

A Study on the Relationship between Catwalk and Media

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<요 약>

The Modern fashion business market is getting bigger day by day all over the world, and consequently the power of the media is also escalating. The elitism, one of the very traditional images of fashion has collapsed, and on the other hand brands are ever more expanding its influence on the masses. The brand image can only be created through continuous media publicity together with a spot-on marketing strategy. Following from this, it may be argued that Catwalk in modern society has its whole purpose in displaying the images of designers and delivering them further to customers. In fashion business, the image of a designer is itself the image of the brand. And therefore Catwalk shows play very important role in brand image making as they are broadcasted all over the world.

A Catwalk show was first established with a business purpose, and it indeed served well in attracting publicity from the very initial stage. In the 60s when the ready-to-wear market was introduced, the couturiers in Paris saw their market easing off. And as a way out, they began their license business in the 70s by which the Catwalk shows became more of a marketing means than a means for sale. This change of role set the underlining purpose of modern Catwalk shows, which mainly deliver images than the actual products, with the help of the ever growing media power. And as a means of delivering images, Catwalk shows

changed from its traditional style in order to attract more media attention, namely more spectacular with more ideas. Catwalks are becoming another form of entertainment and are also seeking for more features to become a form of art.

I. Introduction

Generally in order for new designers to successfully launch their labels in today's fashion business, the followings are required; first, the recognition of their talent through publicity; second, the securing of their reputation through their relationships with big fashion companies; third, the winning of sponsorship through their reputation; and fourth, the development of various.

Since the 1980's the media has increased its influence on the fashion business, and thus it is doubtless that any elaborate debut through the media could serve as the ultimate step for any designers to promote successfully their labels.

Fortunately in the fashion business today, the institution is well systematized for designers to have fair chances to show their skills and talents. For instance, the fashion week which is held twice every year can be one of them. The major fashion week which is held in New York, Paris, Milan, and London, hosts hundreds of media representatives from all over the world, namely the press and the broadcasters who deliver the talents of every talented designer throughout the world.

Traditionally in fashion business, advertisements are used as an important means to promote the image of a brand. However, it is unlikely that any new designers could come up with enough money for any form of public advertisements. Thus, the Catwalk can be one of cost-effective means to appeal to the media.

My research puts much emphasis on two keywords; Catwalk and Media. I will study the characteristics of the Catwalk through its history as well as its relationship with the media.

II. History of catwalk

As we entered the era of mass production following the Industrial revolution and the invention of sewing machine, living mannequins became wanted by the haute couture. In 1858, Charles Fredric Worth opens his own 'maison de couture' together with his wife Marie Vernet, who was to be named the first ever fashion model. She begins to appear in public in Worth's gowns, then her husband. And

at the request of Princess Eugenie, the wife of Emperor Napoleon III, she started to give presentations in Worth's garments at court.

At these fashion shows, there were present various famous people, models and designer clothes, which can be seen in today's fashion industry. These days, a simple something can become a best-selling product if someone famous is seen wearing it. And likewise, Worth also won his reputation by that one deal with the Imperial court.

It seems that today's fashion collection staged twice every year was also influenced by Worth, who held two collections every year in his studio.¹⁾ What is more, Worth encouraged his wife Marie to go to public gatherings such as horse racing events dressed in his gowns, which doubtlessly helped secure his reputation as a designer. It is interesting to note how Worth was able to see the importance of advertising, as well as every other means to win publicity.

In the early years of the 20th century, fashion shows become regarded as a social event.²⁾ This, it seems, was due to the general increase in wealth and rise in social standards, which attracted more interest in beauty and entertainment. What is more, through fashion magazines such as *L'illustration des Modes* and *La Gazette du Bon Ton*, which provide various fashion illustrations, some garments became ready-to-wear.

One of the distinctive features of this particular period is the advent of fashion shows as a form of entertainment. According to Quick³⁾ "for high society women and the aspirant alike fashion show became a big social event. They were held in salons of couturiers, at sporting events and in department stores where the new middle classes were able to view cheaper interpretations of Paris couture." This is to say, fashion shows not only acted as salon shows whereby only distinguished guests were invited, but now it also came to act as an entertainment show for mass audience.

