

Digital Fashion Communication

Popular Culture

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Digital Fashion Communication

An (Inter)cultural Perspective

By

Alice Noris
Lorenzo Cantoni



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Digital Fashion Communication

An (Inter)cultural Perspective

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Abstract

Fashion is an integral part of popular culture, closely intertwined with tales, magazines, photography, cinema, television, music and sport ... up to the emergence of dedicated exhibitions and museums. Fashion is undergoing a major digital transformation: garments and apparels are presented and sold online, and fashion trends and styles are launched, discussed and negotiated mainly in the digital arena. While going well beyond national and linguistic borders, digital fashion communication requires further cultural sensitivity: otherwise, it might ignite intercultural misunderstandings and communication crises. The recent transformation of fashion from being a Cinderella to becoming a major cultural attractor and academic research subject is presented, as well as the implications of its digital transformation. Through several cases, intercultural communication crises are documented and strategies are provided to interpret and prevent them.

Keywords

digital fashion – digital fashion communication – fashion – fashion communication – fashion studies – intercultural communication – intercultural communication crises – popular culture

Introduction

It did not happen by chance that the seeds of popular culture and the ones of fashion, as we know it today, were both planted in the 19th century, when the industrial revolution met a swarm of literary and artistic currents such as the romantic opera, dime novels, early newspaper cartoon strips, Gothic literature,

which spread as mass culture trends across the globe (Danesi, 2019; Godley, 1997). Since then, popular culture and fashion have become part of a person's daily life, contributing to the establishment of new trends, forms of art, movements, and vogues: the two fields have closely intertwined and influenced each other and their surrounding environment.

The worlds of fashion and popular culture are closer than one might imagine, and by converging over decades have contributed to the spread of works and values in many different artistic and creative areas.

Popular culture and fashion address very different and heterogeneous audiences, changing and evolving from generation to generation, while maintaining a sense of continuity and belonging with respect to their previous styles and forms. Fashion in popular culture can be perceived as an instrument to understand our society, its symbols, values, and technological patterns (Cunningham & Lab, 1991; Danesi, 2019).

Although both fashion and popular culture have been characterized over the years by a constant need for change and replacement, there is clear evidence of their enduring value: examples include tales, films and TV series that have become iconic, or music pieces that have become the soundtrack of events experienced by entire generations. Clothes and accessories that have made history becoming true cultural symbols and identifiers not only of specific groups or minorities but at all levels of society.

Fashion acts as a popular culture barometer, reflecting individuals' cultural identities, values, symbols, as well as societal elements related to art, status and technologies (Cunningham & Lab, 1991; Hancock, 2019). Moreover, both have spread offline through the press, initially thanks to magazines and newspapers, and then thanks to the advent of cinema, radio and television. Both have been also able to ride the global wave of electronic communication technologies such as the web and social media, which have established themselves as the main channels for connecting the different actors. Through online media, the two fields have started to shape trends in modern societies (Cantoni et al., 2020; Danesi, 2019).

To study both fashion and popular culture, one needs to take an interdisciplinary approach. In order to explore their connections, in the context of digital communication, this book will bring you along an intriguing route.

In Part 1, it will explore the very meaning of fashion, and its inner connection with culture(s). Then, it will follow its liaisons with popular culture when it comes to tales, magazines, photography, cinema, television, music, sport ... Such itinerary has been accompanied by a growing importance and role recognized to fashion as part of culture. While clothes and fashion-related items have been usually considered as the Cinderella of museums' collections and

exhibitions, in recent years they have captivated a global attention and several museums fully dedicated to this field have opened their doors.

In Part 2, fashion will be approached as a form of communication itself, deeply transformed by digital media. Two tales are proposed, one showing how a fashion event has been at the very origin of a major improvement of the Google search engine, leading to the birth of its image search, the other one addressing the changes in fashion-related practices when it comes to selling and buying clothes. Information and transactions, thanks to digital media, are able to cross physical borders, creating a global 24/7 market – both an economic market as well as a symbolic one, where garments are sold and bought, while fashion trends and lifestyles are negotiated and launched. However, borders do exist beyond the physical ones. Languages and cultures are still there even in such a globalized (info)market. Without a carefully designed intercultural communication, crises are likely to happen, signaling different knowledge backgrounds and values. A major section of this second Part presents several (inter)cultural crises, which recently happened in the world of digital fashion communication. Based on them, a framework is provided, able to interpret such crises and to suggest solution paths. The very fact that digital fashion communication is becoming a major attractor for (inter)cultural debates and a field for related battles, as we will see then, is itself evidence to the importance of fashion within popular culture.

At the end of the book, we won't be able to say, as in many tales, that both – fashion and (popular) culture – *lived happily ever after*. However, we are sure that they will live together, and we were so happy to learn about their stories ... We very much hope that you will have a similar experience!

1 Fashion and (Popular) Culture

In the first section of Part 1, fashion will be introduced, with its complexity, richness, and ill-defined borders. Its close relationship with human cultures will be then presented, stressing its role as a major component of popular culture. In the following section, some specific areas will be explored, namely popular tales, magazines, photography, cinema, television, music, and sport, showing their connections with fashion. In the last section, the emerging role of fashion within the museum world is explored, both when it comes to general museums hosting fashion exhibitions, as well as when it comes to museums fully dedicated to fashion. Digital collections and exhibitions will be then presented before moving to the next Part, where digital fashion communication will move to the forefront.

1.1 *Fashion, a First Approach*

First of all, and before approaching the main relationships between fashion and (popular) culture, let's ask ourselves *what is fashion?*

1.1.1 Fashion, a Fascinating History

The English word “fashion”, which has become so successful and international, comes from the French term “façon”, which means the way of doing something. It is rooted, in turn, in the Latin language, linked with the verb “facere”: to do/make. In the French language, fashion is said “mode”: with a meaning very similar to “façon”, emphasizing a prescriptive point of view: the right way to do something. It originates from Latin as well: from “modus” meaning the right way or quantity, from which the famous proverb: “Est modus in rebus”, “There is a proper measure in things”. A model is thus a prototype, pattern, exemplar of something. For instance, of human beauty, like in fashion models ... “A la mode de Paris” means “The way Parisians do it”: it suggests that their style and taste should be a model for others to follow (Kurkdjian, 2021). Such normativity can be found, for instance in “Italians do it better”, a phrase popularized by the T-shirt worn by Madonna in her video of “Papa Don't Preach” 1986 song (Madonna, 2011). As we shall see later on, the connection between pop music and fashion, which has made Madonna one of the most popular fashion icons in recent decades, has to be further explored.

Such fashion/mode might encompass several fields. If we start with clothing and apparel, its top-of-mind reference meaning, we might go closer to the human body, to include body shape and cosmetics, or farer from it, to include home décor and car interior, up to lifestyles and manners (Fig. 1).

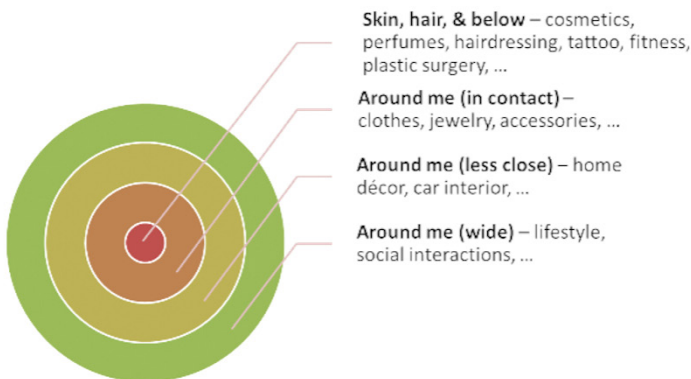


FIGURE 1 Different layers of fashion
FROM AUTHORS

Such linguistic origins help to understand why the definition of fashion is so fluid and there is no consensus among scholars and practitioners on it. Skov & Melchior (2010) consider fashion as a word providing two different meanings – clothing, and something that is popular, trendy and usually fugacious. Following the studies of Craik (1993), Lennon et al. (2014) depict fashion as “the way we wear our clothes, adorn our bodies, and train our bodies to move to highlight the relationships between bodies and their sociocultural context” (p. 170).

Simmenauer (n.d.) defines fashion according to three different meanings. Fashion (i) in relation with the concept of “working in fashion” within the textile industry; (ii) as a specific and particular clothing style during a time or period; and (iii) with reference to a prevailing lifestyle during a particular time, as for example when one says that “Chihuahuas are out of fashion”. The third definition is an enlargement of the second one, considering not only clothes but any kind of element belonging to the above-sketched layers.

While clothing has accompanied human beings from their very origins, the story of “fashion” we are going to explore here is particularly linked to the twentieth century. In fact, the term “fashion” has been quite stable in its presence in the English language, however, as presented in Fig. 2, the relative frequency within English books of the following associated terms: “fashion icon”, “fashion magazine”, “fashion model”, “fashion trend” has seen a major and constant growth since the second half of last century.

1.1.2 “We Wear Culture”

Whichever definition of fashion one might prefer, it is clear that such phenomenon is closely related with human life and (popular) culture, as it is suggested by the very title *We Wear Culture* of a section of *Google Arts & Culture*, one of the most important online initiatives to document fashion history (*Google Arts & Culture*, n.d.).

But what is culture? We might approach again this issue from a linguistic point of view. The word comes from the ancient Latin verb “colo”, which meant “to care” or “to look after”. In Latin, such verb could be applied to three main areas. The first one deals with the way a community looks after its physical environment – “agriculture”: from “colo” and “agros” (fields). The second level has to do with the way human beings cultivate themselves and the new generations: it is the most common meaning of “culture”, which refers to education, literature, art, architecture, music, theatre, and so on – hence locutions like, e.g., “a highly cultivated person”. The third level has to do with the way we articulate our relationship with God: “cult”.



FIGURE 2 Relative frequency within English books of the following associated terms: “fashion icon”, “fashion magazine”, “fashion model”, “fashion trend”, in the period 1890–2019
 FROM BOOKS.GOOGLE.COM/NGRAM, DOWNLOADED JULY 29TH, 2022

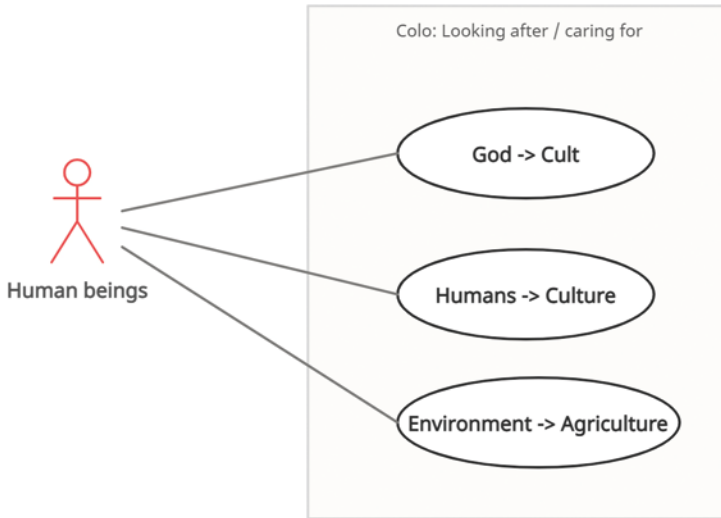


FIGURE 3 Three layers of culture
ADAPTED FROM DE ASCANIIS & CANTONI (2022: 4)

Fashion, if seen through such cultural lenses, encompasses all three levels (Kalbaska et al., 2018b): clothes and other items are produced from natural or artificial materials (*agriculture*), they are shaped according to social practices (*culture*), and are particularly elaborated when it comes to major life events and sacred rituals (e.g., weddings, funerals, religious ceremonies, etc.: *cult*). Culture and cult do refer also to all manners and ways of life at large, providing a framework according to which practices, including those referring to clothing, are considered appropriate or not. Figure 3 provides a schematic view of this.

Two additional words can help us better understanding the close relationships between culture and fashion – “habit” and “investiture”. The first one, which comes from the Latin verb “habeo” (“to have”), means a stable property, something we are used to: be it a virtue: “habit” or “abitudine”, or a cloth: “habit” again, in Italian: “abito”, or a living place: in Italian: “abitazione” (“home”). The second one, “investiture”, comes from Latin (and English) “vest”, and indicates the act through which someone receives the formal clothes linked to a specific social function. Similarly, candidates are named after the Latin practice according to which people nominated for political elections were dressing in white (“candidus”). This dimension stresses the close relationship between the way we dress and specific social roles, which might be explicitly defined within codes of uniforms (e.g., in the military, healthcare or ecclesiastical domains), or

less explicitly by common social practices and etiquettes (Gaulme & Gaulme, 2012; Paternoster & Saltamacchia, 2018).

Beside expressing social status or role, fashion is also used by people to express social meanings about sexuality, gender and identity: the sense of belonging to what is perceived as masculine or feminine is another way to give further significance to what humans decide to wear (Gaulme & Gaulme, 2012; Reddy-Best & Pedersen, 2015).

Fashion, according to Hancock et al. (2013) can be considered as a phenomenon that represents diversity across cultures and depends on time and place variables, a phenomenon that plays a major role when it comes to construct material identity and to shape personal and social spaces.

All of us were born unclad and dress (somehow) up for three main reasons – protection, modesty, and adornment/expression. Fashion, in fact, impacts people's everyday life and lifestyle not only absolving functional necessities and the need to protect intimacy, it helps individuals to communicate who they are and who they would like to be. Human beings cover themselves to integrate and be part of a determined group and to be accepted by the society or by a specific (sub)culture (Hancock et al., 2013; Kalbaska et al., 2018b). Moreover: we cover ourselves in order to unveil that we are much more than our body; the materiality of clothes displays the immaterial/spiritual side of us.

1.1.3 A Franciscan Story on Clothed and Naked Body

In fact, also a naked body is seen and interpreted in reference to a (missing) cloth, as suggested by Lars Svendsen in his *Fashion: A Philosophy* (2006). An image can help understanding this, within the complex fabric of cultural layers: it is a medieval fresco by Giotto di Bondone (1267–1337) (or his atelier), depicting the moment in which St. Francis (1181/2–1226) renounces all worldly goods and gives back even his clothes to his father in order to start a life in full poverty (Fig. 4).

According to the *Legenda maior*, when the young Francis from Assisi decided to convert himself and follow Christ in poverty, he found a strong opposition from his father, a rich silk merchant, who might have named his son Francis in order to underline his relationships with the French textile production.

In order to be freed, Francis meets his father in public and gives him back all his clothes. Hereafter the story as recalled by his biographer Bonaventure:

The true lover of poverty showed himself eager to comply and went before the bishop without delaying or hesitating. He did not wait for any words nor did he speak any, but immediately took off his clothes and gave them back to his father. Then it was discovered that the man of God



FIGURE 4
Giotto di Bondone, *Renunciation of Worldly Goods*, fresco (1295), 230 × 270 cm, Basilica of San Francesco d'Assisi (Italy)
Source: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giotto_di_Bondone_-_Legend_of_St_Francis_-_5._Renunciation_of_Wordly_Goods_-_WGA09123.jpg

had a hair shirt next to his skin under his fine clothes. Moreover, drunk with remarkable fervor, he even took off his trousers, and was completely stripped naked before everyone. He said to his father: 'Until now I have called you father here on earth, but now I can say without reservation, *Our Father who art in heaven* since I have placed all my treasure and all my hope in him.' The bishop, recognizing and admiring such intense fervor in the man of God, immediately stood up and in tears drew him into his arms, covering him with the mantle that he was wearing. Like the pious and good man that he was, he bade his servants give him something to cover his body. They brought him a poor, cheap cloak of a farmer who worked for the bishop, which he accepted gratefully and, with his own hand, marked a cross on it with a piece of chalk, thus designating it as the covering of a crucified and half-naked poor man.

BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO, *Legenda maior*, cap. 2¹

In this short excerpt, and in its artistic representation by Giotto, several elements do appear: the link between cloth(ing) practices, social relations and *status*, the fact that clothes might (un)veil one's deep beliefs and ethos, how

1 English translation from: franciscantradition.org/francis-of-assisi-early-documents/the-founder/the-legends-and-sermons-about-saint-francis-by-bonaventure-of-bagnoregio/the-major-legend-of-saint-francis/the-life-of-blessed-francis/1627-fa-ed-2-page-538.

getting dressed, undressed, and re-dressed might signify way more than just wrapping an own body in different fabrics.

Getting fully naked for Francis, a man who was for sure expert in the textile and clothing industry, stresses even further his decision to change his life, and to socially and publicly denounce the current “state of fashion” in which he had lived till that moment.

Medieval frescoes in a church were designed to communicate directly to all population, with no distinction of social status; they were definitely part of popular culture. We will see a similar criticism, even if conducted from a very different viewpoint, later on, while analyzing the final scene of Altman’s movie *Prêt-à-Porter (Ready to wear)*.

1.1.4 Towards Popular Culture

When it comes to the connection with a specific area of cultural studies – popular culture – fashion, from one side, plays an active role in contributing to model the outside world, shaping and integrating itself in fields such as art, culture, music, cinema, sport, media, tourism and business, creating a symbiosis with the definition of pop culture itself. On the other side, it is thanks to the features of adaptability and creativity that pop culture settled the ideal place for such a symbiosis with the fashion world: what is popular, in fact, influences all aspects of the existence, including what people wear.

Elements of pop culture such as films, television, music etc., act as important players in moving fashion to become more “populist, popular and public” (Danesi, 2019). The merging of culture, business and technology settled a fertile ground to the development of popular trends, laying the foundation for a more pop fashion.

In the following sections, we will go along two different paths. The first one moves from relevant elements of popular culture, outlining the presence and role of fashion there. Namely tales, magazines, photography, cinema, television, music, sport, and a few other interplays will be approached.

The second path will focus on fashion exhibitions and on dedicated fashion museums: the great interest and large publics they are able to attract nowadays, bear a clear testimony to the role of fashion within (popular) culture.

1.2 *Popular Culture and Fashion*

Let us now explore the first path, meeting tales, magazines, photography, cinema, television, music, sport and a few other fields. All of them have in common that they nurture (fashion) imaginaries, and provide a domain within which personal and social goals are presented and negotiated. In particular, we will find there (aspirational) models, benchmark of success, (proto)types

for self-identification. The above-presented layers of “habit” – ranging from the body itself up to lifestyles – are on the stage, from moral ideals and negative examples in tales, to beauty models, idealized characters and typified stories in photography, cinema, TV and sport. Even if not visible in itself, music provides the soundscape where bodies, clothes and other fashion-related items do move and get alive. It’s not by chance that in the prototypical fairy tale of Cinderella clothes and shoes are first of all enacted in a dancing context, where humans can find harmony within themselves, with others, and with their environment.

While presenting each domain, starting from photography, we will briefly address its current digital transformation, so to explore it at two main levels: production/editing and distribution/fruition.

1.2.1 Tales

Fairytales within the context of pop-culture are among the areas that can be more easily connected to fashion (Cantoni, *forth.*). A fairy tale that should be mentioned due to its strong relation with clothing and the dress sense is Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Emperor’s New Clothes* (Andersen, 1998). The tale tells the story of two cunning tailors, who were able to take advantage of the emperor’s narcissism, by convincing him that they were able to sew a suit that could be seen only by smart and intelligent people. The emperor’s narcissism prevents him from understanding that the dressmakers were only simulating their work, and they were not making any special suit. Furthermore, the vanity of owning and showing such a unique piece leads the man to present himself in front of his subjects, who were as well pretending to see the dress in order not to reveal their stupidity to others. The farce continues until, in the end, an innocent child, who had no interest in lying to the emperor exclaims in front of him and the crowd that the emperor had no clothes! The tale illustrates, on one side, the power that clothes have in society, and, on the other, the paradox of fashion and the related communicative dimension, which creates a tension between who people really are and who they might pretend to be.

