



FASHION MARKETING

THIRD EDITION

EDITED BY
MIKE EASEY



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Fashion Marketing



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Third Edition

Edited by
Mike Easey

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Preface

If you are interested or involved in fashion you will already be aware that it is an exciting area of constant change, creativity and global commercial activity. However, skills in fashion are not enough to guarantee success, as even when those skills are exceptional there is still the constant risk of failure and bankruptcy. A knowledge of marketing is essential to help ensure success and lessen the possibility of failure. To paraphrase Armani, 'Clothing that is not purchased or worn is not fashion.' A good knowledge of fashion marketing can make the difference between a prototype that lingers in a dark storeroom and a garment that people really want to buy and wear.

Over the last two decades fashion has become a truly global business. Designers no longer work necessarily within manufacturing facilities and, as part of the knowledge industry, they need to be mobile and have the ability to communicate across cultures and business disciplines. Many brands like Gap, Zara and H&M which were just national brands a few years ago are now internationally recognized. Another major force influencing the fashion business is the growth of the Internet. The Internet has influenced the flow of creative ideas, the search for product information, the transparency of pricing and the management of supply chains amongst as well as how and where customers buy garments.

For the designer keen to start his or her own business, this book will offer a guide to most of the major decisions that will enable you to fulfil your creative potential and be a financial success. For the marketer who is interested in fashion, this book will help you understand the special way that marketing needs to be applied to the

world of fashion. Established fashion businesses also need to remain competitive by asking questions such as:

- ◆ What are the major trends we should be monitoring?
- ◆ How should we set our prices?
- ◆ What is the most effective way to get our message across about the new product range?
- ◆ Which colour wash will be the most popular with buyers?

Fashion marketing finds answers to these and many other questions.

This book has a number of special qualities that make it essential reading for anyone involved in fashion.

- ◆ It deals with contemporary issues in fashion marketing.
- ◆ It has up-to-date examples of good practice. Over the past 35 years, all other major texts on fashion marketing have been centred on US practice. Fashion is now a global business and that theme is evident in all chapters in this revised edition.
- ◆ This book is exclusively about fashion marketing. It is not a marketing book with a few fashion examples among the anecdotes about motorcycles, industrial services and banking. It is all about fashion.
- ◆ There is a unique contribution on range planning which is a practical blend of sound design sense and commercial realism.
- ◆ There is a constant balance of theory and practice, with examples to illustrate key concepts. Where numerical concepts are included, there are clear worked examples to ensure that the ideas are easily understood and retained.
- ◆ Each chapter contains an introduction to set the scene and a summary of key points. There are over 50 diagrams to help to explain ideas and a glossary of the main fashion marketing terms is included.
- ◆ Included within each chapter is a guide to further reading. Keen fashion marketers will therefore be able to use this book as a foundation and springboard to becoming experts in specialist areas such as fashion marketing research or fashion public relations.
- ◆ A coherent approach to fashion marketing is developed, based on the research, consultancy, working and teaching experiences of a team from a major centre of excellence in fashion marketing in the UK. What you will get is a systematic approach to fashion marketing, not hyperbole or speculation.

How this book is organized

Part A looks at the nature and scope of fashion marketing. In Chapter One the special ingredients that make for good fashion design, care for customers and commercial success are explored. All fashion enthusiasts know of some of the links between fashion and broader social change and Chapter Two identifies those links, showing how fashion marketers are able to anticipate and participate in the process.

Part B is concerned with understanding and researching the consumer. In Chapter Three there is a detailed look at the consumer and what he or she wants from fashion, how ideas and brands are learned and how to paint a comprehensive and sound picture of the 'muse' for the fashion designer. Chapter Four deals with marketing research and shows how to investigate the preferences and behaviour of customers, distribution channels and competitors.

Part C looks at target marketing and the fashion marketing mix. Chapter Five deals with choosing profitable markets to aim at and then gives an overview of possible action to meet customer requirements – the marketing mix. In Chapters Six to Nine, precise coverage is given to the design of marketing programmes to ensure that the right garments (Chapter Six) are correctly priced (Chapter Seven), available at the right time and place (Chapter Eight) and are properly communicated (Chapter Nine). The final chapter deals with planning and co-ordinating the whole fashion marketing process, and setting up a system that works for the consumer, offering good fashion design and delivering profits.

If, like us, you believe that consumers deserve good fashion design and that profits should flow to those who act systematically to make that happen, then join us for the challenge that is fashion marketing.

The book's website

On the book's website, www.blackwellpublishing.com/easey, you will find invaluable on-line resources to support both teaching and learning – all downloadable free of charge. The website has the following features:

- ◆ For fashion marketing tutors, a full set of PowerPoint slides to accompany each chapter.
- ◆ Ideas and exercises for seminars.
- ◆ Access to sample assessment materials.
- ◆ Useful hyperlinks to relevant websites.