In London, Lucile, a dress-maker, moved her studio to 23 Hanover Square in 1901, and her first show there was far from an average salon show, but rather a theatrical one; "slowly the idea of a mannequin parade, which would be as entertaining to watch as a play, took shape in my mind. I would have glorious, goodness-like girls, who walk to and fro dressed in my models, display them to the best advantage to an audience of admiring women"⁴⁾ And for her first collection which entitled -'Gown of Emotion' she sent out invitation 'on dainty little cards, keeping the illusion that I was inviting my friends to some afternoon party rather than to place of business'⁵⁾ Her show was accompanied with a

1) Evans, C., *The enchanted Spectacle. Fashion Theory*, Volume 5, Issue 3. London; Berg, 2001, p274.

2) Quick, h., *Catwalking*. London; Hamlyn, 1997, P27.

3) *ibid.*, P27.

4) Evans, C., *The enchanted Spectacle*, p274.

5) Kaplan, J. and Stowell. S., *Theatre and Fashion*. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1994, p68-69.

full orchestra and tea, and the guests included Princess Alice, Ellen Terry, Lily Langtree, the Duchess of Westminster and Margot Asquith. Lucile's show in the early 20th century in London had every element of what today's fashion shows desire; the celebrities, well-trained models, well-organized venue, after show party, music, tickets, as well as newspaper coverage of the show.

Soon fashion shows became more organized. The shows were staged in the afternoon, which had never before been fixed, and big fashion houses became the venue for the show. And the promotional tour which many modern designers put on today began around this period. In August 1911, Poiret went on a business promotional tour which lasted 6 weeks. Such fashion shows often sold tickets for those interested, which is another evidence that displays an entertainment side of the fashion show.

It seems that the style of today's fashion shows was first marked by the Parquin show which was staged in London in 1913. She showed her tango dress on mannequins at the Palace Theatre London. In a 'tango tea' her mannequins tangoed while an orchestra played and clients took tea. This gave couturiers the opportunity to present their models in motion as the mannequins moved to the music, a performance derided by many contemporaries.

In 1920's fashion shows became more systematic and larger in scale. Jean Patou, aiming at the fashion market in the United States, selected six American models through auditions there. He also differentiated his shows for the press and buyers on one hand, and the public on the other.⁶⁾

In the 30's, there appeared the first collection with themes. Schiaparelli, for example, between 1936 and 1939, staged his shows with spectacular parades each involving music, light, dance and stunts.

After the war, Christian Dior introduced a new style of presenting fashion with New Look. Bettina Ballard, the editor of Vogue, described the Dior's first fashion show as the following;

"I was conscious of an electric tension that I had never before felt in the couture. Suddenly all the confusion subsided, everyone was seated, and there was a moment of hush that made my skin prickle. The first girl came out, stepping fast, switching with a provocative swing movement, whirling in the close-packed room, knocking over ashtrays with the strong flair of her pleated skirt and bringing everyone to the edges of their seats. After a few more costumes had passed, all at the same exiting tempo, the audience knew that Dior had created a new look. We were witnesses to a revolution in fashion and to a revolution in showing fashions as well."⁷⁾

This revolution in showing fashion depended on the speed and style of the model's presentation, rather than the theatrical show that had typified the fashion shows of early 20th century. Such phenomenon owes much to the fact that as international fashion markets became bigger, especially in

6) Evans, C., The enchanted Spectacle, p286.

7) Bettina Ballard, quoted in Evans, C., The enchanted Spectacle, p291.

the United States, designers realized that publicity and the press were more important than their private customers. The front rows of all the shows were more often than not filled with the fashion press from America.

However, from 1950s to mid-60s, there continued visual shows in which only garments were emphasized. The models, without any expression, had to walk around the audience in total silence, with the garment number held in their hands. The spectacular shows of the early 20th century had disappeared and were replaced with simple visual shows performed only for the press, buyers, and a few other selected clients. The show models no longer needed to be beautiful. Instead what was required from them was lean trim figures and graceful walking. In the prior era, the show girls were required to be beautiful in order to act as a symbol of society, however, this requirement was now fulfilled instead by photographic models with big eyes, good bone structures, and translucent skin tone.⁸⁾

In 1955, Mary Quant opened her shop Bazaar in London. Her first fashion show was held in the Palace Hotel in St. Movitz, and it was different from the typical haute couture shows, as she employed active movements of the models, fast walking, and jazz music.

