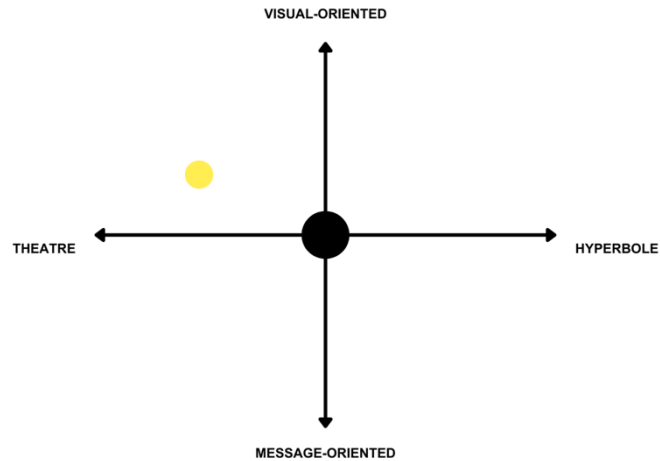
For its Spring/Summer 2023 show, Coperni paid homage to McQueen. During the show finale, in a performance that lasted for about nine minutes, a white, off-shoulder dress was sprayed onto model Bella Hadid’s body. The substance used was a patented spray-on fabric that Fabrican – a London-based company, developed; at first, it looked like spider webs, but when the fibrous layers thickened, the material dried into a fabric. The dress was soft, yet elastic to the touch, bumpy like a sponge. In pictures, however, the material looked like silk or cotton (Testa, 2022).



**Figure 33** – Coperni Spring/Summer 2023 fashion show

Source: The New York Times (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/02/style/bella-hadid-coperni-paris-fashion-week.html>)

The Alexander McQueen Spring/Summer 1999 and the Coperni Spring/Summer 2023 fashion shows are more than just fashion shows; they are art performances. Both shows relied on simple sets – creating an impactful moment during their finales that fostered the relationship between art, fashion, and technology. McQueen’s use of robots to alter a garment and Coperni’s use of an innovative material to create a dress prove how the dichotomy between technology and handmade is the fashion industry’s future. Both shows’ primary objective was to create a strong and visually appealing finale; however, by creating such moments, they also followed the base guidelines of performance arts. Thus, when placing these shows on the fashion spectacle matrix, they fall into the categories of theatre and visual-oriented.



**Figure 34** – Positioning of the Alexander McQueen Spring/Summer 1999 and Coperni Spring/Summer 2023 fashion shows on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix

**Balenciaga Autumn/Winter 2020**



**Figure 35** – Model walking down the runway during the Balenciaga Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show  
 Source: The New York Times (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/02/style/Paris-fashion-week-balenciaga-valentino.html>)

For Balenciaga’s Autumn/Winter 2020 show, designer Denma Gvasalia brought fashion’s attention to global warming. The event’s location – an empty auditorium – was flooded; water swallowed the first rows of seats, and guests sat in the third row and beyond to avoid being splashed by the models walking down the runway. The atmosphere was black, foreboding, and apocalyptic as if predicting the end of the world. There was a gaseous, lemony scent; occasionally, a water drip would ripple through the set. Suddenly, furious grey clouds appeared across an LED screen on the ceiling as models emerged and the show commenced. The Earth also appeared on the screen, in its blue and green peaceful calm. Then, there was a total eclipse; the set became so

dark that it became difficult to see and almost impossible to concentrate. By the end, it became evident that the looks had been accompanied by an apocalyptic film – projected on the ceiling and reflected in the water’s surface, thus creating a cinematic effect – that featured images of carrion crows, storming oceans, flames and lava. The show was an ode to nature and a warning that climate change is already causing irrevocable change to our planet (Degori, 2020; Friedman, 2020b).