Another tale to mention in order to present the relationship between fashion and pop culture is *Cinderella*, which was written – among others – by Grimm brothers (Grimm et al., 1978). Cinderella is a little girl who was happily living with her family, until her mother dies. The father remarries another lady, who had two daughters; due to her father’s constant absences, the three women turned Cinderella into their servant because they were jealous of her inner and outer beauty.

Meanwhile, the king of the reign where the girl was living organized a three days ball to help his son to find a suitable bride, and to do so, he invited to

the event every eligible girl, so that his son would have been able to find his twin soul. Cinderella's stepsisters decided to go to the event, Cinderella instead couldn't go, also because she had no suitable dress to go to the ball. However, when she went to her mother's grave, a bird appeared offering her, for each day of the ball, a different beautiful dress. The first and the second day Cinderella headed off to the ball and the prince had eyes only for her. At the end of the evenings, she managed to return home never letting the prince and the guests know her actual identity.

On the third evening, Cinderella with an even more beautiful dress, once again danced with the prince, who later asked her to bring her home, but in order not to be recognized Cinderella flew down the stairs losing one of her golden slippers that remained in prince's hands. The man declared that he would have only married the girl, whose shoe belonged to, and started a house-to-house search. Cinderella's stepsisters had the chance to try on the shoe with no results, the prince then asked Cinderella's father, if he had another daughter, but he replied that there was only Cinderella, who would have never been able to marry a prince. But the prince insisted Cinderella be given the opportunity to try the shoe, which, in fact, perfectly fitted her foot, and she and the prince became betrothed.

In this case, Cinderella can be considered as an inside beauty in search of the right outside representation. In fact, at home she was sleeping in the ashes and she got used to do very poor activities and it was only during the ball, thanks to the beautiful dresses donated by the bird, that she could express herself in all her beauty. The tale has also to do with modesty and function: Cinderella due to her condition was dressing herself in a functional and modest way. Pieces of clothing in the tale play very important roles: shoes for example, which have been represented in different ways according to the tale's versions, crystal shoes for Disney and golden slippers for Grimm brothers, are the keystone that allow the prince to find his beloved.

Cinderella's fairy tale has inspired dozens of movies as well as many celebrities' looks. Back at the 2010 Met Gala, Zac Posen dressed the supermodel Doutzen Kroes in a regal, tulle confection dress with delicate sleeves; in 2017 the Bollywood star Aishwarya Rai Bachchan went princess-inspired at Cannes, by wearing a full-skirted Michael Cinco ball gown; in 2019 Zendaya took Cinderella's tale to the next level by bringing along her fairy Godmother (her stylist Law Roach) and by wearing her fairytale inspired-gown at the Met Gala (Segal, 2019).

The topic of how fashion has been inspired by fairy tales has been also deeply treated by authors such as Do Rozario (2018) and Hill (2016).

1.2.2 Magazines

Fashion magazines were born in France, as many other satellites of the fashion cosmos. The history goes back to the late 1600s when the first literary gazette founded by Jean Donneau de Vizé, the *Mercure Galant* (renamed *Mercure de France* in 1714), started to produce illustrations aimed to represent the latest French fashion trends, to provide readers information about court life, gossip, and to provide a form of entertainment by offering theatrical reviews, fashion reports and literary features such songs, poems, stories and anecdotes. The gazette played an important role in the establishment of Paris as fashion capital and in the development of an establishment able to promote new trends by showing people which accessories and clothes to wear and which not (Kalbaska et al., 2018b).

The period of the French Revolution (late 1700) marked a watershed between the costumes worn by the courts, which until that moment had represented the models to follow, and a certain popularization of fashion, which no longer was perceived as connected to the court's lifestyle. Also due to the diffusion of the bourgeoisie class and to the invention of fashion magazines, the late eighteenth century was characterized by a growth of the French fashion industry.

Through the founding of the *Courier de la mode* (1768–69), followed by the *Gallerie des modes et costumes francais* (1778–87), fashion information started to be regularly disseminated to a wider French audience mainly composed by noble and bourgeois readers (Van Cleave, 2020).

Another fashion magazine, *Cabinet des Modes ou les Modes nouvelles*, made its appearance on November 15th, 1785, with the aim to inform French and European readers on Paris novelties in terms of clothing and furniture. In 1786, the magazine changed its name into *Magasin des modes nouvelles françaises et anglaises* and started an international collaboration with a similar English periodical providing its readers information and novelties about British and French fashion trends. From February 25, 1790 the magazine changed its name again into *Journal de la Mode et du Goût*, until it was closed between 1792–1793 (Oppici, 2017).

Although some fashion forerunners were registered among fashion magazines, it was not until the twentieth century that they became spread within the society and part of the pop culture imaginary. After 1945, two French magazines became well-known from a commercial point of view: *Elle* and *Marie Claire*, both were interested in representing a modern ideal of woman and played an important role when *prêt-à-porter* appeared in Europe. The increase of attention toward fashion magazines happened in the United States with the appearance of two iconic magazines: *Harper's Bazaar* (1867) and *Vogue* (1892)

and it was concurrent with the US economic boom period. In 1913, the company Hearst acquired *Harper's Bazaar*, becoming *Vogue's* main competitor throughout the twentieth century. Later in 1909, *Vogue* was bought by Condé Nast, which in 1913 created *Vanity Fair*. Editors of fashion magazines played and still play a fundamental role: characters such as Caramel Snow, Diana Vreeland and Anna Wintour more recently, contributed to the success of their magazines and to their positioning as arbiters in the fashion field. That required creativity and experimenting new approaches to fashion communication.

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According to Kalbaska et al. (2018b), fashion magazines have four different functions: (i) inform their readers; (ii) create a sense of product legitimization; (iii) promote different ways to wear products; and (iv) offer a place to advertise products. While all those dimensions still remain in a digitally transformed context, fashion magazines are facing new challenges and exploring new paths. In particular, their role as the main, if not only, gatekeepers of fashion could not be maintained.

If from one side the digitalization process has boosted and popularized the spread of information through the birth of online magazines, which nowadays offer immediate access to information on fashion products (up to eventually buying them online), on the other side, the emergence of social media, such as blogs, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter, has created the perfect environment for people to generate their own contents and actively take part in the co-creation of fashion industry's image and reputation.

Due to this situation, many practices that were well established among mass media had to be adapted and transformed (Rocamora, 2017): fashion stakeholders have readapted themselves by establishing their presence on social media platforms, in order to start to create contents with the aim to engage with people through digital Word of mouth (eWoM) and real time conversations.

The digital communication market has allowed many other players to enter this ecosystem, lowering the entrance threshold: think, for instance, of digital influencers. Fashion brands themselves have nowadays become (also) media companies, constantly producing and distributing contents to their audiences, so that fashion magazines in many cases have to partner with them to keep their relevance. Fashion magazines in order to survive had to change their focus and to amplify their perspective. In particular, (i) editors have become celebrities; (ii) magazines have entered the fashion industry and the digital businesses by launching their own companies such as *Elle* Womenswear in 2006 or Hearst Digital in 2014; (iii) collaborations with other fields such as the world of art and

museums have been boosted to create legitimacy among readers. An example is Vogue's collaboration with the MET – Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2014 (Kalbaska et al., 2018b). Moreover, online platforms have become a fertile ground for the spread of fashion news on the internet, through the birth of news agencies such as BoF, Highsnobiety, Pambianco, Vogue Business and WWD where news about trends and pop culture are shared by experts and journalists.

Digital communication is requiring a dramatic acceleration of content production: as it has been the case of collections and runways, also magazines cannot keep their usual – established and comfortable – pace: they need to become hybrid companies, constantly issuing contents and digitally filling-in the gap between their paper editions and the digital ecosystem, sometimes even discontinuing their presence on glossy paper.

Moreover, digital communication platforms have made the border between information and promotion even thinner (Hanusch, 2019): an article about a collection could be, at the same time, the place where clothes can be directly bought and reviewed by ordinary users. New authorities are emerging and power systems are being negotiated in a battlefield where fashion magazines strive to keep their power and highly respected position (Mora, 2021; *potestas* and *auctoritas*, as suggested by Sadaba & Torregrosa, 2021).

However, in such a context, there are also opposite movements, for instance information platforms launching some paper publications, as a way to stress their importance and to call for a deeper differentiation, especially from influencers, bloggers and fashion companies. In this respect, think for instance of the case of *Business of Fashion*, which in recent years has launched also a printed magazine.

1.2.3 Photography

Although fashion photographs could be traced back to the 1850s, in the court of Napoleon III, photography as an advertising instrument started to be utilized only in the early 20th century, when fashion through the spread of magazines became more accessible to the audience. Prior to the advent of social media, in fact, fashion magazines were the main if not only available medium to disseminate collections and trends (*Beginnings of Fashion Photography*, n.d.).

In 1909, the publisher Condé Nast acquired the American magazine *Vogue*, which was then transformed into a fashion publication magazine: its aim was to capture the spirit and the trends of New York, London and Paris through innovative photography and a growing supply of glamorous models by also featuring more photography along with fashion illustrations and contributing to make photography an integral part of fashion magazines (*An interview with Jonathan Newhouse, Chairman of the Board of Directors*, n.d.).

The rise of *Vogue* and Condé Nast happened also thanks to the photographer Edward Steichen, considered the father of modern fashion photography, who spent the first years of the 20th century in Paris as an art photographer and painter. In 1911 he was assigned by the French magazine *Art et Décoration* to take pictures of dresses realised by the Parisian designer Paul Poiret. In 1923 when Steichen was already an established painter and photographer, at the age of 44, he was hired by Condé Nast publishing house, which offered him a job as director of photography for *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue* (Capper, 2017; Meda, 2011; Zachary, 2015).

Then it was the turn of the French photographer Helmut Newton who in 1957 landed a contract with *British Vogue* and from then on worked with magazines such as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Playboy*, and of the American photographer Irving Penn, who is considered one of the 20th century's most influential photographers despite having gained his *Vogue* first and only cover in 1943 (*Biography of Helmut Newton*, n.d.; *Irving Penn Archives*, n.d.).

The American photographer Annie Leibovitz rose to fame in the 1970s and is considered among the most innovative aesthetic photographers. She became chief photographer for *Rolling Stone* in 1973, later on she joined *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*. She is known for shooting celebrities as well as for her magical and fantastic fashion images, like the one with Keira Knightley shot for *Vogue*. Her most iconic portraits and images include many British Royal Family portraits, Obama's family, and John Lennon image portrayed naked next to Yoko Ono, realised just five hours before he was killed (*Annie Leibovitz*, n.d.; *Annie Leibovitz's Intimate Portraits of Queen Elizabeth II and the Royal Family*, 2016; *Annie Leibovitz. American photographer*, n.d.).

The American Bruce Weber started his fashion career in the late 1970s becoming popular for his portfolios in *GQ*, *Elle*, *Rolling Stone*, *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, for appearing in the *Soho Weekly News* and for his campaigns for Abercrombie & Fitch, Calvin Klein, Pirelli, Ralph Lauren and Versace. Weber's photos have become a permanent possession of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and some of his major pieces have been housed among the most celebrated exhibits in the world such as New York's Whitney Biennale, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Museum of Contemporary Art in North Miami, Venice's Palazzo Fortuny, Musée de l'Élysée in Switzerland, and London's National Portrait Gallery. He is also known for being a filmmaker and for having founded his fashion label Weberbilt in 2003 (*Any photographer has to have a big fantasy life*, n.d.; *Bruce Weber photograph and filmmaker*, n.d.).

Towards the end of the 1970s, the German photographer Peter Lindbergh made his appearance in the fashion world. He was among the first ones to include narratives within editorials, in 1988 realised Anna Wintour's first cover

of *Vogue* and he is also known for having directed critically acclaimed movies, documentaries and fashion films. Around the 1990s, with his style that resembled documentary photography, he changed the way models were portrayed and contributed to create the supermodels era by photographing Naomi Campbell, Christy Turlington, Cindy Crawford, and Linda Evangelista (*Peter Lindbergh*, n.d.).

In the same years, also the photographer Mario Testino rose to fame when in 1997 he photographed Princess Diana for a cover of *Vanity Fair*. Originally from Peru, the photographer is considered among the most influential fashion photographers due to his vibrant style and to the mixture of cultural and commercial elements. He has worked with many iconic brands such as Burberry, Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci, Louis Vuitton and Valentino, as well as for fashion magazines such as *Elle*, *GQ*, *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue* (Mario Testino, n.d.).

The American Steven Meisel, who had pursued an education in illustrations in Parsons New York, has become among the most recognized fashion photographers in the 1990s. He has been the official photographer of the cover of *Italian Vogue* for two decades, as well as of every Prada campaign since 2004, and he contributed to Madonna's book: *Sex* with his shots (Madonna et al., 1992). He has become popular thanks to his many collaborations with brands such as Calvin Klein, Dolce & Gabbana, Prada, Valentino and Versace and due to his choices about fashion editorials, like the one for *Italian Vogue* that represented models in a mental institute (Rumenova, n.d.; *The mastermind of fashion photography: Steven Meisel*, 2018).

Finally, among the most well-known fashion photographers, we can enlist the American David LaChapelle, who was discovered by Andy Warhol, who offered him his first job as a photographer for the *Interview Magazine*. After the experience with Warhol, the photographer moved to fashion magazines, embracing a porno-chic style with bright colors, powerful saturation and a precise setting of models, sceneries and objects, taking inspiration from art history. At the beginning of the 21st century he left fashion to art photography (Day, 2012; Mun-Delsalle, 2014).



While fashion photography has offered and still offers plenty of contents to glossy paper magazines and posters, it has been deeply disrupted by the digital transformation. As above mentioned, we shall see such transformation at two main levels: production/editing and distribution/fruition (Pardo, 2015).

Digital photography can be produced and edited by everyone, with very low production and storage costs if compared with its analogical uncle. In

particular, its marriage with smartphones has made photography an everyday practice, leaving the idea of consecrating special moments towards a constant documentation of one's life. Moreover, thanks to the availability of front cameras, the "selfie" genre has dramatically emerged. Augmented Reality filters have added the possibility of instant editing, moving photography from the realm of producing faithful copies to the one of expressing desired images.

Thanks to the emergence of image sharing social media platforms – in particular to Instagram and WhatsApp and their equivalent in the Chinese market such as WeChat or Weibo – pictures are often made to be shared with one's relatives, (social media) friends and followers. Since the small screen of a smartphone has become the major fruition place, also professional photography has adapted to its formats and limits.

In general, if we make a reference to the three degrees of conventionality of images identified by Dubois (1983) (Mazzali Lurati & Cantoni 2005), digital photography has distanced itself from the iconic one, further stressing the indexical – the picture testifies that the person was there – and the conventional one, which stresses the role of photography as a conventional, artificial expression of oneself and the world.

Such popularization of photography has been accompanied by emerging critical reflections about stereotyped models of beauty that had emerged within the fashion domain. The recent body positivity movement, for instance, is an answer to unreachable and unhealthy beauty stereotypes, ranging from super-models to size-zero ones. Such deeper awareness of the impact of photography onto what we perceive as beautiful or not, has accompanied and is accompanying the success or failure of fashion companies, e.g., in the underwear field. Think for instance of Victoria's Secrets, which had to discontinue its annual show based on a quite exclusive ideal of feminine beauty, and of the emergence of other brands, closely related with the body positivity movement.

Let us move now from still images to moving ones.

1.2.4 Cinema

When it comes to the interplay among fashion, pop culture and cinema (Dubreuil, 2016), the women casual style, for example, which included comfortable clothing such as trousers, started to be adopted by the masses in the 1930s also thank to the film making system, where Hollywood stars such as Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Kathrine Hepburn and Jean Harlow appeared for the first-time wearing riding and sailor trousers both in films and in their private lives (Cunningham, 2016).

Another example of the interweaving of the film and fashion industry is connected to the spread of the jeans in the 1950s, although the word "jean"

started to be utilized in the 1800s, referring to a twill cotton textile employed for the production of pants. Soon this type of trousers started to be called with the name of the cloth it was commonly used for their production, and only after the 1873 when the owner of a wholesale fabric, Levi Strauss, and a tailor, Jacob Davis, patented the jeans realized from indigo-dyed denim with pockets and sturdy riveting made for the workforce, the trousers started to become a garment, being dictated in a certain sense by a specific social group. But it was only thanks to Marlon Brando and to the movie *The Wild One* (1953) that blue jeans started to be adopted by masses, becoming together with the T-shirt the symbol of rebel teenagers (Bass-Kreuger, 2019; Cunningham, 2016).

During the 1960s Holly Golightly (Audrey Hepburn), the protagonist of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961) became an inspiration for many women. At the time, the romantic cinematic comedy revolutionized the way women looked at fashion by making her look composed by flipped hairs, large sunglasses and sleeveless iconic dresses and it contributed to make Tiffany & Co. universally recognized as the American jewellery house par excellence (Biron, 2019; *Fashion on Film: Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 2020).

Movies such as *Risky Business* (1983), *Pretty Woman* (1990), *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) and *The Great Gatsby* (2013), among others, contributed to spread fashion trends globally and to the creation of a sort of fashion pop culture constituted by iconic must-have pieces such as Ray Ban glasses initially worn by US army pilots and brought to the fore by Tom Cruise, the brown polka dots dress and the red gown dress in the spirit of Valentino worn by Julia Roberts, the Chanel blazer and leather pants worn by Anne Hathaway, and the white suits and skimmer hats of Leonardo di Caprio.

Also, the 007 series of movies inspired by the romances of Ian Fleming have played a major role in the spread of fashion menswear style. The first 007 movie was released in 1962 and for all the 1960s, it was Savile Row's tailor Anthony Sinclair, the one who defined the style of the most famous secret agent ever. Later came Dimi Major, Cyril Castle, Douglas Hayward, Brioni and Tom Ford, who dressed the most famous gentleman and action hero, contributing to create his classic, timeless style, which soon became a must-have in a man's wardrobe (Redaelli, 2019; Szmydke, 2016).

Movies haven't inspired only trends adopted by masses, they have also directly inspired fashion houses: Ralph Lauren chose to utilize the film *Downton Abbey* as the sole inspiration for the Fall Ready to Wear collection 2012, while the Givenchy's autumn–winter 2012 collection, realized by the artistic director for the time Riccardo Tisci, unveiled a line with a sci-fi impulse, taking inspiration from the “cyberfilm” *Matrix* (1999), directed by Les Wachowski in 1999. *Blade*

Runner (1982), with its dark and neo-futuristic universe, was instead the source of inspiration for the Dior pre-collection autumn–winter 2015 (Marain, 2020).

The film industry has not only been utilized to describe the positive side of fashion: the movie *Prêt-à-Porter* (*Ready to Wear*) by Robert Altman, released in 1994, apart from being considered among the ultimate fashion movies, does not tend to portray the classical sense of expressiveness and aesthetic of fashion, rather its dramas and intrigues. The comedy makes, in fact, fun of the fashion industry and criticizes its system while representing all its stakeholders: from designers, photographers, magazine editors, journalists, models, up to make-up artists and assistants.