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Acknowledgements

Fashion is a fascinating subject which stimulates a great many questions, an essential requirement for any academic endeavour. As mainstream marketing educators, the authors of this book brought a range of different expectations and experiences to the area of fashion. All of us have working, teaching, training or consultancy experience in the field of fashion marketing and wanted to write a book that would address real issues and would contribute, in a small way, to make the fashion industry and fashion students more aware of how marketing can enable them to be more effective in their work.

For several years the University of Northumbria has run an undergraduate course in fashion marketing. Our experiences of teaching on this course coupled with the paucity of UK texts on the subject convinced us of the need to write the book. Our research and experiences have led us to challenge the way we think about marketing and recognize the special role of design in the process. In many sectors with creative output, it has long been noted that designers need to know about marketing and marketers need to know about design. It is hoped that this book meets the needs of both groups, though in truth designers may learn more about marketing than vice versa.

Many people have helped me with the second edition of this book via comments on the first and second editions and stimulating conversations and inspirations.

The following people are sincerely thanked for their knowledge, help and friendship: Sheila Atkinson, Christine Sorensen, Patricia Gray, John Willans and Gaynor Lea-Greenwood. My co-authors have been very supportive over the years and have been good colleagues,

critics and sources of ideas. Richard Jones, Prof. Christopher Moore, Dr. Sandra Connor, Ruth Marciniak, Prof. Neville Harris, Alan Fyall, Fiona Raeside, Helen Carter and Julie O'Sullivan have all contributed their ideas and friendship over the years. Madeleine Metcalfe at Wiley-Blackwell is due special thanks for her encouragement, patience and tenacity in helping me finish this third edition. Special thanks are also due to my wife Janice for great support.

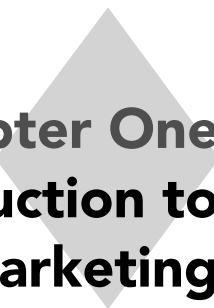
As usual there is a disclaimer: many people have helped me, but I accept total responsibility for all errors in the book.

Mike Easey
March 2008



Part A
Understanding
Fashion Marketing

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Chapter One

An Introduction to Fashion Marketing

The global market for apparel, accessories and luxury goods was estimated to be worth US\$1217 billion in 2006 and is expected to grow to approximately US\$1800 billion by 2011. The company with the largest market share of this vast market is Christian Dior and, despite this great success, the company has approximately 1% of the global market. Global fashion remains one of the largest sectors of world trade that is truly competitive: 1.14 million people were employed in apparel manufacture in the European Union (EU) in 2004 and nearly one-third of all imported clothing bought in the EU in 2007 was manufactured in China. The UK fashion industry is estimated to be worth approximately £22 billion in retail sales value in 2008. Apparel manufacturing industry in the UK employed around 83 000 people in 2006, down from over 200 000 a decade earlier. The above statistics reveal that fashion is a large global business sector going through a period of great change. It is the application of marketing that plays a crucial role in managing this growth and change. This book shows how marketing can be applied to fashion products and services.

This introduction looks at both fashion and marketing and how design and marketing work together in practice. An overview of the fashion marketing process covers the role of marketing in the fashion industry and the ethical issues raised by marketing in this context, with some practical examples of the work of fashion marketers.

1.1 What is fashion?

1.1.1 Fashion is to do with change

Fashion essentially involves change, defined as a succession of short-term trends or fads. From this standpoint there can be fashions in

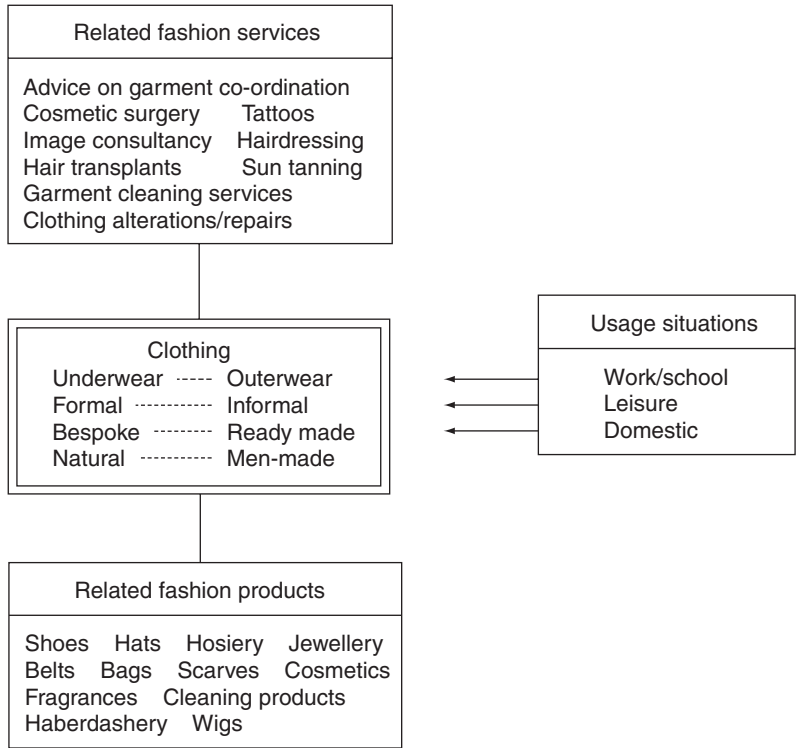


Figure 1.1 Fashion products and services.