In 1960's, the show of Andre Courrges's space-age collection marked a turning point. Courrges got rid of all the silence and solemnity which had engaged past couturier shows, and instead employed light and loud spirit. The shows staged by the likes of Mary Quant and Courrges were the first ever shows in which the then popular 'pop-culture' was fused with the haute couture shows.

Such development in fashion shows not only gave rise to designer ready-to-wear, but also influenced the haute couture shows. The ready-to-wear shows became a one-off event for the press and buyers rather than for the private customers. And all the major Paris's couturiers started focusing on their license developing, as they lost a part of their clients to ready-to-wear. And as a result of such license developing and the rise of ready-to-wear, the couturier's shows became a means of marketing rather than a sales tool, which consequently generated an image of luxury and exclusivity.

In the 1970's, fashion models became stars, as fashion shows turned into a show business. The fashion models became another medium to attract more attention from the press and buyers. Choreographers and show directors were employed to stage the shows and the models danced and performed as pop music was blasted from the stereo sparkles.

Therefore, fashion shows once again became a spectacle. There almost seemed to be a return of the 1930s spectacular shows. In 1973, Kenzo, entitled 'cover girl', made the show four times bigger than the traditional salon show. "Kenzo's show was immensely well received by its audience; one of its strengths was that for the first time ready-to-wear had its own form of show, a popular fashion

8) Quick, h., *Catwalking* p85.

statement, rather than mimicking haute couture show.”⁹⁾

In the 80's fashion shows became bigger and more spectacular. In 1984, Thierry Mugler¹⁰⁾ began staging a ‘show’ for the audience. His 50 models performed a ‘show’ in front of 6000 audiences, half of them who bought their tickets from open markets. It marked the beginning of the fashion show as mass entertainment.¹¹⁾

New and different styles of fashion shows which started in the 60's by Mary Quant no longer stage only the garments of designers, but also their mind, image, as well as their identity. And such characteristics became more and more important as the ready-to-wear began to be broadcasted on TV throughout the world since the mid-80's. Therefore, It seems that the most important aspects of fashion shows today are publicity and promotion.

III. Media and Catwalk

In 1960's when the establishment of ready-to-wear clothes lost them a great number of customers, the Paris haute couturiers began license business. Their license business changed the purpose of fashion shows to a means of image making marketing. And together with advent of supermodels in the 1980's, the fashion shows became more elaborate and spectacular which helped secure the very purpose of the shows. And the general supply of televisions in the 80's allowed the fashion shows to be brought to the homes of ordinary people.

Moreover, the photographs of the Catwalk began to appear in the front pages of newspapers all around the world, as fashion became a form of entertainment. All the designers with their big names were able to make a big profit by their license business, such as perfumes, sunglasses and house wears with their labels on. The fashion shows of the renowned designers became more and more elaborate visually and in every other way. That is to say, the clothes shown on their fashion shows become more than just clothes. They came to symbolize the identity and image of the brand, if not the designer himself/herself.

Today, there are 850 journalists and 120 radio stations and TV stations from all over the world visiting Paris and Milan every year. They deliver the new or simply reinforced images of designers to

9) Evans, C., *The enchanted Spectacle*, p300.

10) Thierry Mugler joined Corp de Ballet at Opera du Rhin at the age of 14. And such experience may have affected him to create his shows into spectacular performances. Baudot, F., *Thierry Mugler*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1998, p4.

11) *ibid.*, p301.

their readers and viewers all around the world. "Fashion shows today are staged for publicity and in their hustle for editorial and television coverage."¹²⁾ This suggests that designers regard Catwalk as a show for their buyers and the press, and not for their customers.

Today, the fashion business does not take place in the fashion shows. The buyers normally prefer to choose items of clothes in show rooms instead. And several weeks prior to the fashion show, the seasonal business is already decided and done. Therefore, fashion shows now only exist for a small part of buyers and the press who are always in search of something new and extravagant. Then, a question arises as to what the press is looking for in a fashion show. According to Angela McRobie, fashion journalism is divided into the following five areas; "first, the designer or company profile or interview; second, the reports from the collection; third, the fashion spread or 'centre fold' fourth, the consumer-oriented feature; and fifth, the single item feature."¹³⁾

Fashion editors also look for the following things in fashion shows. They focus much on 'confirming' the colour, style and items which would be popular in the next season. In terms of fashion trend, the fashion shows are nothing more than a place for confirmation. Glenda Baily, the editor of Marie Claire, in her interview with McRobie said that, "we sit round after the collections, with the team, and have ideas session. We have already done our predictions and our own forecasting. That's where the training comes in. We have this sense of what the designer are going to be doing and usually we're right."¹⁴⁾ This is to say that most fashion editors already know the very colour, styles and items which will be the trend in the next season through their own researches or other routes. Therefore, designers can only try to come up with something unpredictable, if not provocative means to stage their so-called 'new' styles for the next season.