The film director shot part of the movie during SS/1994 in Paris, providing to *Ready to Wear* a layer of campy realness and presenting the hyped entity of Fashion Weeks, involving designers such as Jean Paul Gaultier, Thierry Mugler, Christian Lacroix and Karl Lagerfeld. The latter refused to join the movie and he went to German court to ask the removal of Altman's concerned scene. Furthermore, cameos involved not only designers such as Gianfranco Ferré, Issey Miyake, and Sonia Rykiel, but also models such as Christy Turlington, Helena Christensen, Linda Evangelista, Claudia Schiffer, Carla Bruni, and Naomi Campbell (Defares, 2015).

With its movie, Altman portrayed the 1990's, the glorious years of fashion and haute couture, while showing the difficulties of this world that sometimes still yearns to be taken seriously in mainstream culture. As mentioned above, while interpreting Giotto's fresco of St. Francis getting naked in front of his father, also in this movie a bitter criticism is offered of the state of fashion of the 1990s. In the final scene, the parable of fashion losing every contact with modesty and functionality (as we have also seen in *The Emperor's New Clothes*), ends in a show where all models are just naked ... Still, even if someone becomes aware of it, the reporter just leaves the stage, not being able to denounce the paradox, as it had been done by an innocent child in the tale, and by Francis in his life. On the contrary, the show must go on, and the system covers its failures and futility. Hereafter the script, with the words by the fashion TV reporter, who cannot continue covering the fashion system, gives up, and is immediately replaced by someone who continues the show:

This is Kitty Potter live from Paris at Simone Lo's défilé. Well, what can I say? Simone Lo has shown us everything. I mean, I don't know how much of this is going to be on TV or anything but ... It's so new. I mean, it's ... It's so old. I mean, it's ... I mean, she shows it like it really is. It's so old, it's true. It's so true, it's new. It's the oldest new look, it's the newest old look. Simone Lo has created a new, new look for every man, woman

and child. And they can all afford it. It's called the bare look. So, hooray for Simone Lo!

What the hell am I talking about? I mean, for Christ's sakes, what is going on here, really? Can you tell me what's going on on this planet? This is fucking fruitcake time. I mean ... Is that fashion? Is it? I mean, is there a message out there? I mean, you got a lot of naked people wandering around here. I mean, I've been forever trying to find out what this bullshit is all about, and do you know what? You know what? I have had it. I have had it. Goodbye. Au revoir. Sophie, you got yourself a career.

This is Sophie Choiset for *FAD TV*. In May, 1968, the great couturier Balenciaga closed his atelier forever because, he said, 'there is no one left to dress.' It appears Simone Lo believes the same. She has just shown us a celebration of fashion in the profoundest sense of the word. She has made a statement here today that will be felt for decades to come. She's made a choice that will influence all designers everywhere. And most of all, she has spoken to women the world over, telling them not about what to wear but how to think about what they want and need from fashion. This is Sophie Choiset in Paris for *FAD TV*.

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The digital transformation of cinema has deeply impacted its production processes as well as the lifecycle of its same products (Pardo, 2015).

In the first domain, digital production has fully integrated what used to be "special effects" into a new mixed-reality, where reproduction of physical objects, their digital editing and the insertion/animation of digital ones are placed on a continuum, very often impossible to discern. Characters, with their skins, clothes and other accessories are then (also) produced as fully digital items, giving birth to the flourishing of digital costume designs, which have later on found their ways also in video gaming and in *NFT* – Non-Fungible Tokens (Rennie & Potts, 2020). Additionally, what used to be for decades a domain reserved for very few, has become an activity everyone can do with their own mobile phone, making the production and sharing of videos a distinctive activity of contemporary life.

On the fruition side, Cinema movies have combined their original model based on theaters with several ways of access, deeply influenced by the emergence of television and of digital platforms, which we will see in the next paragraph. This move has promoted the diffusion of fashion films as a genre in itself. In fact, digital videos have been more and more considered as a valuable tool by fashion marketing and communication departments to create

new contents and entertain audiences. According to Buffo (2019), fashion films can be considered as online videos created by fashion brands based on brand contents translated into motion images; they are usually inspired by cinematography, although they have developed their own way to communicate through net-aesthetics, and they contribute to create a stronger brand identity. Three main typologies of narrative choices are usually adopted by fashion brands to develop fashion films and fashion sagas: (i) narrate a story; (ii) create or strengthen brand personality; (iii) evoke atmosphere. In 2016, Alessandro Michele, Gucci's creative director, in order to launch the new Guilty perfume proposed a fashion film, recalling the atmosphere of the movie *Death in Venice* (1971). In 2017, Kenzo creative directors Carol Lim and Humberto Leon in order to present their autumn–winter collection launched *Cabiria, Charity, Chastity* directed by Natascha Lyonne, the film can be considered an ode to Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria* (1957) and tells the story of Chastity, who reconciles with her Vaudevillian past and finds the meaning of life in a foolish world. In 2017, also the fast fashion brand H&M in collaboration with Erdem launched the film *Secret Life of Flowers*, directed by Baz Luhrmann, in which the narrative follows a love triangle, and it is set in a mysterious country mansion where it is “always spring”. Within the fashion film category, Miu Miu in 2011 has launched *Women's Tales*, an online film series whose aim is on one side to promote fashion branding, showcasing fashion items through feminine artistic expression and, on the other, to share a feminist message (Resting, 2019; *Top 10 Fashion Films of the Season*, 2017).

1.2.5 Television

Not only cinema, but also television through the time became one of the mediums to showcase new styles, moving from being the place where characters were costumed to windowing new tendencies in the fashion panorama.

The tv show that could be considered as the pioneer in the promotion of stylish look for masses is the American soap *Dynasty*, which was the first tv show with an *ad-hoc* designer, who was taking care of the fact that each single cloth should match the episode. From one side, the soap was influenced by the trends of the 1980s, on the other, it was impacting on them, dictating new styles (Cunningham, 2016).

At the turn of the century, in the wake of *Dynasty* other TV shows emerged: *Sex and the City*, *Gossip Girl* and more recently *Stranger Things* and *Game of Thrones*. The first two tv series showcased iconic labels such as Armani, Chanel, Dior, Dolce & Gabbana, Fendi, Jimmy Choo, Manolo Blanic, Prada etc., and through them characterized each TV character and her/his life, becoming an integral part of the storytelling (Cunningham, 2016; Thrasher, 2020). The

Netflix sci-fi horror series *Stranger Things* instead, has recently brought to the surface the Millennials' nostalgia for the 1980s pop-culture history through a setting of the time, musical tributes to the 1980s performers with the use of synthesizers and clothing style (Garcia, 2016). Eleven, the protagonist, has become an icon of style by bringing back to light bubble dresses, rompers, bowling shirts and colorful dungarees. In 2019, for the debut of the third season of the series, Nike released a capsule collection that included three different shoe models, sweatshirts and t-shirts and also Levi's, the fast fashion brands H&M and Paul & Bear launched their capsule collections proposing their idea of *Stranger Things* streetstyle (Abbiadati, 2019; Banfi, 2019; Garcia, 2016; Pantano, 2019; Rearick, 2019). Another TV series that impacted on the fashion industry is *Game of Thrones*, an American fantasy drama series created by David Benioff and D.B. Weiss for HBO. Gucci's autumn-winter 2018 runway show despite showing all the classic style elements of a Gucci collection such as bold prints and vibrant colors, also presented some accessories inspired by *Game of Thrones* including dragoons, snakes and a decapitated head (Stow, 2018). Adidas instead, in 2019 has teamed up with the HBO series to release six Ultra Boost sneakers inspired by the saga and in the same year the beauty brand Urban Decay has partnered with *Game of Thrones* to create its whimsical palette (*Winter is here; Adidas Running Announces Game of Thrones® Collaboration*, 2019).

Television has allowed the birth of specific channels dedicated to fashion: the most well-known is FashionTV (FTV), an international fashion and lifestyle broadcasting television channel founded by Michel Adam Lisowski in France in 1997. The channel is a distributed satellite channel, which offers a review of global fashion and is independently owned and operated from its headquarters in Paris, London and Vienna. It offers over 100 hours of monthly programming presenting the latest fashion trends, shows, designer events and it also presents industry professionals; its aim is to inspire audience by offering an insider's view of the fashion industry in a highly desired clip-based content. It can be considered among the few TV equivalent to fashion print media appealing to everyone interested in the fashion world (trends, style, beauty, etc.) (Fashion TV, n.d.).

In 10 years after its foundation, FTV expanded towards the eastern world in China and India and also in other markets such as Australia, Africa and South America (Fashion TV, n.d.).

The Covid19 pandemic has contributed to give a new life to the small screen: television has been chosen as the channel par excellence to present the new spring-summer collections 2020/2021 by two iconic Italian brands, Armani and Elisabetta Franchi. During the Milan Fashion Week, respectively

on channel LA5 and La7, the two brands enabled their audiences to take part in their shows directly from the first row and to reposition television as one of the major channels to communicate fashion (Bandirali, 2020).

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As for photography and cinema, the digital transformation has deeply impacted also television. In particular, it's worth to mention here the emergence of new players, in particular of new platforms – like Netflix or Amazon Video – that managed to disrupt the production and distribution market.

Fruition has moved from dedicated (big) screens, where the programs were accessed according to their schedule, to the possibility of getting individual items, independently from a given schedule, frequently on the small screen of a smartphone.

Smartphones have in fact emerged both as a major tool, which allows individuals to produce good quality images and videos, and at the same time, as the most used screen to access visual materials, or to be used as a second screen in combination with a larger one, to comment, share on social media, buy while accessing movies and films. Propagation and negotiation of fashion-related images and trends have found in smartphones and in their affordances a major acceleration device. In fact, such fragmentation and distribution of materials that used to be beforehand accessed in quite large, pre-defined chunks, had already (digitally) transformed Music, which should be tackled now.

1.2.6 Music

Within the context of pop culture, music as well has not been exempt from fashion convergence: starting from the twentieth century, music has become a passion for designers and clothing a fixation for musicians. Young people's desire to emulate their favorite performers allowed fashion to become the *trait d'union* between them and musicians, creating different subcultures. In some cases, music stars dressed up dictating new trends, in others, stylists proposed their own design to them, contributing to widen the fashion panorama.

Elvis Presley with his leather jacket embodied in 1950s the ideal of the so-called “bad boy”, which was later taken up and brought to the fore in 1978 by John Travolta in the musical-film *Grease*. The Beatles instead contributed to the birth of a counterculture known as hippies, while in the US young generations started to criticize American values and to challenge them on topics such as political and human rights, drugs, freedom, ecology, etc. Psychedelic art was another form of expression that hippies utilized together with music to

express their ideals. Their style was made by bright colors, jeans, vests, loose fitting clothes, long hair and no shoes or sandals, rejecting consumerism in favor of hand-made production or second-hand garments (Cunningham, 2016).

Between the 1970s and the 1990s it was the turn of Heavy metal and Punk groups. The former movement with music icons such as Alice Cooper, the Kiss and later on Marilyn Manson wearing black clothes, high heels, leather jackets, spandex and make-up. The latter was born in UK as a (sub)culture proposed by the young working class frustrated by the high levels of unemployment, it had stars as The Clash, Damned and The Sex Pistols. Distinctive traits for punkers were the leather boots and jackets with metal rivets, tattoos, piercings and hair eccentrically colored and styled. Sex Pistols, one of the most influential bands, were styled by their Malcom McClaren and his wife Vivienne Westwood, who also owned a shop in King's Road at the time called "Let it Rock", where people could go and purchase the garments worn by their music models (Cunningham, 2016; Reardon, 2020).

The advent of MTV helped to reinforce the union between music and fashion. The history of MTV started in 1981, it was a TV channel where nothing else than rock music was displayed 24/7, reaching an audience mainly aged from 12 to 34 years. Featured musicians influenced the stylists of the time, sometimes also becoming designers of themselves, but also stylists dictated the trends proposing new looks to the stars. Some of the major fashion trends launched by MTV are for example Madonna's lacy gloves, hoop earrings, cropped sweaters and cropped pants. The rock star to create her style has collaborated with many fashion haute couture brands such as D&G, Givenchy, Jean Paul Gaultier. She also contributed to the creation of M by Madonna, a fashion line, realized in collaboration with the fast fashion brand H&M. Through the MTV channel another performer launched his music and style: Michael Jackson. His red leather jacket and his glittered style were copied by many fans (Cassidy, 2001; Cunningham, 2016).

Also, Kurt Cobain's unplugged sweater was made famous and copied around the world through MTV. The iconic sweater worn by the rockstar during the MTV Unplugged concert was recently sold for \$334,000, making it the most expensive sweater ever sold during an auction (Kreps, 2019).

In 2011, when Amy Winehouse passed away in her Camden Square apartment, Jean Paul Gaultier celebrated the singer with a spring-summer 2012 collection inspired by her life. Playing on the late star's style, rooted in the 1950s and 1960s, Gaultier sent out on the catwalk models with beehive, thick eyeliner makeup, beauty spot, clothes with tarty fifties flavor, black skirts, brassiere visible under a white top and bustiers (Marain, 2020).

Another performer, Lady Gaga, in 2014 was chosen to be the testimonial for the Versace's spring-summer collection and in July 2020 she was chosen by the fashion maison Valentino as testimonial of the new fragrance "Voce Viva" (*"A perfume is born"*, 2020).

Typical trendsetters of the current pop culture, who not only influenced fashion trends, but also established their own fashion business, are: Beyoncé, Justin Timberlake, Jay Z, Kanye West and Rhianna. In 2005, Justin Timberlake founded his denim and lifestyle clothing line William Rast together with Trace Ayala and in 2008 he was engaged as a testimonial by Givenchy to launch the new men fragrance (Chan, 2016; Frangouil, 2018; *Justin Timberlake's William Rast Clothing Line*, 2009; Pacella, 2009). Beyoncé's character is associated with many fashion brands and projects: she has collaborated with and endorsed many popular fashion and cosmetics labels such as Armani, L'Oreal, Tommy Hilfiger etc. In 2004, together with her mother, daughter of a sewer, Beyoncé launched House of Deréon, a ready-to-wear fashion line, whose style was inspired by three generations of women in her family. In 2016 she received the Fashion Icon Award by The Council of Fashion Designers of America and she launched another fashion label, Ivy Park, in collaboration with Topshop. In 2018 Ivy Park became a company fully controlled by the singer and in 2019 she announced a collaboration with Adidas (*Adidas X Ivy Park*, 2019; Duboff, 2016; *Fashion icon Beyoncé*, n.d.; Holmes, 2016; *House of Deréon*, n.d.). Jay Z together with Beyoncé, his wife, is a constant presence in fashion shows and in the main fashion events such as the MET Galas. He has been involved in the fashion industry since 1999, when he founded together with Damon Dash Rocawear an apparel company based in New York. In 2011 he launched Life + Times, a pop culture website where the rapper and businessman shares his interest for high end cars, clothes and lifestyle items and designs (Perpetua, 2011; *Rocawear Apparel LLC*, n.d.).

The hip-hop performer Kanye West is considered among the most influential global trendsetters and urban style fashion leaders: he has collaborated with brands such as Nike, Louis Vuitton, Adidas to create his sneaker collections and he has also launched the womenswear ready-to-wear label Yeezy and alongside his wife, Kim Kardashian, starred in Balmain's spring-summer 2015 campaign (*Kanye West*, n.d.).

Also Rhianna, apart from being constantly present in Fashion Weeks, in 2016 launched the limited collection Fenty x Puma and in 2017 she created her Fenty Beauty brand, with inclusivity and diversity at the forefront of its brand identity. In 2018, she then launched a lingerie fashion collection and in 2019 she has become the first woman of color to lead a house under the LVMH brand by launching Fenty fashion house (Ilchi, 2020; *Rihanna makes history*, 2019; Vingan Klein, 2016).

Music festivals such as Coachella and the Fyre Festival are to be mentioned. The first one is to be considered due to its importance gained through the years not only as a music festival but also as a public event, where stars and fashion icons set new trends both in terms of music as well as in terms of fashion. The annual music festival was founded in 1999 and since then it has been held at the Empire Polo Club in Indio (California) in the Coachella Valley of the Colorado Desert. Every year it hosts on its stage very famous singers and bands such as The White Stripes, Daft Punk, Jay Z, Outcast, Beyoncé etc., together with less known bands and singers coming in particular from Mexico. Coachella's audience has grown through the years and the most recent editions of the festival, before Covid19 spread, attracted 250,000 revellers coming from all over the world across two weekends of April. It is considered an unofficial opening ceremony for a summer run of global music festivals (Paton, 2021).

As stated by the New York Times (Paton, 2021), according to Katy Lubin, vice president for communications at the global fashion search platform Lyst, when it comes to fashion, online searches for "festival fashion" start in March and last until July. Furthermore, according to Lucie Greene (Paton, 2021), founder of Light Years consultancy and trend forecaster, festivals are for some fashion brands a great occasion to create a network with potential customers, which buy products only for such specific occasions. Some fashion brands dedicate entire collections and products to music festivals. As an example, H&M and ASOS plan months in advance which items to place on their online markets to satisfy these customers' needs.

Through influencers and the use of brand ambassadors, also luxury brands exploit music festivals to advertise their products. In this case such brands tend to put on stage social media campaigns involving stars present during the event.

While Coachella can be considered a highly successful case, we should mention here also a failure case, which demonstrates the importance of digital media in this domain: the case of Fyre Festival. This festival has taken place in 2017 on the Bahamian island Great Exuma. The luxury event was scheduled to take place on April 28–30 and on May 5–7, 2017 with the aim of promoting the company's Fyre app for booking music talent, ideated by Billy McFarland, CEO of Fyre Media Inc., and by the rapper Ja Rule.

In addition to live music, at Fyre Festival was implied the presence of celebrities: many of them promoted the event on their Instagram and social media profiles. Among fashion icons that advertised the festival there were Alessandra Ambrosio, Bella Hadid, Chanel Iman, Emily Ratajkowski, Hailey Baldwin and Kendall Jenner. Later on, some of these stars apologized for their choice of being involved in such a failure (Brockington, 2019). While the festival had

been announced as a dreaming luxury experience, in fact, its organization was an epic failure, combining different crises related to security, food and beverage, accommodation, medical services up to artist relations, causing initially the postponement of the event and then its definitive cancellation. Among the problems that attendees experienced there were prepackaged sandwiches instead of high quality and gourmet meals, poor and not satisfying accommodations instead of the advertised luxurious villas.

Billy McFarland, the main event organizer, in March 2018, decided to plead guilty to one count of wire fraud to defraud ticket buyers and investors, and as second count, while he was out on bail, to have also defrauded a ticket vendor. In October 2018, he was therefore sentenced to six years of prison and was required to forfeit US \$ 26 million (*U.S. authorities put Fyre Festival clothing up for auction, 2020*). In August 2020, more than three years after the failed event: 126 items from Fyre festival have been auctioned, with the aim of going toward the victims of Billy McFarland's fraud (Frishberg, 2020).

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The digital transformation of music has been dramatic in recent decades (McCourt, 2015), impacting all its dimensions. Here, we should mention in particular how visuals have been deeply associated to music, through videos and images, and how popular singers and players, as it has happened for actors and actresses, have found on social media a fertile ground where to grow their audiences and nurture them with a constant feed of audio-visual materials. These, in turn, have become an integral part of fashion imaginaries.