almost any human activity from medical treatments to popular music. For the purpose of this book though, the concept of fashion will be taken to deal with the garments and related products and services as shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 identifies some major categories of clothing along with their main usage situations, but this list is by no means exhaustive. Fashion marketers should take a broad view of their domain – fashion is not only about clothes.

The competitive ethos of the fashion industry revolves around seasonality. The industry has a vested interest in developing new products for the customer at the expense of existing items: this process is known as planned obsolescence. Planned obsolescence is not confined to the fashion industry, it occurs in several other manufacturing sectors such as the electronics or automobile industries. While the concept of planned obsolescence can be criticized from several perspectives, many customers appreciate the continual change in fashion products and services. Unfortunately, the rate and direction

of change are usually slower and less predictable than the fashion industry would like.

1.1.2 Fashion is about creating

In order for the change which is intrinsic to fashion to take place, the industry must continually create new products. Used in another sense, the term fashion means to construct, mould or make. Fashion, therefore, also involves a strong creative and design component. Design skill is essential and can be seen in all products from the made-to-measure suit to the elaborate embroidery on a cardigan. The level of design can vary considerably from a basic item such as a T-shirt to the artistic creations of Coco Chanel, Christian Dior, Yves St Laurent or, in more recent times, Stella McCartney. To some the design of fashion garments can be viewed as an art in its own right, though this is a notion supported more in countries such as France and Italy than in Britain. The majority of garments sold do not come into this category, but the inspiration for the design of many of those garments may have come from works of art.

1.1.3 Fashion and marketing

The continual change, i.e. fashion, involves the exercise of creative design skills which result in products that range from the basic to the rare and elaborate. The creative design personnel provide part of the mechanism by which the industry responds to the need for change. At the same time the ability to identify products that the customer needs and will buy is also essential to the industry. Marketing can help to provide this additional knowledge and the skills needed to ensure that the creative component is used to best advantage, allowing businesses to succeed and grow.

1.2 What is marketing?

Marketing is a business philosophy or way of thinking about the firm from the perspective of the customer or the potential customer. Such a view has much merit as it focuses on the acid test for all business – if we do not meet the needs of our customers we will not survive, let alone thrive. Fashion firms depend upon customers making repeat purchases and the key to such loyalty is the satisfaction of customers' needs with garments which are stylish, durable, easy to care for, comfortable, perceived value for money and all the other criteria deemed

relevant by the buyer. For this reason, fashion design personnel should readily appreciate the need to understand the customer's perspective. Most designers have a mental picture of a typical customer. Fashion marketers ask, how typical is that mental picture and does the 'customer' belong to a group of buyers that form a profitable prospect for the company? Notice that the notion of seeing the business from the perspective of the customer does not preclude concern for profit. Indeed, if profit is not actively sought then the firm's ability to meet customers' needs in the long term will be greatly diminished.

Marketing comprises a range of techniques and activities, some of which are highly familiar to the general public. Most people have encountered market researchers and all have seen advertisements. Other less public aspects include product development and branding, pricing, publicity, sales promotion, selling, forecasting and distribution. An overview of the range of fashion marketing activities is given later in this chapter.

Marketing is a management process concerned with anticipating, identifying and satisfying customer needs in order to meet the long-term goals of the organization. Whilst concerned with the organization's relationship with customers it is also concerned with internal organizational factors that affect the achievement of marketing goals.

1.2.1 Is marketing a solution to all business problems?

There are many views of what marketing is and what it does. To the zealots, marketing is the panacea for all business problems and can provide remedies for product failures or falling profits. Clearly, this is naive and does not recognize the interdependence of the many business and creative functions within organizations. Nor does this view fully appreciate the wider marketing environment that confronts all firms when they embark upon marketing activities.

The best marketing plans and activities can be easily and quickly undermined by changes in the economy or in competitors' actions. Such changes cannot always be anticipated, although a framework for monitoring and anticipating change is discussed in Chapter Two. In the fashion industry, which is highly competitive and is characterized by change, the role of good fortune cannot be easily discounted. The fashion industry is well known for the high failure rate of new businesses and the regular price reductions on product lines that have not sold. Such failures are in part a reflection of the enormous risk of fashion, but some are also due to the inadequate or inappropriate application of the marketing process. It is the contention of the authors that, when properly applied, marketing will help to reduce

some uncertainty in the fashion industry and cut down the number of business failures.