The fashion week in Paris and Milan held twice every year lasts for about 10 days, and each one attracts more than 100 designers. And in London, more than 50 designers take part in the fashion week which lasts for 5 days. There are more than 10 catwalk shows per day, and every designer must do whatever extraordinary he or she could to attract interest from the press.

According to Annie Gurton, "Journalists want newsworthy stories which engage the reader and make them want to read to read more. Journalists are looking for information, either as the hook for a story or to flesh out a story."¹⁵⁾ This literally means that what the press wants from the catwalk is something which their readers would want to read about. Then, what could possibly attract the attention

12) Frey, N., Mass media and the runway presentation, Giannino Malossi(ed.), *The style Engine*, New York; Monacelli Press, 1996, p30.

13) McRobbie, A., *British Fashion Design; Rag Trade or Industry*, London; Routledge, 1998, p166.

14) *ibid.*, p168

15) Gurton, A., *Press Here!* Hertfordshire; Prentice Hall, 1998, p5.

of the ordinary people? The answer to this question could be found in Angela McRobbie who said that, “fashion design is a kind of spectacle, a form of entertainment which connects with the world of pop music, show business and celebrity culture and which keeps the public interest in fashion live.”¹⁶⁾

One of the ‘newsworthy’ stories Catwalk shows can offer the press is the celebrities. They attend the catwalk shows either as audience or as models. Rocamora once said in his article that, “the article shifts from talking about the clothes to talking about the celebrities, and it is the naming of star that readers the event worthy of interest.”¹⁷⁾ The celebrities and designers have kept a close relationship throughout many years, and this has become a well-known factor due to their many media coverage. It always appeals to the readers to find out what famous people wear which famous designer clothing, and who designs what for whom. The celebrities and their fashion life may seem more real and interesting. “Music, cinema, and fashion become a single show where celebrities are the maker of a popular entertainment.”¹⁸⁾ An article on a celebrity could serve both as an entertainment for the mass and as a means to satisfy the celebrity culture.

Another way to satisfy Catwalk as a show entertainment is by a story. Today’s Catwalk has its emphasis not on the clothes but on the show itself. The clothes are now nothing more than a prop which help deliver the image of the show. It is also impossible to attract media attention simply by the clothes. Designers such as Jean-Paul Gaultier, Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen and Hussein Chalayan appeal to the media through the events in the show and new ideas. They have all managed to develop in their own ways the theatrical side of the fashion show which had been one of its original traits.

Alexander McQueen and Hussein Chalayan both attracted the media attention in a slightly different way. The basic concept underlying their shows is provocation. Alexander McQueen first won the media attention in his 1995 fashion show with his bottomless trousers, which were far from fashionable. Hussein Chalayan is similar to McQueen in that his shows are also far from being fashionable. According to Kahn, “radical catwalk then is an event that not only seeks to attract the attention of the media, but which is in itself reflective, if not critical, of the mechanisms it utilizes.”¹⁹⁾ That is to say, their Catwalk can stand and exist on its own, independently from the fashion system, the media and branding namely, as if it was a piece of art. The Catwalks of Avant-garde designers engage much on the sensitive social issues of the time.

16) McRobbie, A., *British Fashion Design*, p69.

17) Rocamora, A., High Fashion and Pop Fashion: The symbolic production of fashion in *Le Monde* and *The Guardian*, *Fashion Theory*, Volume 5, Issue 2. London: Berg, 2001, p130.

18) McRobbie, A., *British Fashion Design*, p70.

19) Khan, N., Catwalk Politics, in Bruzzi, S. and Gibson, P., (ed.), *Fashion Cultures Theories, Explorations and Analysis*. London: Routledge, 2000, p117.