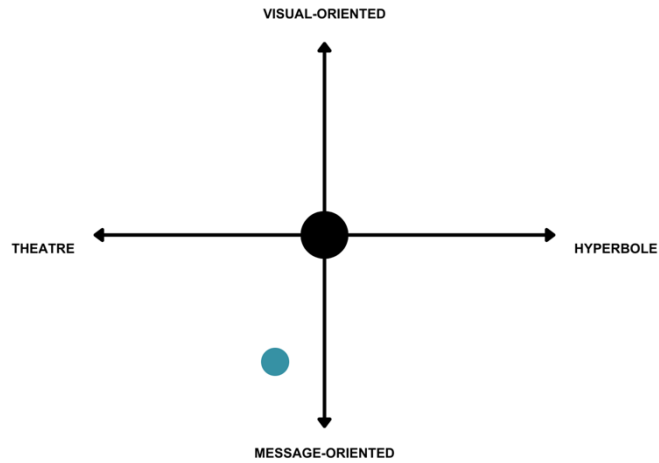
**Figure 36** – Water set at the Balenciaga Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show

Source: Les Façons (<https://www.instagram.com/p/B9MU2puF8uE/>)

**Figure 37** – Lava set at the Balenciaga Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show

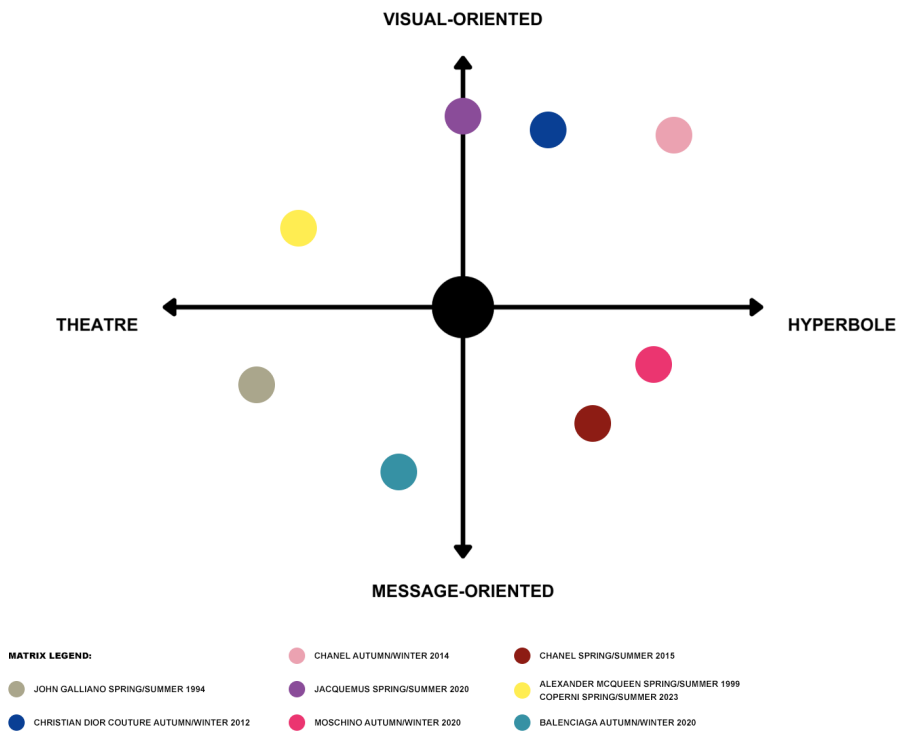
Source: The Spaces (<https://thespaces.com/balenciaga-evoked-the-end-of-the-world-for-its-aw20-show/>)

The Balenciaga Autumn/Winter 2020 was a cinematic experience. The show conveyed Gvasalia’s unmovable support for the global warming cause. The show was staged in a seemingly simple set, transformed through technology to display forces of nature, such as lava and the ocean. Thus, when placing it on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix (Figure 38), the show is categorised as mainly message-oriented; however, due to the film that accompanied the runway looks, the show is also slightly positioned on the theatre side of the horizontal axis.



**Figure 38** – Positioning of the Balenciaga Autumn/Winter 2020 fashion show on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix

### Final considerations



**Figure 39** – Positioning of all the analysed fashion shows on the Fashion Spectacle Matrix

The evolution of the fashion show has consistently proven the importance of brands establishing an open line of communication with their customers: by conveying values to its audience, a brand can ascertain and secure its position within its chosen market.

In contemporary runway shows, showcasing specific meanings has become a practice of almost second nature for brands; however, it is important to note that, even in this newfound cultural landscape, fashion shows that find themselves conveying messages should not immediately be categorised as message-oriented within the fashion spectacle framework, as the portrayed meanings are not necessarily the shows' primary focus. In this sense, the fashion spectacle matrix allows for some fluidity, as well as a slight subjectivity, when categorising runway shows.