1.2.7 Sport

Sport is also a form of pop culture deeply rooted in the history of the society and connected with fashion history. Starting from Jesse Owens, one of the most well-known African American athletes: in 1936 in Berlin he was the first American athlete to win four gold medals in a single Olympic game, wearing the shoes designed by two German brothers Rudolf and Adolf Dassler, who later on founded respectively the companies Puma and Adidas. Adidas, to celebrate the athlete who contributed to make the brand known worldwide, in 2016 announced the Black History Month footwear collection inspired by Jesse Owens and realized in collaboration with his family (*A true American Hero – Jesse Owens, 2017*). Although the beginning of the influence of sports on fashion, and vice versa, can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century, it is the 21st century that contributed to strengthen this connubium with sport players such as David Beckham, Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Michael Jordan, James

LeBron, Kobe Bryant, Roger Federer, Serena Williams, Marija Sharapova, Tiger Woods and Lewis Hamilton. Their popularity crossed their sport fields and it also touched fashion, where they have become worldwide trendsetters. It is not rare, in fact, to see their faces and bodies landing the front covers of magazines such as *Vogue*, *Elle* and *GQ*; walking red carpets such as the Met Ball, film festivals and awards shows; and taking part to Fashion Weeks in London, Milan, New York and Paris. Sportsmen and women are no longer only advertising sportswear, but they have become ambassadors of luxury and casual brands or even entrepreneurs of themselves by creating their own fashion brands.

Since 2005, the NBA has a mandatory dress code that imposes players to wear dress coats, collared shirts and pants to NBA-related events off the court. David Stern, the NBA commissioner, who has taken this decision, explained that in the era after Jordan the NBA had to find its identity (Lieber, 2014). The idea that the NBA was getting married to hip-hop and thugs was not in his mind: that is why he decided to change the NBA fashion root, by making it more palatable. When basketball players join the NBA, the agencies representing them assign three key figures: a publicist, a trainer and also a stylist. NBA players have become brand ambassadors by proudly wearing sport Valentino suits, Rag & Bone tails, Versace statement button-downs, Tom Ford vests, MSGM bomber jackets and not rarely major trends are becoming directly attributed to their influence. For instance, in 2011 Durant started wearing backpacks during post-game conferences and suddenly these sport items spread everywhere. James Le Bron by wearing and advertising the headphones Beats contributed to make them a must-have fashion item and a matter of style (Lieber, 2014). Between 1984–1985 Nike launched the Air Jordan 1 sneakers: an homage to Micheal Jordan that later on have become a real brand within Nike, which produces worldwide known basketball products not only for men but also for women and children (*Evolution of the Nike Air Jordan*, n.d.).

Also football has not been exempted from fashion incursions in the life of football players: from the David Beckham era football and fashion have merged, pushing many footballers to become models, influencers and sometimes even stylists while, at the same time, major brands began to launch collections inspired by the world of football. The sport champions of the third millennium have managed to impose themselves on the public opinion as actual celebrities, who by now have nothing to envy to film or television stars. For instance, in Germany the football point of reference in the world of fashion has been Jérôme Boateng, who has been the ambassador of Bread&Butter, an annual fair organized by Zalando in Berlin; he has also founded a lifestyle magazine, BOA, to share his taste in looks (*Introducing BOA17*, 2018; Schlagwein, 2018).

Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, with respectively more than 300 million² and 220 million³ followers on Instagram (as of end of June 2021) are among the most followed sportsmen in the world and with their styles and partnerships with luxury, sport and casual fashion brands such as Adidas, Armani, Nike, contribute to increase sales and visibility of such fashion brands. In 2013, Ronaldo launched his brand CR7 through an underwear collection which later on was amplified by adding other fashion products such as shoes, denim items and perfumes; while in 2019 Lionel Messi launched his fashion brand named Messi in collaboration with Ginny Hilfiger, Tommy's sister (Cristiano Ronaldo, n.d.; Hicks, 2019; Zhang, 2019).

When it comes to tennis, the Swiss Roger Federer, the US Serena Williams and the Russian Marija Sharapova are to be mentioned here as fashion trend-setters. Federer frequently appears on the front row of fashion shows and appears to be a good friend of Anna Wintour. He has been Nike, Rolex and Uniqlo brand ambassador and in 2020 he has been voted as the most stylish man of the decade by *US GQ*, contributing to transform tennis into a growing fashion powerhouse (Basu, 2009; Riley, 2020). Among women, the tennis players Serena Williams and Marija Sharapova are considered not only top players in their field but are also rooted in fashion by making their appearance on the cover magazines of *Elle*, *Harper Bazaar*, *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, etc. Furthermore, their stylish outfits worn during the most important tennis matches, as it also happened for Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer, have become iconic: brands such as Nike, Uniqlo, Lacoste, Adidas have benefitted from partnering with them, in order to gain new customers and get larger audiences (Barsamian, 2018; Criss, 2019; Kambhampaty, 2019; *Serena Williams's February 2018 Vogue Cover*, 2018).

The fashion field has been also touched by many other sports: further examples are Formula 1 and Golf. The former has been represented by racers such as Louis Hamilton, who apart from being considered among the world's richest sportsmen, is also considered by many a style icon, having become a fixture on the fashion week circuit. In 2018, Hamilton partnered with the designer Tommy Hilfiger to launch the collection TommyxLouis, which in 2020 became a fully vegan and sustainable collection; in 2019, he designed the 10-style eyewear collection for the eyewear brand Police (*Formula One Champion Lewis Hamilton Introduces Sustainable Clothing*, n.d.; Fraser, n.d.; Halliday, 2019; Kai, 2018; *The Style Evolution Of Lewis Hamilton*, 2020). Golf, on the other hand, boasts protagonists such as Tiger Woods. Tiger has been Nike's testimonial since 1996 and

² www.instagram.com/cristiano/.

³ www.instagram.com/leomessi/.

despite the scandals that involved him, the company still proposes on its website the Tiger Woods Collection (Rishe, 2019; *Tiger Woods*, n.d.).

An element that keeps fashion brands so deeply connected with sport players, is related to the concept of endorsement (Chung et al., 2013; Do et al., 2015). As empirically demonstrated by Chung et al. (2013), endorsements can have a strong impact on consumer utility, such that there is a shift in market share and fashion companies are led more and more often to pay a large amount of money to featured sport players in order to increase their brand visibility and their sales.

Another sport that can be considered strongly connected with fashion is dance, which can be either considered a form of art expression or a sport depending on the contexts in which it is practiced. Within fashion shows dance is increasingly used by designers to showcase their collections: brands such as Alexander McQueen, Moncler, Oteyza, Stella McCartney, Tommy Hilfiger and Victoria's Secret have often chosen dance to present their collections during the catwalks (Bateman, 2015; Remsen, 2019). Furthermore, dance icons of the past and of the present, such as Anna Pavlova, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Rudolf Nurayev, Fred Astaire, Martha Graham, Hrithik Roshan, Michael Jackson and Madonna have made their own fashion statements through the 20th and 21st centuries.

A very interesting story – almost a contemporary sport and fashion tale – is the one of Allyson Felix, who has become the most decorated U.S. track athlete in Olympic history with eleven medals. In 2018, she was offered by Nike – her official sponsor – a 70% reduction of contract due to her pregnancy, a case she brought to the public opinion through an article in *The New York Times* (Felix, 2019). After ending the contract, she decided to set-up her own shoe line, establishing the Saysh company: at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics she ran and won running in her own shoes (Bhasin, 2021).

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In fact, Nike has played a major role among the sport brands that are deeply involved in the digital transformation and its “popularization”. A first collaboration between the tech company Apple and the fashion brand can be traced back to 2006, when they launched Nike+iPod, a wireless system that would allow Nike's footwear users to communicate with Apple iPod Nano. The idea behind such a combination was to bring the worlds of sport, music and technology together like never before. Since then, the collaboration has never stopped, and the two brands launched a series of items such as the Apple Watch Nike+ continuously improving wearable technologies for sport users (*Apple Watch Nike+ Edition Articles*, 2020).

Nike, however, has not been the only company to implement wearable technologies to improve sport experiences, another such example can be Under Armour.

The brand Under Armour, which benefitted largely from being featured in the Oliver Stone movie *Any Given Sunday* (1999), has celebrated its marriage with the digital world in 2015, when it acquired the following fitness apps: MapMyRun, Endomondo, and MyFitnessPal. In the following year, it also launched its “smart” shoe series (Under Armour, n.d.).

Such combination of sport practices, wearable sensors and mobile apps is spreading all over the sport world, making fitness a major fashion and style-related trend. A trend that, for instance, has been able to dramatically extend the usages – and related sales – of sneakers, well beyond actual training practices (Hancock, 2019).

1.2.8 Other Interplays

Not only tales, photography, cinema, television, music, and sport interplay with the fashion industry within the context of pop culture: video games, museums, tourism and international events have been impacted and have impacted on fashion – and still do.

In 2015, Louis Vuitton inspired its spring-summer collection to *Final Fantasy*, a video game. Nicolas Ghesquière, the creative director with a strong passion for fantasy, chose Lightning, a character from *Final Fantasy*, as its muse to present Louis Vuitton’s campaign. Her pink hair and the angelic face seduced the director of the brand, who explained that his intent was to converge digital, visual and cybernetic aspects with real life (Kim, 2016).

Another field converging with fashion through pop culture is tourism. Many cities around the world benefit every year from fashion weeks that count millions of visitors (Gravari-Barbas & Kalbaska, *forth.*; Kalbaska et al., 2018a). In popular culture, fashion style is mainly dominated by Paris, which is seen as the fashion capital “par excellence”.

Paris started to gain the role of fashion capital during the reign of Louis XIV first, and the one of Queen Marie Antoinette later, becoming not only the beating political hearth of Europe but also the center of increasing influence in terms of fashion trends by opening the court to the advent of fashion labels and personal dressmakers (Godart, 2014; Kurkdjian, 2021).

The central position of Paris built from Versailles’ époque was further established and reinforced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the spread of fashion magazines that contributed to create the myth of Paris, celebrating

its designers, its manufacturers and inventions but also by the birth of the haute couture and the presence of a strong textile industry. It was only at the end of the twentieth century that London, Milan and New York together with Paris established themselves as “fashion capitals” contributing to the birth of the so-called “fashion oligarchy” (Godart, 2014).

According to Godart (2014) there is still no consensus among scholars on which are the characteristics that describe a fashion capital, although he suggests defining them according to the presence of a well-established “Fashion Week” show with a global or international spread on fashion magazines. The status of fashion capitals has not only brought to those cities high media coverage and popularity during the fashion weeks, but also huge incomes derived from the services and the works generated by them.

This condition of fashion capital has helped cities such as London, Milan, New York, and Paris to strengthen the collective thinking and also their status of fashion tourist destinations.

Among the major international events that celebrated the connubium among fashion, cinema, music, sport and also tourism, there is the Super Bowl. During the 2020 Super Bowl match between Kansas City Chiefs and San Francisco, which brought to Miami thousands of American football passionates, the singers Shakira and the actress and singer J. Lo performed and gave place to a planetary event watched by 148.5 million of people and reaching 69% of share. During the performances J. Lo changed into different Versace outfits, including a silver bodysuit and a feathered cape painted with Puerto Rican and American flags, to celebrate her heritage and origins, while Shakira wore custom-made designs from Norwegian designer Peter Dundas (Adgate, 2021; Alleyne, 2020; Sernagiotto, 2020).

Michael Jackson in 1993 was the first who used the Super Bowl to communicate his beliefs against violence, war and injustice through his music and by pushing the envelope through his outfit by wearing a uniform. Other artists who utilized the Super Bowl as a stage to convey their messages and to communicate through their music and their clothing choices have been Katy Perry, Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake, Prince, Madonna, Beyoncé, and Lady Gaga (Alleyne, 2020).

After having followed the first path, our exploration of fashion and popular culture will now take a second itinerary, which focuses on fashion exhibitions and on dedicated fashion museums: the extreme interest and large publics they are able to attract bear a clear testimony to the role of fashion within (popular) culture.

1.3 *Fashion in Museums and Exhibitions*

Museums and exhibitions have not been exempted from the impact of fashion: temporary and permanent fashion exhibitions, in fact, have become a great source of attraction for fashion passionates and tourists coming from all over the world and have become an increasingly important forum for fashion brands. In fact, fashion has been treated initially as the “Cinderella” of the arts, occupying a marginal place in exhibitions, mainly due to an hostility traditionally traceable to the low status that fashion occupies within academia and to the disagreements between academics and curators on the role of museums in the present society and about “fashion” and its relationship with (popular) culture (Bass-Krueger et al., 2020; Steele, 2008). After having established itself within art museums in expositions offered by the Imperial War Museum, the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met), the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum, fashion has found its route through the establishment of permanent fashion museums such as the Palais Galliera Museum, the Dior Granville Museum, the Museum Yves Saint Laurent, the Cristóbal Balenciaga Museum, the Armani Silos and the Museum Audemars Piguet.

Furthermore, the recognition by UNESCO of practices and traditions related to fashion has played an important role in rising fashion to the level of recognized cultural phenomena; think for instance to the *savoir faire* of watchmakers, the manufacturing of artisanal clothes and textiles such as the wedding costume tradition of Tlemcen, the Azerbaijani carpet weaving, or the Indonesian Batik textile production (*Indonesian Batik*, n.d.; UNESCO, 2003).

In the following paragraphs, just a few cases will be presented, to exemplify a category that is constantly growing, including large collections in general museums, private collections, museums dedicated to fashion or to specific sub-sectors (e.g., the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto, Canada) or to individual designers/companies.

The chosen museums have been listed as follows: first of all, starting from the ones that use fashion items as part of more extensive exhibitions, then moving to museums fully dedicated to fashion and finally to digital platforms. Within each category, museums have been ordered according to their date of foundation.

1.3.1 Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A)

The history of the V&A began in 1852 when the British government created the Museum of Manufacturers in Marlborough House, St. James, to house a collection of decorative art objects that had been displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851 at the Crystal Palace. In 1857, to improve taste and knowledge among

British manufactures, the British government moved the items to the South Kensington Museum and redisplayed the collection, obtaining surprising results and laying the premises for developing a new museum. The museum has been renamed “Victoria and Albert Museum” in 1899, when Queen Victoria charged Aston Webb to design the current building, which has been opened to the public in 1909 (*Building the museum*, n.d.).

Since its foundation, the V&A has constantly evolved in its collections and in its public interpretation of art and design; however, its mission to further deepen the standards of British industry by educating designers, manufacturers and consumers in art and science has remained (*About us V&A*, n.d.). The V&A is also responsible for the Museum of Childhood, in Bethnal Green, a district in the borough of Tower Hamlets, and the V&A Dundee, an outpost of the museum centering on Scottish design, opened in Scotland in 2018 (*Hunt*, 2018).

The V&A is considered among the world’s leading museums of art and design, housing a permanent collection of over 2.3 million items that span over 5,000 years of humanity. The Museum holds many UK national collections and hosts a vast heritage valuable for studies in architecture, Asian art and design, book arts, ceramics, glass, fashion, furniture, jewelry, metal work, painting, photography, sculpture, textiles, as well as theatre and performance (*About us V&A*, n.d.).

Among its valuable collections, V&A hosts a permanent exhibition of fashion objects, including items spanning five centuries. However, the collection focuses mainly on the 18th century onwards, mostly presenting European fashion and accessories, such as 18th century ‘Mantua’ dresses or the 19th century with dresses utilized by the élites in India, China and Japan. It also includes 20th century elements such as 1930s eveningwear, 1960s daywear and post-war couture. It also includes a wide range of accessories from across the world, including footwear and hats and collections of Cristóbal Balenciaga, Pierre Cardin and many other past and contemporary designers (*Fashion V&A*, n.d.).

Apart from permanently exhibiting such a variety of fashion items, the V&A leaves room also for temporary exhibits such as the *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* exhibition, which in 2015 has become the second most visited V&A exhibition with 493,043 people visiting it during its 21-week run. *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* (2011) is also included in the 10 most visited exhibitions at Met, where it attracted 661,509 visitors during its run from May 4 to August 7 (661,509 *Total Visitors to Alexander McQueen*, 2011). Kordic (2015) reported that *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* exhibition’s official website has had some 2.3 million unique visits, in addition to 134,000 clicks at The Museum of Savage Beauty (*The Museum of Savage Beauty*, n.d.), a specially

commissioned interactive web page, which provided insights and additional stories and information about techniques behind some of the items presented during the exhibition. V&A also offered memberships to ensure the viewing of Alexander McQueen's most popular exhibition to its visitors, thus welcoming 10,000 new members during the show run (Kordic, 2015).

In order to fulfill such an unprecedented demand for the final two weekends the exhibition was available also throughout the night (Muñoz-Alonso, 2015). *Savage Beauty* occupied several spaces in the V&A Museum through different thematic rooms, starting with McQueen's early collections to its more recent pieces where the designer expressed all his passion for fashion by combining it with his interest in anthropology, gothic elements, and by reinterpreting romanticism and other periods through his perspective and style (*Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty – About the Exhibition*, 2015).

The primacy of the most visited exhibition at the V&A is detained by another fashion exhibit *Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams* (2019). Such event is considered the most comprehensive exhibition ever staged in the UK on the House of Dior, with its 594,994 visitors (Young, 2019).



The V&A Museum offers to its audience a website⁴ in which users can find all the information concerning upcoming exhibitions and the services offered by the Institution (V&A, n.d.). Concerning its social media strategy, V&A is active on Facebook,⁵ Instagram,⁶ Pinterest⁷ and Twitter,⁸ beside running a highly successful channel on YouTube.⁹ Taking into consideration the number of followers on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, *The Art Newspaper* in 2020 classified V&A as the 10th most followed museum in the world with more than 3.3 million of followers (Dawson, 2020).

1.3.2 Met and Its Gala

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's roots can be traced back to 1866 in Paris, France, when a group of American citizens realized the importance to create a "national institution and gallery of art" to spread art education towards America (*History of the museum*, n.d.). As soon as the lawyer John Jay, who

4 www.vam.ac.uk.

5 www.facebook.com/victoriaandalbertmuseum.

6 www.instagram.com/vamuseum/.

7 www.pinterest.ch/vamuseum/_created/.

8 twitter.com/V_and_A.

9 www.youtube.com/user/vamuseum.

came up with the idea, returned to America, he gave birth to his project in the city of New York and through the Union League Club he rallied leaders, managers, artists, art collectors, and philanthropists to join his project. In April 1870, The Metropolitan Museum of Art was incorporated and opened its doors to the public in the Dodworth Building at 681 Fifth Avenue. In November the museum acquired as its first object a Roman sarcophagus. In 1871, among the 174 European paintings that entered the collection were included works by Anthony van Dyck, Nicolas Poussin, and Giovanni Battista Tiepolo. The museum's collection continued to expand throughout the rest of the 19th century and by the 20th century, up to becoming one of the world's most-known art centers (*History of the museum*, n.d.). Nowadays, the Met has got more than 1.5 million objects spread over 2 million square feet, employs nearly 1,600 staff members and it is visited yearly by 7 million visitors coming from all over the world (*Making the Met*, n.d.).

Met's Costume Institute is to be presented here. It began as the Museum of Costume Art, an independent entity formed in 1937 and directed by Irene Lewisohn, the Neighborhood Playhouse founder. In 1946, with the financial support of the fashion industry, the museum merged with The Metropolitan Museum of Art becoming The Costume Institute, and in 1959 it was transformed into a curatorial department (*The Costume Institute*, n.d.).