1.3 What is fashion marketing?

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 organization. It is a major argument of this book that fashion marketing is different from many other areas of marketing. The very nature of fashion, where change is intrinsic, gives different emphasis to marketing activities. Furthermore, the role of design in both leading and reflecting consumer demand results in a variety of approaches to fashion marketing which are explored below.

1.4 Fashion marketing in practice

Within the fashion industry there is enormous variation in the size and structure of businesses serving the needs of customers. From a small business comprising a self-employed knitwear designer to major multinational corporations such as Liz Claiborne or Zara, diversity remains a key feature. With legislative changes and expansion of the EU, the gradual removal of trade barriers on a global scale and the growth of the Internet, the fashion industry is increasingly a global business. This implies considerable variation in the cultural, social and economic perspective of the participants. The consequence of these variations in size, experience and perspective is that the practice of fashion marketing is not uniform at a national level, let alone at an international one.

At the centre of the debate over the role of fashion marketing within firms resides a tension between design and marketing imperatives. Relatively few fashion designers have had formal training in business or marketing, although fortunately this situation is changing in the EU. Similarly, the formal training of marketing personnel can often lack an appreciation of the role of design in business. Training has tended to be separate and this, when coupled with the differing approaches of the two areas, causes divergent views. Design students were traditionally taught to approach problems as though there were no constraints on time or cost so that creativity might flourish. The assumption of much of this training was that creativity flourishes when there is freedom from structural factors.

Spontaneity, eclecticism and the willingness to take risks in challenging the *status quo* are some values central to traditional design training.

Marketing training, by contrast, embraces different values. Marketers are taught to be systematic and analytical in approaching problems. The foundation of a lot of marketing involves the setting of objectives and quantifying inputs and outputs, such as advertising expenditure and market share. Success, marketing students are taught, comes from careful research and planning, not spontaneity or ignoring market realities such as competitor price levels. Owing to a lack of training, marketing personnel often fail to understand the aesthetic dimension of a design or many qualitative aspects of product development.

The above outlines concentrate on differences in perspective between marketing and design personnel but naturally there are areas where they share common values. Good designers and marketing personnel both recognize the need for thorough preparation and the exercise of professional skill, both understand the importance of communication, although with differing emphasis on the visual and process components, and both tend to be in agreement about the functional aspects of clothing, such as whether a garment is waterproof or machine washable.

Starkly put, 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 marketer and the designer. This difference in perspective engenders a range of views about what fashion marketing ought to be. Two views of fashion marketing are shown in Figure 1.2. These views can be labelled design centred and marketing centred, and are detailed below.

Sample statements	Fashion marketing is the same as promotion	Design should be based solely on marketing research
Assumption	Sell what we can make	Make what we can sell
Orientation	Design centred	Marketing centred
Alleged drawbacks	High failure rates Relies on intuition	Bland designs Stifles creativity

Figure 1.2 Two views of fashion marketing.

1.4.1 Design centred: fashion marketing as promotion

According to this view marketing is seen as synonymous with promotion. Adherents of the view state that designers are the real force, and marketers should merely help to sell ideas to the public. Translated into practice this view tends to have all marketing activity carried out by either public relations or advertising departments or agencies. Customers and potential customers are seen as people to be led or inspired by creative styling that is favourably promoted. At the extreme, it is rationalized that the only people who can appreciate creative styling, in a financial sense, are the more wealthy sections of society.

Research within such a perspective is limited to monitoring the activities of others who are thought to be at the forefront of creative change, i.e. film directors, musicians, artists, etc. Many great fashion designers subscribe to this view and have run successful businesses based upon the above assumptions. The principal weakness of this approach is that it depends ultimately on the skill and intuition of the designer in consistently meeting genuine customer needs and consequently earning profit.

1.4.2 Marketing centred: design as a research prescription

Here marketing is dominant and it regards the designer as someone who must respond to the specifications of customer requirements as established by marketing research. Detailed cost constraints may be imposed and sample garments pretested by, for example, retail selectors who may subsequently demand changes to meet their precise needs. Several major retail stores still operate systems not too far removed from this, with merchandisers and selectors exerting considerable control over the designer. The result, according to many, is a certain blandness in the design content of garments available from such retail outlets.

It is argued that marketing constraints have strangled the creative aspects of design. Taking profitability as a measure of popularity, this restrictive prescription for design seems to work for many firms. Whether popular acceptance of fashion designs equates with good design is another matter.

1.4.3 The fashion marketing concept

There is another way to view the relationship between marketing and design, and this is termed the fashion marketing concept. That good fashion design only requires sufficient promotion to succeed is a view