The dichotomy between visual and message orientation is still present within the fashion industry. Messages and visual spectacles can be achieved through means often associated with the opposite orientation: a show that is categorised as message-oriented can still be dependent on visual aids, often through the use of hyperbolic sets and production; on the other side of the spectrum, visual-oriented shows can still, and often do, convey messages and meanings to their audiences, namely when following theatrical means of showcasing fashion. As a matrix, the fashion spectacle framework relies on the use of two converging spectrums and, therefore, when recurring to it, fashion shows are not categorised in a set way, but rather in a fluid, slightly subjective way.

Although the analysed shows were selected only due to being good representations of different combinations of the established categories, the fashion spectacle matrix remains a useful tool when analysing how different types of sets and productions can affect the way audiences respond to fashion brands' runway shows. By making use of the developed framework, it becomes possible to better understand trends within fashion shows, either by analysing the events from a particular year or season, or by applying the matrix to the shows of a specific brand in order to understand how and what brands communicate to their audiences.



# Conclusion

Fashion shows have established themselves as a fundamental practice. While their main objective remains marketing-faced, the fashion show has entered a new era where spectacle is key. Fashion presentations are crucial in fashion and brand communications; they allow designers to create imaginary realms and convey messages through spectacular sets while promoting their new seasonal creations.

The rise of digital media has contributed to the spectacularisation of fashion shows. The rise of the online world has intensified the pressure on brands. As this dissertation explored the role of branding in the fashion and luxury industries, it became clear that, nowadays, it is fundamental for brands to create and perpetuate strong visual identities. Brands have increasingly furthered their imagery – they are now able to communicate their values via visually appealing content later shared with their audiences via social media platforms. Digital fashion media practitioners, commonly referred to as fashion influencers, have become crucial players within the fashion field; they occupy front rows at fashion shows and thus create content that promotes its dissemination – complete with the conveyed meanings and the presented garments.

The fashion show has evolved as a medium in multiple ways. With one of this dissertation's primary objectives being to understand the role of the fashion show, the literature review portion of this study has allowed for the conclusion that while the events began as simple and were meant solely to communicate to the elites the newly determined fashion trends for the upcoming season, they have become much more. Currently, fashion shows are an extension of the collection they present; they strive to produce a powerful presentation that translates well into social media and communicates the brand's values. More than ever, the fashion show is a collaboration between all of its comprising elements – location, models, theme, and mediatisation techniques.

Thus, creating the fashion spectacle matrix has allowed the categorising of fashion shows across two spectrums. The matrix, which takes the form of a perceptual map, identifies what and how brands try to communicate through the fashion shows they produce – therefore corroborating the fashion show as an embodiment of a brand's values. Fashion shows have become a platform imbued with meanings. They allow brands and designers to communicate with their audiences, broadcasting their ideas and promoting causes that feel dear to them. In this sense, the framework allows for the fulfilment of two of this dissertation's objectives: analysing how fashion brands convey their brand values to their target audiences and categorising the different types of fashion shows.

This study began by questioning in which way fashion shows have impacted the branding of luxury fashion and designer brands. Through the review of existing literature and the development of the fashion spectacle framework, it became possible to offer an answer to this

dissertation's primary research question: runway shows have impacted the branding of luxury fashion and designer brands by allowing the communication of their values and imagery via a spectacular event. Brands have started to invest in producing stunning events that allow the dissemination of their values, hence attracting a wider audience. In conclusion, when brands produce fashion shows shaped after escapist realms, they are inviting the world into their universe; these kinds of presentations assure the audience that, even if the audience cannot afford the presented clothes, by buying other branded goods, such as sunglasses or perfumes, they can still join the brand's imaginary world through buying other branded goods.

### **Limitations and further research**

This dissertation's limitations lie in the fashion spectacle matrix being a new project. Although its development was heavily researched and contextualised, the framework does not account for the possible emergence of other categorising spectrums. With the continual analysis of relevant literature as well as the evolution of future fashion shows, it may become apparent that the matrix should be rethought and reformulated in order to accommodate different defining characteristics of fashion presentations.

At the same time, said limitation can also be understood as an incentive for further research. As fashion shows evolve in accordance with branding principles, it will be interesting to investigate how adaptative to the zeitgeist the fashion spectacle matrix remains. Other further research possibilities include the application of the developed framework to study fashion shows from specific brands or seasons, thus drawing concrete conclusions on how brands present fashion and which messages, if any, they are choosing to convey simultaneously.

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