Considering more in detail the place of fashion within Met, the journalist Diana Vreeland has plaid a major role: she worked as special consultant, from 1972 until 1989 she created at the Costume Institute a memorable suite of exhibitions, including *Inventive Clothes/1909–39* (1973); *The World of Balenciaga* (1973); *The Glory of Russian Costume* (1976); and *Vanity Fair* (1977), which set the grounds for the spread of costume exhibitions globally. At the end of the 20th century, Richard Martin together with Harold Koda began a series of thematic exhibitions including *Infra-Apparel*; *Waist Not*; *The Four Seasons*; and *Cubism and Fashion*. Martin's work at Met culminated in *Rock Style*, the last exhibition before he died in 1999. Mr. Koda, who had previously left the Institute, rejoined it in 2000 until 2016 as curator in charge, he was then followed by Andrew Bolton, Wendy Yu Curator (*The Costume Institute*, n.d.).

Within the Costume Institute, one or two special exhibitions are on stage every year, among them: monographic exhibitions such as *Chanel* (2005); *Piret: King of Fashion* (2007); *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* (2011); *Charles James: Beyond Fashion* (2014); and *Rei Kawakubo/Comme des Garçons: Art of the In-Between* (2017). We can list here also thematic exhibitions such as *AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion* (2006); *Superheroes: Fashion and Fantasy* (2008); *The Model as Muse: Embodying Fashion* (2009); *American Woman: Fashioning a National Identity* (2010); *Schiaparelli and Prada:*

Impossible Conversations (2012); *PUNK: Chaos to Couture* (2013); *China: Through the Looking Glass* (2015); *Manus x Machina: Fashion in an Age of Technology* (2016); *Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination* (2018); and *Notes on Camp* (2018), inspired by Susan Sontag's 1964 essay in which she defined camp as a passion for the "unnatural" (Sontag, 2018; *The Costume Institute*, n.d.).

The thematic exhibition *Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination* deserves a special mention, since it has become the most visited exhibition in the history of the Met Museum, being visited by 1,659,647 visitors from May 10 to October 8, 2018. It did exceed the prior number one show, *Treasures of Tutankhamun* (1978), which had been visited by 1,360,957 people (*1,659,647 Visitors to Costume Institute's Heavenly Bodies*, 2018).

To keep raising funds, the Costume Institute benefits from The Met Gala, an event whose main goal is to raise annual funding for the department's exhibitions, acquisitions, and capital improvements. Born from an idea of Eleanor Lambert, the event has been introduced for the first time in 1948 as a midnight supper and dubbed "The Party of the Year" (Chilton, 2020). Co-chairs in past years included Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (1977, 1978) and Patricia Taylor Buckley (1979–1995), Miuccia Prada (1998, 2012) and Oprah Winfrey (2010) (Shaw, 2021; *The Costume Institute*, n.d.).

Each first Monday of May, the Gala celebrates the overture of the spring exhibition, in more recent years under the guidance of Anna Wintour, artistic director of Condé Nast and editor-in-chief of *Vogue*: she has been co-chair since 1995, excluding 1996 and 1998. The Gala has turned into one of the most anticipated charity events, collecting guests not only from the world of fashion but also from those of cinema, society, sports, business, and music (Chilton, 2020).



From a digital perspective, to be mentioned is also the Met website,¹⁰ which, despite it does not offer digital recurrent exhibitions, every year attracts over 30 million users interested in exploring its offerings (*Making the Met*, n.d.). Moreover, the website together with Met social media accounts have been widely exploited during the Covid19 pandemic to offer a series of initiatives in order to let Met audiences access and enjoy its collections, programs, and educational contents while the museum was temporarily closed due to the restrictions (*The Metropolitan Museum of Art Announces*, 2020). Met is nowadays

10 www.metmuseum.org.

present on the following social media platforms: Facebook,¹¹ Instagram,¹² Pinterest,¹³ Twitter¹⁴ and YouTube.¹⁵ According to Dawson (2020), considering the number of followers on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, Met could be deemed the second most followed museum in the world, with almost 9.8 million followers, only preceded by MoMa with 12.4 million followers in 2020. To develop its strategy, Met has currently two people fully devoted to the development of a social media strategy (Dawson, 2020).

1.3.3 Palais Galliera

In May 1878, the Duchess of Galliera made it known that she wished to bequeath her art collection to the French nation, on condition that it would be displayed in a museum she would have financed and which was to be set in a square with specially created streets on both sides to be named Rue Brignole and Rue Galliera. The museum itself would have also to bear the name Brignole-Galliera in her honor (*History of the building*, n.d.). The Paris City Council accepted her proposal in July 1878 and the Duchess commissioned its construction (*History of the building*, n.d.).

Although the Paris City Council immediately accepted the Duchess proposal some vicissitudes forced the Duchess to change her plans and in 1884 she decided to bequeath her art collection to Palazzo Rosso in Genoa. Although the Duchess never exhibited her collection in Paris, she decided to finance the completion of the palace and that it would have immediately become a property of the city of Paris. After her death in 1888, the building was completed in 1894 (*History of the building*, n.d.).

In 1895, thanks also to the writer and historian Maurice Quentin-Bauchart, it was decided to dedicate the building's spaces to the creation of a museum of industrial design, to dispel the prejudice of the early 20th century that art applied to industry was inferior to the great art forms of architecture, sculpture and painting (*History of the building*, n.d.). Then, in 1954 the first of the annual exhibitions of the *Peintres Témoins de Leurs Temps* was presented in a renovated Palais Galliera (*History of the building*, n.d.).

Meanwhile, the city of Paris was increasingly establishing itself as a fashion capital and interest in historical and contemporary costume was growing, thanks also to the presence of figures such as the painter, historian and

11 www.facebook.com/metmuseum.

12 www.instagram.com/metmuseum/.

13 www.pinterest.ch/metmuseum/_created/.

14 twitter.com/metmuseum.

15 www.youtube.com/user/metmuseum.

collector Maurice Leloir (1853–1940), who founded the Société de l'Histoire du Costume (SHC) in 1907 and donated his remarkable collection to the city of Paris in 1920. On Leloir's death, Georges-Gustave Toudouze took over the presidency of the SHC, which still lacked a place where the public could admire its pieces (*Creation of the museum*, n.d.).

Initially, the City of Paris temporarily exhibited SHC's collection at the Cercle Volney while at the same time the curators of the Musée Carnavalet, to which part of SHC's collection had previously been donated by the City of Paris, and the directors of SHC, agreed to use the most iconic pieces to convince the Paris City Council of the desirability of a permanent showcase for the collection. The first exhibition at the Cercle Volney triggered the initial funding from the City Council for a costume museum and in 1954 the project became definitive: several rooms on the ground floor of the Musée Carnavalet were renovated and dedicated exclusively to the presentation of the SHC collection (*Creation of the museum*, n.d.).

The exhibitions at the Musée Carnavalet were immediately received with enthusiasm by the public, and donations began to arrive. It soon became clear that a more suitable venue was needed and in 1955 a large room on the ground floor of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris was chosen. Considered an annex of the Musée Carnavalet, the Musée du Costume was officially opened on 23 November 1956, with Madeleine Delpierre as chief curator (*Creation of the museum*, n.d.).

In 1971, however, the museum was forced to close when its ceiling collapsed. After the transfer of the collection to the Musée Carnavalet, the city of Paris decided to opt for the Palais Galliera, which in 1977 finally welcomed the Musée du Costume, making it the *Musée de la Mode et du Costume* and taking over the Palais Galliera (*Creation of the museum*, n.d.).

The new independent institution inherited the costume and accessories collection of the Musée Carnavalet and, with Madeleine Delpierre still at the helm, joined the group of fourteen Musées de la Ville de Paris (*Creation of the museum*, n.d.).

The 1980s led to an increase in the pieces collected and to the creation of two new departments: Prints and Drawings in 1984, and the Contemporary department in 1987. After Guillaume Garnier's death in 1989, Catherine Join-Diéterle succeeded (*Creation of the museum*, n.d.).

In 1994 on a new 4,800-square-meter site in Paris, the museum opened the restoration workshop and the storerooms dedicated to the conservation of the museum's garments and accessories. In 1997, a second change of name occurred and from Musée de la Mode et du Costume de la Ville de Paris the museum became the *Musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris* – the City of Paris

Fashion Museum. In 2002, the museum obtained the official accreditation of *Musée de France (Creation of the museum, n.d.)*.

In 2010, Olivier Saillard succeeded to Catherine Join-Diéterle as director, and under his management further improvements were done to the museum, which had been closed in 2009 and reopened in September 2013. At the time, it changed its name for the third time becoming the *Palais Galliera* promoting a return to the roots in the spirit of its original architect Paul-René-Léon Ginain (*Creation of the museum, n.d.*).

The Musée de la Mode et du Costume at Palais Galliera offers nowadays a varied collection of fashion pieces, which reflects the codes of clothing in France from the 18th century until contemporary fashion, including nearly 200,000 items such as clothing, accessories, photographs, drawings, etc. (*Collection, Palais Galliera, n.d.*).

Due to the fragility of its collections, the museum presents its monographic exhibitions (e.g., Givenchy, Fath, Carven, Grès, Alaïa, Jeanne Lanvin, Fortuny, Martin Margiela) and thematic ones (e.g., The History of Jeans, Japonisme in Fashion, Fashion and Gardens, The Roaring Twenties, Sous l'Empire des Crinolines) periodically renewing and substituting the pieces presented in order to protect and preserve them (*Restore, preserve and exhibit the collection, n.d.*).

The museum includes different departments: (i) 18th century dress, which encompasses indicatively 1,600 items, comprising men's and women's garments dating from the late 17th century to the year 1800, together with children's wear and theatre costumes; it offers reminders of France's royal past, such as dresses worn by Louis XVII and Marie-Antoinette (*Collection, Palais Galliera, n.d.*). (ii) 19th century costume, which presents items worn by Comtesse Greffulhe and the Empress Josephine. The department encompasses 5,300 items, which recounts the history of fashion among France's upper classes from the Napoléonic period to around 1906, when Paul Poiret's *Directoire* style dresses inaugurated the 20th century of fashion (*Collection, Palais Galliera, n.d.*). (iii) Fashion of the first half of the 20th century, which goes from the beginning of the 20th century to the appearance of Christian Dior's New Look in 1947, accumulating over 4,000 items. Among them pieces designed by stylists such as Balenciaga, Callot Soeurs, Chanel, Chéruit, Doeuillet, Doucet Nicole Grout, Jacques Heim, Lucien Lelong, Jeanne Lanvin, Molyneux and Elsa Schiaparelli (*Collection, Palais Galliera, n.d.*).

(iv) Haute Couture: the department comprises over 7,000 labelled items from some thirty different designers, including the creative diversity of Paris's couture houses by showing Dior, Balenciaga, Chanel, Grès, Carven, Fath and Balmain, Yves Saint Laurent, Courrèges, Paco Rabanne and Pierre Cardin and providing graphic illustrations by Christian Lacroix and by John Galliano for

Christian Dior. Within the concept of *Haute couture*, the museum includes all those luxurious clothes pieces, typically Parisian, which were created for women: the garments were to be created in their entirety according to the client's measurements, using the finest materials and handcraft. The breaking point for the museum is the 1947, after the austere War years, when the couturier Christian Dior left his stamp on the history of fashion in the form of a new silhouette, disrupting the fashion codes by creating his spring-summer haute couture collection, which fashion editors christened as The New Look, giving birth to the golden age of Parisian haute couture (the 1950s) (*Collection, Palais Galliera*, n.d.). (v) Contemporary Department: it includes pieces which are dated from early 1950s and illustrate the beginnings of ready-to-wear as pioneered by historic brands like Lempereur and Weill, it includes different groupings, that signal the evolution of French fashion from the mid-20th century to the most recent fashion production: ready-to-wear pieces, licensed lines, street fashion and the mass-produced clothes to be found in big cities across all over the world (*Collection, Palais Galliera*, n.d.). (vi) Undergarments. This department has a collection of some 5,000 items of lingerie, underwear and corsetry, which includes women's undergarments dating from the early 19th century until present days (*Collection, Palais Galliera*, n.d.). (vii) Accessories: it collects nearly 35,000 pieces from the 17th century until present times including hats, shoes, bags and purses, muffs, scarves, jewelry, fans, walking sticks, parasols, umbrellas, gloves, buttons, buckles (*Collection, Palais Galliera*, n.d.). (viii) Print and Drawing department houses nearly 55,000 items from the 18th century until nowadays and it includes prints, drawings, invoices and advertisements. The collection also includes a varied selection of engravings from fashion journals from the late 18th to the early 20th century, among them *Le Journal des Dames et des Demoiselles*, *La Mode Illustrée*, *Le Moniteur de la Mode* and *L'Art et la Mode* (*Collection, Palais Galliera*, n.d.). (ix) Photography department, which comprehends two major types of photography emerging from this mass of materials: professional and promotional ones. The photographic collection does not only retrace the history of fashion photography, clothes and the haute couturier lives, but it also considers the ways in which fashion has been advertised and the ways in which the human body has been depicted throughout different historical periods (*Collection, Palais Galliera*, n.d.).

The museum underwent between 2018 and 2020 through a period of restoration, which allowed it to enlarge its spaces to envisage temporary exhibitions from time to time. The museum was first said to reopen on March 31st, 2020, but due to Covid19 the opening was postponed to October 1, 2020 (Darrivière, 2020; *Palais Galliera to close for refurbishment until spring 2020*, 2019). New refurbishments indicatively include 670 extra square meters of galleries devoted to the

upcoming exhibitions. The new areas have been named after Gabrielle Chanel to which the museum has devoted its first exhibition *Gabrielle Chanel, manifeste de mode* from May 19 to July 18, 2021 (Darrivière, 2020; Darrivière, 2021).



Palais Galliera also offers to its visitors a comprehensive website¹⁶ in which it is possible not only to deepen the history of the museum, to book tickets and plan workshops, to discover current and planned temporary exhibitions, it also provides additional information for professionals and researchers, and offers the opportunity to see some online pieces. As of 2021 the social media presence of the museum includes Facebook,¹⁷ Instagram¹⁸ and Twitter¹⁹ overall almost 80,000 followers (as of June 29, 2021). The website also promotes a series of applications connected to the museum such as Second Canvas (*Covid-19: discover our collections from your home!*, n.d.).

1.3.4 Museum Dior Granville

The museum devoted to Christian Dior (1905–1957) was founded in 1997 at Villa Les Rhumbs, Christian Dior's childhood home in Granville, Normandy, not far from Mont St. Michel. The Villa was built by the shipowner Beust in the late 19th century and it was named “Les Rhumbs” due to the fact that the old marine symbol Rhumb, designating a wind rose divided into 32 rhumbs, appeared as a mosaic floor ornament in one of the house's entrances. It was bought by Christian Dior's parents in 1905. In 1932, after Christian Dior's mother Madeleine's death, the father, an industrialist ruined by the crisis, sold the property, which was bought by the town of Granville, which opened its garden to the public in 1938 (*Les Rhumbs*, n.d.).

According to Christian Dior's autobiography *Christian Dior et moi* the designer was attached to the family house, and he wrote that his style and his life owed almost everything to the site and architecture of his old house (*Les Rhumbs*, n.d.).

The idea of turning villa Les Rhumbs into a place dedicated to Christian Dior's memory and design became a real project only at the end of the 20th century, driven by the curator Jean-Luc Dufresne, the couturier's cousin (*The history of the Christian Dior Museum*, n.d.).

16 www.palaisgalliera.paris.fr.

17 www.facebook.com/PalaisGalliera/.

18 www.instagram.com/palais_galliera/.

19 twitter.com/PalaisGalliera.

In 1991, the association *Présence de Christian Dior* was founded to work on donations, while until 1995 the town of Granville was in charge of the acquisitions of Dior's pieces. Since 1995, the association *Présence de Christian Dior* has also become the point of reference of the acquisitions' collaborating with many stakeholders such as the Dior Couture and Dior Perfumes, LVMH company, the town of Granville, and the regional acquisition fund for the museums (*The history of the Christian Dior Museum*, n.d.).

In 1997, the villa became the Christian Dior Museum, the only – so far unique – *Musée de France* labeled museum dedicated to a couturier ("*Les Rhumbs*", n.d.). In the same year, the creation of "showcase rooms" allowed the museum to present its collections under better conditions and to regularly open the spaces to the public (*The history of the Christian Dior Museum*, n.d.). In the year 2005, the centenary of the couturier's birth, the *Christian Dior, man of the century* exhibition has been organized, which gave to the museum a national recognition (*The history of the Christian Dior Museum*, n.d.).

The Christian Dior Museum regularly calls on lenders' services to realize new exhibitions, nevertheless, the collections that it owns are becoming larger and larger every year. The museum acquires regularly new pieces (nearly 20 items per year from private individuals or in auction-rooms), to implement and complete its collections it benefits also from donations (*Collections*, n.d.).

Afterwards, the acquisitions are inventoried in an archive, allowing the museum to renew as much as possible the exhibitions, offering to the visitors the opportunity to discover, but also to gather up at the Christian Dior Museum a representative collection of the couturier's work (*Collections*, n.d.).

The association that runs the museum organizes since 2010 an autumn–winter exhibition: *Une maison, des collections*, presenting its permanent items and its most recent acquisitions (*The history of the Christian Dior Museum*, n.d.).

In June 2012, the museum also received the *Maison des Illustres* label from the Ministry of Culture (*The history of the Christian Dior Museum*, n.d.).

Since 1997 the following exhibitions have taken place in the museum: *Woman on Stage* (1997); *Tradition of Elegance* (1998); *Fashion and Travel* (1999); *Dior: Lifestyles* (2000); *Dior, In the Garden* (2001); *Dior, Fauna and Flora* (2002); *Dior, Architect of Fashion* (2003); *Dior, Fashion and Uniforms* (2004); *Christian Dior ... Man of the Century* (2005); *Christian Dior and The World* (2006); *Dior, 60 Colourful Years* (2007); *Dandyisms. From Barbay d'Aureville to Christian Dior* (2008); *Dior, The Bohan Years. Three decades of styles and stars* (2009); *Le Grand Bal Dior* (2010); *Dior, The Artists Ball* (2011); *Stars in Dior* (2012); *Dior Impressions* (2013); *Dior, The Legendary Images* (2014); *Dior, The New Look Revolution* (2015); *Women in Dior. Sublime Elegance of a Portrait* (2016); *Christian Dior & Granville* (2017); *Treasures of the Collections, 30 years of acquisitions* (2018); *Grace of*

Monaco, Princess in Dior (2019); and *Christian Dior, A Career in Couture* (2020) (*Exhibitions since 1997*, n.d.).



The museum offers to its visitors a quite descriptive website:²⁰ in fact, it does not offer the opportunity to book tickets, workshops or buy products but informs potential visitors about the story of the museum, exhibitions, the personal story of Dior, the Association and it provides practical information about how to reach the museum and what people can find in its shop. The Christian Dior Museum offers visitors in the section related to the collection a link to the website “Les Collections du Réseau des Musées de Normandie” in which it is possible to visualize 1525 digitalized items which can be consulted according to different categorizations (Les Collections du Réseau des Musées de Normandie, n.d.). Christian Dior Museum is also present on Facebook,²¹ Instagram,²² and on Twitter²³ with in total about 20,000 followers (as of June 29, 2021).