According to Kahn, “the popular response to catwalk shows that play with socially sensitive issues such as the Holocaust is to accuse designer and fashion house of sensationalism.”²⁰⁾ It seems that the Avant-garde designers attract the media attention by taking advantage of such sensationalism. May be their shows are actually in the core of the fashion system even if it does not appear to be so. There are not, or at least should not be any differences between the sensation caused by size, the sensation caused by products, or even sensation caused by political or social issues. They all attract the media attention, which is for sure. Catwalk shows are pure business. According to Frey, “contemporary criterion for a fashion show’s success is just how close it can get to a seamless sales pitch.”²¹⁾ Whether or not those Avant-garde designers had purposely try to cause some sensation for publicity, as long as they live in the world of fashion business, everything they do will be regarded as a business tact.

IV. Conclusion

This study is mainly focused on the history of Catwalk and its relationship with the media.

Modern fashion business market is getting bigger day by day all over the world, and consequently the power of the media is also escalating. The elitism, one of the very traditional images of fashion has collapsed, and on the other hand a brand is ever more expanding its influence on the masses. A brand is no longer just a pronoun representing its products. It carries the life style, taste, and ideologies of society it belongs to. This is to say that a brand’s success does not only rely on its product. The brand image can only be created through continuous media publicity together with a spot-on marketing strategy. Following from this, it may be argued that Catwalk in modern society has its whole purpose in displaying the images of designers and delivering them further to customers. In fashion business, the image of a designer is itself the image of the brand. And therefore Catwalk shows play very important role in brand image making as they are broadcasted all over the world.

A Catwalk show was first established with a business purpose, and it indeed served well in attracting publicity from the very initial stage. In the 60s when the ready-to-wear market was introduced, the couturiers in Paris saw their market easing off. And as a way out, they began their license business in the 70s by which the Catwalk shows became more of a marketing means than a means for sale. This change of role set the underlining purpose of modern Catwalk shows, which mainly deliver images than

20) Khan, N., Catwalk Politics, p118.

21) Frey, N., Mass media and the runway presentation, p30.

the actual products, with the help of the ever growing media power. And as a means of delivering images, Catwalk shows changed from its traditional style in order to attract more media attention, namely more spectacular with more ideas. Catwalks are becoming another form of entertainment and are also seeking for more features to become a form of art.

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캐워크와 미디어의 관계에 대한 연구

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현대 패션비즈니스는 그 시장을 전 세계로 넓혀가고 있으며 미디어의 영향력은 더욱더 증가하고 있다. 전통적 패션의 이미지의 하나인 귀족주의는 붕괴되었으며, 그 대신 일반대중에 대한 브랜드의 영향력은 늘어만 가고 있다. 브랜드의 성공은 제품의 성공적인 제작으로만 이루어 질수 없다. 정확한 마케팅 방법과 함께 미디어를 통한 지속적인 홍보가 있을 때 브랜드 이미지는 형성되고 브랜드 이미지는 브랜드의 성공을 가지고 올수 있을 것이다. 이러한 의미에서 현대 사회의 캐워크는 디자이너의 이미지를 보여주고 소비자에게 전달하는데 그 목적이 있다고 할 수 있을 것이다. 패션 비즈니스에서 디자이너의 이미지는 곧 브랜드의 이미지 이므로 전 세계 미디어를 통해 소개 되는 캐워크는 브랜드 이미지 형성에서 중요한 역할을 차지할 수 있다.

캐워크는 초기 단계부터 적극적인 홍보 역할을 수행하는 비즈니스의 목적으로 시작되었다. 1960년대 패션 비즈니스에서 기성복 사업의 본격화가 시작된 이후 파리 의 전통적 패션하우스의 시장이 감소되기 시작했다. 1970년대, 파리 패션하우스들에 의한 라이선스 사업의 시작으로 캐워크는 판매의 수단보다 마케팅 도구로서의 역할이 증가 되었다. 이러한 역할의 변화는 미디어의 발전에 힘입어 상품보다 이미지를 전달하는 현대 캐워크의 기본 성격을 규정하게 되는 계기가 되었다. 이미지 전달방법으로서의 캐워크가 발달함에 따라 전통적인 스타일의 캐워크와는 많이 다른 캐워크가 미디어의 주목을 받게 되었다. 스펙타클과 아이디어 캐워크가 그것이다. 캐워크는 대중예술의 모습을 닮아가고 있으며 보다 예술적 면모를 띄게 되었다.

Key words: catwalk, media, Fashion business.