1.3.5 Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa

Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa created by the Foundation named after Cristóbal Balenciaga (1895–1972) opened on June 7th, 2011 with the goal to spread and underline the figure and work of the designer. The museum is situated not far from Balenciaga birthplace at Getaria, a small fishermen village in the Basque Country, on the north cost of Spain. The museum is housed in an annex of Palacio Aldamar, a villa located on a hill overlooking Getaria, and which was the residence of the Marquesses of Casa Torres, Queen Fabiola’s of Belgium grandparents and mentors of Balenciaga during the first stages of his career (*Cristóbal Balenciaga Museum: Preserving and Sharing a Heritage*, n.d.).

Although Cristóbal Balenciaga Museum’s main goals are to conserve, promote, highlight, and spread the work and the image of Cristóbal Balenciaga around the world and to ensure his contribution to the world of fashion and arts, in its spaces the museum does not only host exhibitions related to the designer and his works but, in rotation, it also presents temporary exhibitions connected to fashion and educational and leisure activities (*Cristóbal Balenciaga Museum: Preserving and Sharing a Heritage*, n.d.).

20 musee-dior-granville.com.

21 www.facebook.com/musee.christiandior/.

22 www.instagram.com/museediorganville/.

23 twitter.com/museedior.

Furthermore, at the museum a stream of research focuses on the interpretation and the spread of intangible heritage connected with Balenciaga's history. The museum gives spaces in fact also to the artisans' work that surrounded the couturier by making a tribute to all those people who contributed to the success of the man and of the brand, helping him in giving shape and materiality to his collections. The project called "the hands that sew" since 2014 has aimed to determine not only the contribution of the numerous people who worked for Balenciaga over the time, but also the techniques they utilized and the idea they had of the couturier and his personality (*The hands that sew*, n.d.).

The Cristóbal Balenciaga Museum hosts one of the most comprehensive collections of creations realized by the designer Cristóbal Balenciaga, both considering the quantity and the quality of the pieces owned and to the time-span covered, which ranges from Balenciaga's earliest stage of production to his final period (*Cristóbal Balenciaga Museum: Preserving and Sharing a Heritage*, n.d.).

It boasts a unique and varied collection of the designer's works mainly retrieved from donations of former clients and friends. It encompasses more than 3,000 items, including not only clothes and accessories but also sketches, fabric swatches, textiles, photographs, letters, toiles. The textile pieces are further complemented through a documentary archive that encompasses the Historical Archive of the Marquises of Casa-Torres, documents related to the Balenciaga House and the relations with its customers, drawings and fabric samples, images, photographs and a series of personal letters from and for the couturier. The museum's Conservation and Restoration department, apart from having developed criteria to handle the items and the collections, is also responsible to pursue extensive research, including studies on Balenciaga's private and professional life (*Cristóbal Balenciaga Museum: Preserving and Sharing a Heritage*, n.d.).

Among the past and present exhibitions, which have characterized the museum since its opening, we can mention the following ones: *Cristóbal Balenciaga. A Timeless Legacy* (2013–2017); *Balenciaga Master of Lace* (2016); *Balenciaga the Experience of Luxury* (2016); *Coal and Velvet. Views on Popular Costumes by Ortiz Echagüe and Balenciaga* (2016–2017); *Rachel L. Mellon Collection* (2017–2018); *Balenciaga. Revolution and Legacy* (2018–2019); *Cristóbal Balenciaga. Fashion and Heritage* (2018–2019); *Transmissions* (2018); *Distinción* (2019); *Cristóbal Balenciaga. Fashion and Heritage. Contexts* (2019–2020); *#Finaestampa_* (2019); *Fabiola from Belgium. A Royal Wedding* (2019); *Fashion and Heritage. Cristóbal* (2020–2021); and *Alaïa and Balenciaga. Sculptors of Shape* (2021) (*Collection, Balenciaga*, n.d.).



Through the time, the museum has developed its digital communication thanks to a website²⁴ and a collaboration with Google Arts and Culture, which has enabled to provide digital exhibitions. Examples are *Cristóbal Balenciaga. Fashion and Heritage*; and *Balenciaga and the Popular Costume (Digital Exhibitions, n.d.)*. In addition to that, the website offers a wide range of information about the current and past exhibitions, the history of the museum, learning activities, and provides the possibility to directly buy tickets. As for the social media presence, it is present on Facebook,²⁵ Instagram,²⁶ Twitter²⁷ and YouTube,²⁸ with indicatively 40,000 followers. The YouTube account could not be considered since it did not display the number of people registered (as of June 29, 2021).

1.3.6 Armani Silos

On April 30th, 2015 the Italian designer Giorgio Armani (1934-) opened Armani Silos in Milan, to celebrate 40 years of his career. Giorgio Armani's relation with the city of Milan can be dated back to 1957, when the stylist moved to the city to improve his career by founding his company and by making Milan his home (*Armani/Silos, n.d.; Armani Silos Exhibition Space, 2018*). The building, a former industrial warehouse, was chosen by the designer to establish his exposition place also due its characteristic lights and geometric lines, which perfectly matched with Armani's style and way of thinking. The spaces measure around 4,500 square meters, are displayed on four levels and host a permanent outfit collection that spans from the 1980s to the present day, retracing Armani's evolution of style and proposing highlights from the stylist's career path in the fashion industry, as well as temporary exhibitions dedicated to different artists. The spaces also include a gift shop, an open-plan indoor coffee shop, and a digital archive (*About the exhibition space, n.d.*).

The space has been set up to present Armani's aesthetic ideas and to elevate and celebrate creative talent by housing contemporary artists exhibitions and acting as a research center for students and researchers (*Armani/Silos, n.d.*).

The permanent collection showcases a selection of over forty years' Armani fashion creations and collections presented according to three main recurring

24 www.cristobalbalenciagamuseoa.com.

25 www.facebook.com/cristobalbalenciagamuseoa.

26 www.instagram.com/cristobalbalenciagamuseoa/.

27 twitter.com/museobalenciaga.

28 www.youtube.com/user/cbalenciagamuseoa.

themes, central to the designer's work and which continue to inspire his collections: (i) Androgynous: simple, pure and clean-cut fashion. Throughout his interpretation of the jacket, Armani reinterprets the concepts of androgyny by exposing pieces that are characterized by the use of neutral colors, the reinterpretation of male fabrics, the convey of the concepts of understated, discreet femininity and elegance. (ii) Ethnicities: Armani's creations present within this thematic section are the ones, which have been impacted by non-western cultures using and reinterpreting elements retraceable within far away ethnicities. Africa, China, Japan, Persia, Arabia, Syria and Polynesia are some of the sources of inspiration for the stylist. (iii) Stars: the interconnection of Armani with cinema is presented within this thematic area, where clothes worn by celebrities, both on screen and on the red carpet are displayed (*Permanent collection*, n.d.). Among the temporary exhibitions at Armani Silos there are *Emotions of the Athletic Body* (2017); *The Beats and the Vanities. Larry Fink* (2017); *Racconti Immaginari by Paolo Ventura* (2018); *Italian panorama* (2018); *From One Season to Another by Sarah Moon* (2018–2019); *Fabula by Charles Fregér* (2019); *The Challenge – Tadao Ando* (2019); *About Future: Architecture. Cities, Environment, Models and Visions* (2019); *Accents of Style* (2019–2020); and *Heimat. A Sense of Belonging* (2021) (*Past exhibitions*, n.d.).

As Armani explained (Stevens, 2015), the necessity to decide what to exhibit and how within Armani Silos has become a way for him to reflect on the main themes that represented his style and career path, contributing to the development of a museum that does not only present his career, but that also contributes to present to the society how fashion accompanies and often anticipates important social changes.



Armani Silos offers to the visitors and researchers also the possibility to interact with its digital archives, in which the brand's historical memories are brought back to life thanks to a digital soul, where through the use of touchscreen tables, workstations and projection areas it is possible to access its cultural heritage. The archive includes one thousand outfits divided into various collections, images and videos documenting backstage life and catwalks, sketches, advertisements and excerpts from *Emporio Armani Magazine* (*Armani Silos Exhibition Space*, 2018).

Armani Silos also offers a website²⁹ in which it is possible to plan the visits, reserve tickets for visits and for consulting the digital archives, to read about

29 www.armanisilos.com.

exhibitions, initiatives, and the story of the museum. In addition to that, it is also active on two social media channels: Facebook³⁰ and Pinterest,³¹ with respectively 26,380 and 526 followers (as of June 29, 2021).

1.3.7 Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris and Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech

In 2017, two museums have been established to present the works and the life of Yves Saint Laurent (1936–2008) and the collections of the Pierre Bergé – Yves Saint Laurent Foundation: one in Paris at the historic headquarter of the Yves Saint Laurent fashion house, and the other one in Marrakech.

The Parisian Museum is located in the Hôtel Particulier at 5 avenue Marceau where Yves Saint Laurent spent almost thirty years of his life designing his collections from 1974 to 2002. Part of the 450 meters square building is occupied by the headquarter of the Fondation Pierre Bergé – Yves Saint Laurent (*Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris*, n.d.).

The museum Yves Saint Laurent Paris is considered among the first museums in the city of Paris fully dedicated to the work of one of the twentieth century's greatest couturiers (*Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris*, n.d.).

The museum focuses on the couturier's creative genius, on the process of thinking and designing an haute couture collection, on the history of the twentieth century and the haute couture traditions that accompanied a way of life that no longer exists. It encompasses a rotation of retrospectives and displays temporary thematic exhibitions, offering a selection of approximately fifty haute couture designs throughout its spaces. To the main themes that shaped the couturier's life, the museum also presents two of Yves Saint Laurent's major creations: the Mondrian dresses (autumn–winter 1965) and the gowns realized in collaboration with the artist Claude Lallanne (autumn–winter 1969); it offers on its website also the presentation of the so-called online collection (*New Display for the Collections*, 2019).

Its present and past exhibitions include: *Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris* (2017–2018); *Yves Saint Laurent: Dreams of the Orient* (2018–2019); *Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris* (2019–2020); *Betty Catroux, Yves Saint Laurent* (2020–2021); *Yves Saint Laurent. Behind the Scenes of Haute Couture in Lyon* (2021) (*What's on*, n.d.).

The Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech Museum has been designed by the Studio KO. It comprises a 400-square-meter permanent exhibition space designed by Christophe Martin, a temporary exhibition space, a 150-seat auditorium, a

30 www.facebook.com/armanisilos/.

31 www.pinterest.it/armanisilos/.

bookstore, a terrace café, and a research library with over 6,000 volumes which attracts a broad range of visitors: local and foreign researchers, anthropologists, historians, archaeologists, museum and exhibition curators, artists, and students (Morris, 2017; *The museum*, n.d.).

From a collection point of view, the museum mainly focuses on essential work of Yves Saint Laurent such as the pea coat, the Mondrian dress, 'le smoking' and the safari jacket. It seeks to transmit YSL passion for Morocco and to present what mostly influenced the designer. Within the permanent exhibition, fifty pieces chosen from YSL collections are displayed around themes dear to the designer such as Masculine-Feminine, Black, Africa and Morocco, Imaginary Voyages, Gardens and Art offering a different perspective of the couturier's work using garments, which regularly rotate to better conserve each piece and to constantly renovate the exhibition. *Jacques Majorelle's Morocco* (2017–2018); *The Sculptural Dresses of Noureddin Amir* (2017–2018); *Les Marocains by Leila Aloui* (2018–2019); *Garden Memory* (2019–2020); *Jacques Azema. A Poetic Adventure* (2019–2020); *Desert Design* (2019–2020); *Christo: Femmes 1962–1968* (2019–2020); *Brice Marden Morocco* (2019–2020); and *Bert Flynt* (2020–2021) are the exhibitions that have been or are displayed within the museum (*Exhibitions*, n.d.; Morris, 2017).



The museum Yves Saint Laurent Paris is present on Facebook,³² Instagram³³ and YouTube³⁴ with about 190,000 followers altogether. The Marrakech Museum³⁵ as well as the Parisian³⁶ one offer to their visitors a website. While the second one offers also an online collection, in the first case the webpage appears to be less elaborated. It is possible to get to know more about Yves Saint Laurent life, the story of the building and of the museum, the library, the auditorium, the foundation Jardin Majorelle, the exhibitions and about how to organize the visit. The museum appears to be active on the following social media Facebook,³⁷ Instagram³⁸ and Twitter³⁹ with in total almost 140,000 followers (as of June 29, 2021).

32 www.facebook.com/museeyslparis/.

33 www.instagram.com/museeyslparis/.

34 www.youtube.com/user/fondationpbysl.

35 www.museeyslmarrakech.com.

36 museeyslparis.com.

37 www.facebook.com/myslmarrakech/.

38 www.instagram.com/myslmarrakech/.

39 twitter.com/myslmarrakech.

1.3.8 Musée Atelier Audemars Piguet

The Musée Atelier Audemars Piguet was inaugurated in 2020 in Le Brassus, home of the Audemars Piguet family, in order to plunge into the Swiss manufacturer's cultural universe past, present and future, by presenting two centuries of watchmaking history. The museum embodies the original historical house, established by Audemars Piguet's founders in 1875, with a new all-glass structure, made up of two spirals integrated into the existing landscape (Andrei, 2020, *The Architecture*, n.d.).

The museum offers collectors and auction houses a range of amenities and solutions including research, certification, as well as traditional restoration and preservation, *Grande Complication* and *Métier d'Art* workshops. As part of the manufacture's ongoing creative efforts, the museum provides an exhibition space to host some art works commissioned by Audemars Piguet, it displays also some of the manufacturer's watchmakers and artisans at work in their workshops. By integrating traditional ateliers at the centre of the museum, Audemars Piguet pays tribute to craftspeople who have given birth to the brand across 250 years of history (Andrei, 2020).

The museum showcases some 300 watches, encompassing pieces of miniaturization, technical complexity and avant-garde design and including iconic pieces belonging to Audemars Piguet's heritage. The museum showcases rare timepieces, such as the watch *Universelle* – the most complicated piece crafted by Audemars Piguet in 1899 – as well as a series of emblematic models including *Royal Oak*, *Royal Oak Offshore* and *Royal Oak Concept* (Besler, 2020).

Within the museum, it is possible to watch the exposition according to different types of watches such as *Chronograph Watches*, *Calendar Watches*, *Chiming Watches*, *Grandes Complications* or according to their period: *Belle Epoque*, *Art Deco*, *Postwar-boom Years*, *The 1970s*, *Late 20th Century*, *21st Century* (*Designing time*, n.d.; *Watches of exception*, n.d.).

The museum opened its doors in 2020, the same year in which UNESCO declared the craftsmanship of mechanical watchmaking and art mechanics an intangible cultural heritage of mankind (Andrei, 2020; Markl, 2020). The inclusion within intangible UNESCO cultural heritage does not only refer to the craftsmanship needed to produce watchmaking objects designed to measure and indicate time (clocks and chronometers, pendulum clocks and watches), but also to animated paintings, art automata and mechanical androids, music boxes, sculptures and songbirds. Among the values that the practice of watchmaking conveys, according to UNESCO, there are creativity, dexterity, good workmanship, patience, punctuality, perseverance, precision and the intangible aspect of time measurement. Apart from the philosophical and intangible dimension behind the inscription in the UNESCO intangible heritage list, there

is also an economic function, which has impacted Swiss and French society: the watch production and watchmakers have also shaped the architecture, urban landscape of the regions involved and with their industries they contribute to the economic development of the involved countries (Markl, 2020). In fact, eleven years earlier, in 2009, UNESCO had already inscribed as World Heritage Site La Chaux-de-Fonds/Le Locle, Watchmaking Town Planning. According to UNESCO, its universal outstanding value can be synthesized as follows: “The watchmaking urban ensemble of La Chaux-de-Fonds and Le Locle demonstrates outstanding universal value as these twin manufacturing-towns constitute an exceptional example of organic urban ensembles entirely dedicated to a single industry. They have been constructed by and for watchmaking. They are the product of an extremely close symbiosis between socio-technical needs and responses provided by town planning choices. Watchmaking has given rise to a remarkable architectural typology in the built structure. Housing designed for home working is situated alongside owners’ houses, workshops, and more recent factories, in a homogeneous and rational urban fabric that is open to the outside. The two towns bear witness to the exceptional uninterrupted continuation of a living and world-renowned watchmaking tradition, which has succeeded in coping with the socio-technical and economic crises of the contemporary world” (*Cultural properties – La Chaux-de-Fonds/Le Locle, watchmaking town*, 2009).

• • •

The museum is also active online through a website,⁴⁰ which offers visitors the opportunity to book activities that can be done in presence such as guided visits or workshops. In addition to that, it is possible to find on the website information about the museum, its surroundings, the architecture of the building, the exposed pieces and the ateliers.

The Musée Atelier Audemars Piguet has not dedicated social media accounts. From its website, the social media channels of the brand itself are linked. If we count them, it becomes the most active in terms of number of social media in which it is present considering the institutions presented in

⁴⁰ www.museeatelier-audemarspiguet.com.

this section: Facebook,⁴¹ Instagram,⁴² Pinterest,⁴³ Twitter,⁴⁴ YouTube⁴⁵ and Weibo,⁴⁶ with more than 4,400,000 followers in total.

1.3.9 Fashion in Museums and Exhibitions: An Overview of Their Digital Presence

As we have seen, all presented museums/institutions are active in the digital communication domain, even if at different degrees of involvement, and covering different social media channels. Such a variety could represent different approaches and philosophies when it comes to articulate the relationship between the physical and the digital, spanning from just providing essential info up to displaying digital exhibitions and offering booking services. Such differences might be also due to different budgets, to various maturity levels of their management, to copyright constraints, as well as to various connections and degrees of freedom between those institutions linked to a company and the company itself.

One can expect that the experience of lockdowns due to Covid19 will act as an accelerator in order to expand their online activities towards higher levels of interactivity, richer contents, and exploration of advanced features. All of them are also somehow active on social media, showing how their interactions with visitors, prospects and all interested persons can find on such channels a privileged field. Table 1 provides the number of followers/likes for each social media account.

While all above presented museums and exhibitions have been using several digital media in order to present themselves and make their collections somehow available, in recent years fully digital exhibitions and collections have been curated. That offers the possibility of crowd sourcing items that are physically distant and owned by different subjects, at the same time ensuring their (digital) conservation and accessibility to larger publics. Let us approach three cases in the next paragraph.

1.3.10 Digital Platforms

We can briefly present here two very large initiatives in the field – *the Europeana Fashion collection* and the Google *We Wear Culture* – as well as a recent initiative devoted to the Batik textile heritage: iWareBatik.

41 www.facebook.com/audemarspiguets/.

42 www.instagram.com/audemarspiguets/.

43 www.pinterest.pt/audemarspiguets/_created/.

44 twitter.com/audemarspiguets.

45 www.youtube.com/user/aptvofficial.

46 <https://weibo.com/3115261414>.

TABLE 1 Number of followers of museums' social media accounts as of June 29, 2021. The table is organized on the basis of the most liked Facebook page, which is the only social media used by all institutions.

Social media	Facebook	Instagram	Pinterest	Twitter	YouTube	Weibo
Museum						
The MET Museum and its Gala	1,958,630	3,883,562	852,173	4,302,304	271,000	–
Audemars Piguet	1,585,046	2,457,865	2,222	216,207	52,500	99,914
V&A Museum	709,368	1,607,294	121,700	1,373,072	204,000	–
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris	112,507	77,928	–	–	633	–
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech	105,328	32,114	–	901	–	–
Palais Galliera Musée	30,569	30,809	–	20,401	–	–
Armani Silos	25,879		526	–	–	–
Cristobal Balenciaga	17,972	16,604	–	6,106	Data n.a.	–
Museoa						
Museum Dior Granville	10,239	6,906	–	1,570	–	–

The project Europeana Fashion is a best practice network co-funded under an EU programme and initially composed by 22 partners from 12 European countries, which involved leading European institutions and collections in the fashion domain. The project was born in 2012 with the aim of providing access to over 700,000 digitized fashion pieces from Europe's leading museums, photographers and fashion archives, considering historical clothing and accessories, contemporary designs, catwalk photographs, drawings, sketches, posters, catalogues and videos to collectively showcase European fashion in a digital space and to digitally preserve a most valuable part of European Cultural Heritage (Europeana Fashion Project, n.d.; *Europeana Fashion*, n.d.).

Among the contents provided, there are contemporary autumn–winter, spring–summer collections from designers, as well as galleries and exhibitions such as *Clothes for the Ballroom*; *Les Coututiers*; *Textile Industry* and many more (*Europeana Fashion*, n.d.).

Thanks to its success, Europeana fashion led to the creation of the Europeana Fashion International Association, a non-profit organization established to bring

together and engage fashion institutions, both GLAMs – Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums – and creative industries, to valorize fashion heritage also online.

The association organizes special events every year, such as conferences and training workshops with the aim of enlarging competences and skills of its members on crucial topics such as the use of social media, the digitization and metadata standards for fashion contents and copyrights issues. It also offers support in order to help stakeholders to learn how to design and implement collection management systems for fashion archives (*Europeana Fashion, an enjoyable portal for everyone to explore!*, 2021).

Among its supporting members there are: Amsterdam Museum (NL), Archivio Emilio Pucci Firenze (IT), Fondazione Gianfranco Ferré Milano (IT), Les Art Decoratifs – Louvre Paris (FR), Missoni S.p.A Sumirago (IT), Salvatore Ferragamo S.p.A. Firenze (IT), Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (DE) and Stockholm Universitet (SE) (*Europeana Fashion, an enjoyable portal for everyone to explore!*, 2021).

In 2017, Google has launched a global initiative called *We wear culture*, offering a virtual free access exhibition presenting 3,000 years of fashion (*We Wear Culture: 3.000 years of fashion in Google*, n.d.). More than 180 museums, fashion organizations, schools, archives, other institutions and NGOs from all over the world have collaborated with Google to explain through this virtual exhibition that fashion can be considered a part of culture, a form of art and the result of craftsmanship with a multifaceted impact. To do so, these institutions have teamed up to make available online more than 30,000 fashion pieces (*We Wear Culture: 3.000 years of fashion in Google*, n.d.).

With more than 450 exhibits, the website offers visitors the opportunity to explore and understand fashion through different lenses presenting pieces that go from the Silk Road and the Sari history to the British Punk. Moreover, it presents the most iconic couturiers, shoemakers, jewelers, tie-dyers and bag-makers such as Coco Chanel, Cristóbal Balenciaga, Oscar de la Renta, Salvatore Ferragamo, Yves Saint Laurent or Vivienne Westwood, which mastered their crafts through generations, turning design sketches and tailoring patterns into pieces that people still wear (Lauterbach, 2017; *We Wear Culture: 3.000 years of fashion in Google*, n.d.).

We Wear Culture explores also sustainability issues, presenting ecological or recycled textiles and offering visitors food for thought on what is the real cost of fast fashion, on how technology is revolutionizing the way fashion is done or on ways to consume fashion respecting the planet (*We Wear Culture: 3.000 years of fashion in Google*, n.d.). It also offers a section dedicated to virtual reality films on YouTube, bringing to life the stories of iconic pieces (Lauterbach, 2017).

From a technological point of view, Google's technologies include virtual reality, 360-degree videos, street and high-resolution images that are used to preserve collections and to make them available to everyone everywhere. The zoom option offers the chance to get into ultra-high-resolution images made with Art Camera in order to observe craftsmanship details and unique pieces (Lauterbach, 2017; *We Wear Culture: 3,000 years of fashion in Google*, n.d.).

We Wear Culture is available online at g.co/wewearculture and through the Google Arts & Culture mobile app on iOS and Android. According to Andrew Bolton, MET curator "It's very difficult to show fashion on a permanent display in museums because of its fragility", therefore, online exhibitions such as the ones provided by Google *We Wear Culture* can allow a large part of collections to be virtually displayed without damaging the pieces and further broadening the access to fashion (Ward, 2017).

The above-mentioned UNESCO recognition of practices and traditions related to the artisan *savoir faire* of watchmakers is not the only fashion-related practice, which has been inscribed in the UNESCO intangible heritage: another example is the Indonesian Batik textile. The production, the techniques utilized, the symbolism and culture that surrounds Batik, whose hand-dyed cotton and silk garments permeate the everyday life of Indonesian people has been recognized as a major intangible cultural heritage. In fact, from the very beginning to the end of life, Indonesians experience Batik not only as a garment to wear but also as a form of culture and as a form of communication. The technique is often handed down by Indonesian families from generation to generation and the Batik craftsmanship intertwines with Indonesian cultural identity and spiritual rituals, through the adoption of symbols, colors and designs with particular meanings. While in their infancy babies are carried in batik slings adorned with symbols of good luck, specific Batik varieties are utilized during weddings and at funerals as well, the dead are shrouded within batik textiles. A central role is played by Batik in further religious rituals, such as the ceremonial casting of royal Batik into a volcano. Furthermore, Batik textile is worn regularly in business and academic settings, as well as by public employees. Batik technique originated from the island of Java and it is realized either by drawing dots and lines of the resist with a tool called *canting*, or by printing the resist with a copper stamp named *cap*. The diversity of patterns reflects varied historical influences including Arabic calligraphy, European bouquets, Chinese phoenixes, Japanese cherry blossoms and Indian or Persian peacocks (*Cultural Selection: "Batik for the World"*, n.d.; *Indonesian Batik*, n.d.; Permatasari & Cantoni, 2019a).

To preserve Batik and its heritage, the inscription of this technique in the UNESCO intangible heritage has also been accompanied by an increased

interest by museums and by the development of information and communication technologies aimed at further safeguarding such heritage (*Discover Indonesian Batik at These 5 Batik Museums*, 2020; Permatasari & Cantoni, 2019b; Permatasari et al., 2020).

Among the digital initiatives, we should present here iWare Batik, which stands for “I am aware of Batik”, “interactive software of Batik” and “I wear Batik”. Developed thanks to a collaboration among the Indonesian LPDP Fund, Sobat Budaya’s Indonesian Cultural Digital Library, and USI – Università della Svizzera italiana (Switzerland), iWareBatik is a digital platform – a website⁴⁷ and a mobile app – designed to showcase and communicate cultural values and meanings of Batik. It aims to help international travelers and Indonesian Batik stakeholders to look for the variety of Batik textiles, the philosophical meanings behind each motif, their place of origin and local producers. Moreover, the platform provides tourist information about the 34 Indonesian provinces and their Batik-related practices, while doing so, it seeks to raise awareness towards rural sustainable tourism and the preservation of UNESCO heritage properties within Indonesia (*Philosophy of iWareBatik*, n.d.). The mobile app features gamification dimensions, and offers an artificial intelligence powered service: the user can take a picture of a Batik motif, and the system provides its name, history, meaning, and place of origin.



Two different but convergent paths have led us to explore the close connections between fashion and popular culture. While doing so, we already stressed how the digital transformation has deeply impacted all studied aspects. It is now time to look closer at digital media and/in fashion, and to explore how popular culture and intercultural issues play on such stage.

2 Fashion and Communication (Technologies)

The previous Part has covered popular culture and fashion, by doing so, several communication dimensions and practices have been already tackled, every time briefly addressing the issue of how the digital transformation is affecting them.

It is now time to focus directly on the close, deep, and intrinsic relationship between fashion and communication. This Part will first present fashion as

⁴⁷ www.iwarebatik.org.

communication, outlining a semiotic approach to it, closely connected with popular culture studies. Then it will focus on the reactions of fashion with information and communication technologies and digital media. While tales have been covered in the previous Part, this one will address such a topic through two contemporary tales – the role of J. Lo in the history of Google, and of Federico Marchetti in fashion eCommerce.

The three main areas/layers in which fashion's digital transformation is taking place will then be presented, on the one side showing how much wide and deep it is, and on the other side, helping to position our research within such a large map.

Digital communication does not know – from a technical viewpoint – physical and political borders. However, globalization has not destroyed linguistic and cultural varieties. To communicate properly with different locales, it requires not only linguistic translation, but also a cultural one. Localization is hence covered, and how it is applied within digital fashion communication.

The last, and major part of this Part, is devoted to present and discuss instances in which communication failures do happen, covering several recent cases in the field of fashion and providing a tentative still comprehensive framework to interpret such cultural clashes. Both cases and framework might help to anticipate and even to avoid them ...

2.1 *Fashion as (Also) Communication: A Semiotic Approach*

Clothing is a form of expression of the human being, and it concerns all facets of human life, the relationships of individuals with their body as well as the relationships of the body with human society. Beside modesty and the need to protect ourselves, a main reason why we dress in specific fashions is to express ourselves and to communicate our invisible dimensions to others.

Because of the utmost importance of expression and communication in fashion, it has become of particular interest for semioticians like Roland Barthes (1973), Umberto Eco (1969) and others (Rocamora & Smelik, 2016). Clothes, accessories, and all fashion-related items can be in fact interpreted as elements of a semiotic system, and do resemble to a language: this is fully evident, for instance, in uniforms, which operate as a formally defined semiotic/social code.

According to Arthur Asa Berger, “Fashion is the infinity of articles of clothing that are available in a given society and personal dress is the combination of articles of clothing that an individual selects to wear at a given moment in time. We can see, then, that personal dress is the equivalent of speaking or saying something using elements that are similar to verbs and nouns and adjectives – elements such as shirts and pants and dresses and suits and shoes” (Berger, 2017: 88).

We have here two main elements of a semiotic/linguistic code: a paradigm of items that can be alternatively chosen – e.g., the different types of shoes one can wear – and a syntactic structure, which combines chosen elements in order to define a specific outfit. When we get clothed in the morning, we take then a series of decisions about specific layers (underware, upper and lower body, shoes, hats, etc.) and combine individual choices at each layer up to completion of our final outfit.

As in semiotic/language, we have also in fashion the “zero” sign: the choice is not only about alternative items, but also between them and a “zero” item. This happens, for instance, when a person decides not to wear a tie, or to go barefoot. Social practices, more or less formalized into formal codes, are considered while taking such decisions, decisions that can be more or less in line with what we believe others expect from us. Such social practices/norms are constantly negotiated and re-negotiated every time someone gets dressed. Berger suggests the *denimization* as a process of change, which has fully re-negotiated the meaning of denim; we can mention here the incredible diffusion of sneakers in recent years. While at first they were confined within the paradigm of sport shoes, and adequate in syntagmatic relations with sport clothes, nowadays they have fully entered further paradigms, being accepted or even desired at work or in other occasions.

In fashion, like elsewhere, everything has a meaning. What should not be forgotten, is that we dress (also) for functional reasons, and that fashion items are much more expensive than words ... “The language of dress is much more limited than language itself, since we have an almost unlimited number of words at our disposal while our personal dress is limited to the clothes that we have purchased (or that we can afford). And words do not go out of fashion as quickly as clothes” (Berger, 2017: 89); thus, an extensive and comprehensive grammar of fashion, the same we have for languages, is not possible (Svendsen, 2006).

A poor person, who dresses with the only items he has, is not doing so *because* he wants to communicate that he is poor; he does so because he cannot afford any actual choice, and *by doing so* he discloses his poverty.

As in languages, also in fashion some elements might change at a very fast pace (like for denim and sneakers), while others do remain unchallenged/unchanged for several decades if not centuries. In language, for instance, while new words are constantly created (and others become obsolete), morphology remains very stable across the time. In fashion, colors, materials, models and shapes do change quite frequently, while other dimensions remain stable. Consider, for example, the fate of trousers in Europe and in western societies: they are (almost) the only shape allowed for men to dress their lower body.

While tunic-shaped items were very common in the ancient times up to the middle age, later on they have been specialized only for women or religious clothes. A similar discourse can be done for high heels: up to a certain moment they were used by men, nowadays they are used mostly by women. Of course, tunic-shaped dresses are still used by men in many geographies, and Scott men do wear kilts ... As in language, for any rule you can find several exceptions!

Fashion's communication value and potential have been demonstrated by old and new media, and have being amplified through an increasing use of digital technologies such as social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, Twitter etc.). Such amplification, in turn, has contributed to make fashion a major player within the pop culture panorama (Kalbaska et al., 2018b).

According to Kalbaska et al. (2018b) there are four main aspects to be considered when analyzing the intertwining relationship between fashion and communication. (i) Imitation: as suggested by Simmel in 1905 (1957), individuals through clothing, on one side, look for approval among the community, and on the other, try to distinguish themselves and appear unique. Simmel believes then that fashion satisfies two human needs: the need to fit in a community/culture and the need to differentiate from others and affirm a personal identity. The need of imitation nowadays is not only utilized by higher social strata to differentiate by lower classes, or as a top-down phenomenon, where higher social classes create trends that eventually spread to the majority; it is also a bottom-up phenomenon where what is worn by lower-middle class people might become fascinating also for the élites. (ii) Appearance: through clothing people tend to express who they are also according to the occasions and the different functions they have in their lives. In this sense, in society media and social media play a significant role in determining what is acceptable and what is not also from the fashion perspective. (iii) Expression: according to authors such as Eco (1969), Barthes (1973), Lurie (1981) and Lotman (2011), fashion can be also considered as communication, a non-verbal and visual language with many different nuances. Moreover, more recently Lascity (2021) has stressed the importance of clothing and personal adornment within communicative processes. People utilize clothing at different levels: individual, intrapersonal, to help themselves to develop their sense of the self; interpersonal, to communicate with others their appearance and how they make sense of others; and at a group level to fit in with particular social groups or religious affiliation (Lascity, 2021). (iv) Prescription, imitation, influence and personal relations: all these elements contribute to create trends and determine the penetration of fashion within social life.

The internet has amplified this phenomenon and the power of these four factors has increased: influential persons (and influencers) through social media have strengthened their role and their impact on personal relations also when it comes to clothing.

2.2 *Digital Transformation within Fashion*

In this paragraph, the different layers and dimensions of the digital transformation of fashion (Andò et al., 2019; Rocamora, 2017) are presented and mapped according to a comprehensive framework. To do so, two tales will introduce us to such a disruptive process – those of J. Lo and Google and of Federico Marchetti and YOOX. Afterwards, a three layers map will be provided, together with a number of specific application domains.

2.2.1 J. Lo & Google: A Tale of Fashion and Digital

Fashion is not only the Cinderella of museums, who eventually turned into a princess, as we documented in the previous Part. Digital in fact, is another field that has been disrupted by it ... Let's see this through a story.

In 2000 the performer Jennifer Lopez appeared on the red carpet of the Grammy Awards wearing a green Versace gown with a neckline that plunged down to her naval (Fig. 5). The dress was held only by a tape. Not an ordinary outlook, which did not fail to capture the attention of those participating in the event as well as of those watching her on the screens across the entire globe. People were so impressed by J. Lo and her dress, up to the point that they became the most popular search query of the time on Google (Li, 2019).

However, back then, search results on Google were still a list of blue links. When the search team realized that the query had become so popular, and that Google wasn't able to directly surface the results that people were looking for – the picture of J. Lo wearing the dress – the team felt clearly the need to address such visual searches and created Google Images (Li, 2019).

Hereafter the report provided by Eric Schmidt (2015), a former CEO of Google: “When Google was launched, people were amazed that they were able to find out about almost anything by typing just a few words into a computer. The engineering behind it was technically complicated, but what you got was pretty rough: a page of text, broken up by ten blue links. It was better than anything else, but not great by today's standards. So our co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin – like all other successful inventors – kept iterating. They started with images. After all, people wanted more than just text. This first became apparent after the 2000 Grammy Awards, where Jennifer Lopez wore a green dress that, well, caught the world's attention. At the time, it was the most popular search query we had ever



FIGURE 5 The O.G. dress, at the 42nd Grammy Awards
© SCOTT GRIES/HULTON ARCHIVE VIA GETTY IMAGES

seen. But we had no sure-fire way of getting users exactly what they wanted: J-Lo wearing that dress. Google Image Search was born”.

In an interview to *GQ* in 2019, Cathy Edwards, director of engineering and product for Google Images, declared that the creation of a whole new way to look at the internet did not happen overnight, but J. Lo provided a major impetus in that direction. Despite the fact that in 2000 Google was only two years old and with a quite small number of employees, everyone had clearly in mind the importance of creating an image search engine, but no one knew how much

priority to give it until J. Lo wore that dress in February 2000. Google Images was finally launched a year after the Grammys, on July 12th, 2001 (Tashjian, 2019).

At the time few people were able to take part and join an event such the Grammys or fashion catwalks, and in order to get to know more on clothes or styles, buying a magazine appeared to be among the simplest solutions. With the advent of Google Images instead, anyone at any time became able to look for clothes and styles through the use of queries (Tashjian, 2019).

During the Milan Fashion Week 2019, Donatella Versace together with Jennifer Lopez decided to revamp the iconic dress and J. Lo performance. Versace reached out Google to work with the company on the show: the Google Assistant has been utilized as vocal command during the show to launch the images and also the invitations to the show were created through a jungle print flipbook with a Google search field claiming “what is Versace Spring 2020” (Li, 2019; Tashjian, 2019).

In addition, during the Versace fashion show a voice asked “OK, Google, show me images of the Versace jungle dress” and photos of the famous dress appeared on screens positioned all around the runway. Immediately after, the same Donatella Versace queried: “Okay Google, show me the real Versace jungle dress” and then J. Lo appeared wearing a revived version of the dress (Fig. 6). As it happened for the event in 2000, the catwalk saw a spike on Google queries (Tashjian, 2019).

While this tale tells quite a bit about IT developers – an almost only-male micro-culture (Ensmenger, 2010) – it also highlights both the importance of fashion within the digital transformation as well as the role played by digital media within fashion and its narratives.

Such importance goes well beyond deeply affecting the way fashion is communicated – in fact, it touches all fashion related practices. Among them, let’s now consider the very way fashion is sold and bought.

2.2.2 Federico Marchetti and YOOX, a Tale of Digital and Fashion

Another digital event related to the fashion industry that has disrupted it has been the birth of YOOX, the first fashion multibrand eCommerce company. The firm, an off-price luxury e-tailer, was born from an idea of Federico Marchetti, an Italian consultant who after completing an MBA at Columbia University, decided to return to Milan. In 1999, Marchetti conceived his entrepreneurial idea founding YOOX, bringing together the worlds of fashion and internet (Friedman, 2012; Gonsalves, 2014). The name chosen for the company, YOOX, according to Marchetti’s explanation, means magic box. The origin of the name is connected with the scientific use of the terms “Y” and “X”, which are defined



FIGURE 6 Jennifer Lopez and Donatella Versace during the Milan Fashion Week spring-summer 2020. Lopez's dress is a take on the legendary dress, also by Versace, worn by J. Lo during the Grammys 2000

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as chromosomes of “XX” and “XY”, signifying man and woman. To the “Y” and “X” the founder added the letter “O”, which symbolizes “o”, signifying binary code as well as internet. “Y” and “X” have not been in the middle of the brand name due to the fact that according to Marchetti's point of view people are the ones who manage technology, therefore they need to be around the technology “OO” (WIRED.JP, 2013).

Behind this concept, there is the idea that technology needs to be integrated with entertainment dimensions in order to be part of human life (WIRED.JP, 2013; YOOX, n.d.).

After having approached and convinced venture capitalists to invest in the idea, Marchetti founded the company in 2000 and launched YOOX website, which within few years became a global leader in fashion eCommerce. In 2004, it has been listed among the Time Magazine's “50 coolest websites” for the Lifestyle and Culture section. The company's main goal is to interact with sophisticated customers, who are able to create and design their own

outfits without the need of season offerings (*YNAP's pioneering milestones*, n.d.; *YOOX*, n.d.).

In 2015, YOOX was merged with Net-a-Porter, a company founded as well in 2000, giving birth to YOOX Net-a-Porter Group (YNAP); later on, in 2018, it has become part of the Richemont group. In the same year, the company partnered with Alibaba Group to easily reach and further engage Chinese customers (*YNAP's pioneering milestones*, n.d.).

The two tales of J. Lo and Federico Marchetti, besides introducing to the overall digital transformation of fashion, can be read as highlighting two disruptive directions. In the first tale, a fashion-related event – linked with music, a very important companion of fashion within popular culture, as we have seen in the previous Part – triggers a major change in the way we look at the internet and its major search engine. In the second one, a successful digital eCommerce application triggers a major change in the way fashion items are presented, sold and bought.

Due to the increasing intertwining of fashion and digital, a new stream of research is thus expanding, exploring the realm of “digital fashion”, whose dimensions we need now to explore briefly.

2.3 *Three Layers and Main Applications*

A systematic literature review conducted by Noris et al. (2020a) revealed that the digital fashion field is flourishing. By querying five databases (ACM, ERIC, IEEE, Scopus and Springer Link) from the 9th until the 15th July 2019 using “digital” and “fashion” as search terms, a corpus of 491 relevant publications has been collected and analyzed. Such analysis has yielded to a classification of the research domain according to three main layers: (i) *C&M – Communication and Marketing*; (ii) *D&P – Design and Production*; and (iii) *C&S – Culture and Society*.

Each layer presents different subcategories. (i) *Communication and Marketing* includes the following elements (a) *C&M: Practices* – it refers to the execution of communication and marketing activities and their effects on consumers; (b) *C&M: Enabling Tools* – it considers the development of tools that enable the fashion environment to put in act such activities; and (c) *C&M: Societal Implications* – it considers the implications on society.

(ii) *Design and Production*, intended in their broad definition, is subcategorized in (a) *D&P: Product Development*; and (b) *D&P: Process and Technology Implementation*, including in those sublayers the creation and implementation of tangible and intangible elements/processes, which are performed both by humans and machines and allow the advancement of the fashion sector.

Finally, the category (iii) *C&S – Culture and Society* is subdivided into three sublayers: (a) *C&S: Culture*; (b) *C&S: Education*; and (c) *C&S: Society*.

On the base of this systematic literature review, Nobile et al. (2021) defines digital fashion as an emerging field that “involves all those processes that include (i) marketing and communicating tangible and intangible products; (ii) the development and implementation of processes that support the advancement of the industry; (iii) the effects of digital advances on society” (p. 5).

Beside setting the ground for a classification of digital fashion, those studies demonstrate also that the domain is flourishing, attracting the interest of academics and practitioners, not only when referring to the category *Communication and Marketing*, which is the most represented one, but also when considering the categories *Design & Production* and *Culture & Society*, which are emerging.

According to the above presented classification, the study whose pages are in your hands (or on a screen in front of you) belongs to the C&S and C&M layers. On the one hand, this book offers an analysis of how popular culture has impacted fashion and how fashion has impacted and transformed popular culture. This falls under the C&S category, whose sublayers *C&S: Culture* and *C&S: Society* consist of a number of studies that, according to the cited literature review, deal with topics such as fashion culture and heritage, history, customs and tradition, religion, art and performance, trends in the digital age, but also studies that consider how the whole digital system of fashion can interact with our society (Nobile et al., 2021).

On the other hand, the second part of the book dedicated to *Fashion and Communication (Technologies)* belongs to the category C&M (sublayers: *Practices* and *Societal Implications*). These sublayers discuss the development of communication and marketing strategies in the digital realm involving all interested stakeholders, which contribute to the development of the fashion system, including also studies on crisis communication; they also discuss the impact of communication technologies as a tool to research a specific social issue and how it interplays with fashion. It is believed in fact, that fashion through the intertwining with communication technologies can have an important role to shape society, human beings' identity and attitudes (Noris et al., 2020a).

In this direction, the following paragraphs are devoted to explore specific fashion communication and marketing dimensions, particularly affected by the digital transformation.

2.3.1 Fashion Shows

The first fashion show can be dated back to the 1860s when in Paris the designer Charles Frederick in order to present his new fashion pieces utilized real models rather than the usual mannequins. Initially, fashion shows were called “fashion parades” and were small events thought for buyers and specialists; not even photographers were invited, in order to avoid the circulation of any kind of copy (*A short history of the fashion show*, 2019).

It was only after World War II that fashion houses started to open their ateliers to present their collections: shows started to be presented as previews of collections that would have been sold in shops months later. Editors and journalists got used to come to the events to see the presentations and to use them to forecast trends and decide which pieces and brands they wanted to feature in their articles. Buyers, on the other hand, had the time to see the upcoming season's offering and arrange their purchase (*A short history of the fashion show*, 2019).

As above mentioned, after a "fashion oligarchy" phase, in which fashion shows and weeks have been mainly centered around cities such as Paris, London, Milan and New York, in more recent years the status symbol of these cities has been challenged by many other places that have tried to establish themselves within the fashion environment, also thanks to digital media. Today, cities such as Dubai, Copenhagen, Los Angeles and Miami, Mumbai and New Delhi, Sao Paulo, Stockholm, Shanghai, and Tokyo are emerging or have emerged as fashion capitals also due to their particular attention to become fashion show centers (Godart, 2014; Kalbaska et al., 2018b).

As it happened for the fashion magazines, with the spread and proliferation of social media platforms, in order to remain appealing, fashion shows had to readapt and to modernize themselves also becoming media events. Fashion shows although still attended by celebrities, buyers and journalists, are also featuring bloggers and influencers, who are nowadays recognized by the audience as fashion authorities on a par with editors and fashion experts. A valuable moment in the establishment of fashion bloggers as authorities has been settled in 2009, when Dolce & Gabbana included their presence on the front row of their show (Rocamora, 2017).

Furthermore, many companies have been able to reduce the manufacturing times (for example, "fast fashion" ones, such as H&M and Zara) in order to satisfy a consumer philosophy of "see now, buy now", contributing to the birth of the so-called "in-season collections". Fashion shows such as Victoria's Secret have become public spectacle and entertainment events, where consumers can access live-streams of most of the shows worldwide, which means that by the time that clothes are set up in the stores, they are not considered by customers as "new" anymore.

Fashion companies have integrated fashion shows with social media to the point that they are now for certain aspects intrinsic, contributing to the spectacularization of such events. As an example, in September 2013, through a partnership with Apple, Burberry's collection was presented to the world across eleven different social networks, through the exploitation of a digital screen present on its flagship store, as well as through mega screens such as the ones in New York's Times Square and in Hong Kong's Worldwide House (Strugatz & Conti, 2013).

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Periscope, Snapchat, and more recently TikTok have become legitimate spaces of diffusion of fashion collections: this transition has been accelerated in 2020 by the spread of Covid19, which led most institutions involved in the organization of fashion shows to produce full online events. For instance, in September 2020 TikTok launched the “TikTok Fashion Month”, a one-month event whose aim was to create a more accessible, direct-to-consumer fashion show environment. Among the participants, there were global luxury fashion brands such as Louis Vuitton and Yves Saint Laurent, which already presented their first experiences on the platform earlier in September, as well as JW Anderson and Alice & Olivia. The latter brand created a capsule collection with PUMA exclusively for this platform (Ageeva, 2020; *TikTok, but make it fashion: Introducing #TikTokFashionMonth*, 2020).

2.3.2 Fashion Models

The history of models and super models is closely connected with the history of fashion shows and *vice versa*. As mentioned above, in the 1860s Charles Frederick Worth, who could be considered the world’s first couturier, was, in fact, the first designer to use live mannequins, who were later on called models, to present his collections. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the first modeling agencies and schools made their appearance. In mid 1900s the phenomenon of “big name models” started to emerge: among them Barbara Goalen, Bettina, Carmen Dell’Orefice, Dorian Leigh, Dovina, Fiona Campbell-Walter, Suzy Parker and Lisa Fonssagrives, who is widely considered to have been the world’s first supermodel. They made frequent appearances on the covers of fashion magazines such as *Harper’s Bazaar* and *Vogue* (*A short history of the fashion show*, 2019; Lindig & Matthews, 2016) and became highly recognized within popular culture.

In the 1960s, it was the turn of Pattie Boyd, Peggy Moffit, Jean Shrimpton, Twiggy, Luna Donyale and Naomi Sims, the latter two respectively became the world’s first black supermodel and the first black woman to cover *Ladies Home Journal* (Lindig & Matthews, 2016).

In 1975, Cheryl Tiegs was the first model to be featured in two *Sports Illustrated* covers, followed later on by other models such as Christie Brinkley, Kathy Ireland and Stephanie Seymour, who was also featured by Victoria’s Secret for its shows. In the same year, Beverly Johnson became the first black model to appear on the cover of *American Vogue*, one year later she was featured on *French ELLE* cover, the model appeared in nearly 500 magazines throughout her career and walked many famous runways. In 1975, the Somali beauty Iman Abdulmajid was discovered by Peter Beard in Nairobi: she moved to the U.S. and soon became popular by shooting for *Vogue America* (Lindig & Matthews, 2016).

In the late 1980s, Elle Macpherson, nicknamed “The Body”, was featured in *ELLE* magazine for six years in a row; in 1994 she was among the first models to create her own business: Elle Macpherson Inc. and later on she also set up her own lingerie company. In the same years, the British black model Naomi Campbell was establishing herself by landing on the cover of *British ELLE* just before her 16th birthday. By the late 1980s, Campbell, along with other two supermodels Christy Turlington and Linda Evangelista became known as the “trinity”, which in the 1990s became eventually the “big six” by adding Kate Moss, Cindy Crawford, and Claudia Schiffer. Long before the success of Emily Ratajkowski in the music video *Blurred Lines*, in 1989 Helena Christensen appeared as model in Chris Isaak’s *Wicked Games* music video, while in 1991 Tyra Banks was one of the first models to shift into acting industry. They both contributed to the spread of fashion icons within pop culture (Lindig & Matthews, 2016).

At the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 2000s the fashion world was characterized by a greater diversity: in 1998 Alek Wek, a model from South Sudan, became an icon for women with darker skin; a year later, Sophie Dahl became one of the first cases of a fuller-figured models. Sophie was followed by another plus-size model: Ashley Graham, who made history by appearing on the cover of the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue*. Also, the Canadian model Winnie Harlow, affected by skin vitiligo, received a valuable endorsement when she was featured in Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* visual album (Lindig & Matthews, 2016; Nnadi, 2020).

In the 2000s, it has been the turn of the so-called “Brazilian Babes”: Alessandra Ambrosio, Adriana Lima and Gisele Bündchen, who together with Tyra Banks, Stephanie Seymour, Helena Christensen, Heidi Klum, Naomi Campbell, Claudia Schiffer, Irina Shayk and Liya Kebede became among the most iconic Angels of Victoria’s Secret fashion shows (Lindig & Matthews, 2016; Matera, 2016).

With the spread of social media, also the supermodel fashion panorama has deeply changed. Even if Donatella Versace in 2018 decided to make a tribute to the 1990s supermodels who contributed to make the brand so famous by inviting Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell, Helena Christensen, Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, and Claudia Schiffer to close her Milan fashion show (Cusumano, 2017), in the last decade the world of so-called “Insta-models” and influencers is emerging.

2.3.3 Influencers

According to SanMiguel (2020), influencers can be considered as individuals, who make their voice stand out from the rest, and who manage to position themselves as opinion referents in a certain area, exploiting the word of mouth on the web. Thanks to their characteristics, such figures have become crucial for the fashion world: influencers are considered as new stars and celebs,

capable of attracting millions of followers with their social media accounts (SanMiguel, 2020). Influencers can be divided according to (i) the type of platform on which they appear (e.g., bloggers, Instagrammers, TikTokers, Youtubers, etc.); (ii) their personal-professional profile, which can be further divided in scope of influence, spread of trends and B2B and B2C influence; (iii) their volume of followers; and (iv) the following 4 variables: relevance, resonance, objectives and customer journey (SanMiguel, 2020).

Looking into fashion when matching the categories related to platforms and volumes of followers, models like Emily Ratajkowski, Kaia Gerber, the sisters Gigi and Bella Hadid, Kourtney, Kim and Khloé Kardashian, Kendall and Kylie Jenner, Joan and Erika Smalls burst onto the scene with skyrocketing followers' numbers across Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter etc. Such models have in fact crossed the boundaries of fashion icons, making themselves not just models, but mainstream celebrities and influencers. As an example, the supermodel Gigi Hadid, who had been the global brand ambassador for Tommy Hilfiger, in 2016 launched with the stylist her capsule collection Gigi x Tommy Hilfiger, shifting gears to a multimedia consumer-facing format and contributing to build up her business woman reputation within fashion and entertainment business (Nnadi, 2016; Sherman, 2016).

On the contrary, Kim Kardashian together with her family moved from being reality TV stars with the premiere of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* in 2007, up to becoming online fashion icons. Kim Kardashian, in particular, can be considered as an early adopter of Instagram: she started to post back in 2010, her choice to share her styles and everyday life on social media contributed to shape the idea of fashion icons and to revolutionize the idea of celebrities' public and private lives. She was among the first to present to her audience not only the paparazzi shots during galas or events, but to regularly publish "behind-the-scenes" images, showing her closets, her getting-ready process, all the outfits she wears (Okwodu, 2020).

Kim Kardashian wedding with the rapper Kanye West contributed to Kardashian's transformation. The couple has made inroads into the fashion world not only by wearing major designers' outfits in ceremonies and events such as the Met Gala, getting covers in major fashion magazines such as *Vogue*, but also by creating their own lines and clothing such as West's line or the KKW Beauty and Skims line. Kim's platforms are real springboards for new designers such as Kaisie Wilen, Mowalola Ogunlesi, Awa Stelter, as well as showcases for the return of iconic brands such as Jean Paul Gaultier or Azzedine Alaïa (Okwodu, 2020).

Another fashion influencer, who should be mentioned in the present section is the Italian Chiara Ferragni. She founded The Blonde Salad blog in 2009, presenting her camera-ready personal style and looks to Internet users (Cochrane,

2016), and soon became one of the pioneer women to build her career as fashion blogger first and as entrepreneur later on. As of August 2021, Ferragni counts on Instagram⁴⁸ more than 24 million followers and is considered one of the most influential personalities in the field of fashion, contributing to the co-creation of fashion industry's image and reputation, despite the fact that she has initially been considered a fashion outsider. She is among the influencers, who regularly deserve a front-row seat during fashion shows, contributing to emphasise the role of digital communication within the fashion industry.

A special mention needs also to be given to an emerging group of purely digital influencers: avatars. Avatar profiles such as @ilmiquela, @noonouri, @blawko22 have not only started to attract the attention of millions of users by regularly appearing on social media platforms, but they have also started collaborations with well-known fashion brands and magazines such as Dior, Prada, Valentino, Vogue, etc. (SanMiguel, 2020).

With the spread of influencers and blogging, the traditional, hierarchical way of fashion communication has been deeply challenged (Hjarvard, 2013; Kristensen & Christensen, 2017).

Influencers with their millions of followers on social media platforms, who daily follow their fashion choices and copy their looks, have entered the 21st century pop culture scene, in competition with the previous way of doing fashion, who has characterized the scenes of the 20th century.

2.3.4 Between Off- and Online: A Digital Communication Pendulum

As in many technology-related domains, first movers get a particular visibility, being featured by media and perceived by their audiences as innovators and pioneers (Fidler, 1997; Rogers, 1995). However, while a technology is widely adopted, competition becomes much harder, and to emerge among others is much more difficult. The case of the former President of USA, Donald Trump, who has been deplatformed by several social media in early 2021, might cast light on the issue. Such controversial permanent bans (Celeste, 2021) have become themselves highly visible and mediatized events, being covered and discussed extensively on- and offline. Apparently, leaving a social media platform might have a similar effect as entering it, if not a higher one ...

This might have happened in the case of Bottega Veneta, which has decided to close its social media channels in 2021 (Adegeest, 2021). Such decision, which was definitely against the tide, has attracted a great interest on the company and its (un)communication strategy. Weeks later, Bottega Veneta has launched a new online communication outlet, the quarterly magazine Issued by Bottega (n.d.), which has raised extensive interest and coverage. As the first company

48 www.instagram.com/chiaraferragni/.

doing so, it might have attracted higher levels of attention, while at the same time intriguing its audiences and interested stakeholders to keep updated about the next steps.

In fact, while social media platforms do provide huge opportunities for creative people, they are anyway “earned” media. In other words, they limit what can be published and which interactions can be done on them, while at the same time dictating what cannot be done.

Their wide diffusion makes them a privileged place where to be seen and interact with interested people; at the same time, practices are constantly at risk of becoming quite homogenous: leaving them might be an interesting way of getting visibility and interest above competitors.

As it has been demonstrated in communication, there is not a “zero level” (Jakobson, 1939; Watzlawick et al., 1967): both being on social media as well as not being there is full of communication.

2.3.5 Covid19 and Digital Fashion Communication

The late first quarter of the 21st century was marked by an acceleration of digital transformation. The outbreak of the pandemic Covid19, which started end of 2019 in Wuhan city in China, and since then spread across the world, has not only impacted the health of millions of citizens causing many deaths, but living in such an interconnected and globalized environment it has also impacted on human being’s daily life activities and habits (Noris & Cantoni, 2021a). Covid19 has negatively touched and impacted the global economy and the financial markets, causing a fall not only due to the presence of the disease but also due to the restrictive measures applied by local governments to reduce the spread of the pandemic, by applying business stops, closures and lockdowns (Fernandes, 2020). Many governments have been obliged to put in act social distancing measures and to order the shutdown of non-essential business activities due to public health concerns. The trend of the global finance has touched levels similar to the 2008/2009 economic crisis and due to the period of uncertainty, as a consequence of the (possible) loss of jobs, of the interruptions of manufacture and distribution chains, has brought many firms to change and adapt their business strategies. According to a McKinsey report (*The State of Fashion*, 2020), the fashion industry as well has not been exonerated from the impact of the pandemic. To survive such global crisis, fashion managers had to start to reimagine and rethink the entire sector.

During the first pandemic wave, fashion companies while pivoting the majority of their activities online, had to implement new business strategies, in order to further capture the attention and the desires of their customers and to push and increase sales on eCommerce platforms and on retail (Noris & Cantoni, 2021a).

If from one side the required social distancing measures, the restrictions and lockdowns have accelerated the digital transformation of fashion companies, on the other, they have emphasized the unpreparedness of (some) companies to react to unexpected and exogenous (external) crises such as the Covid19. Furthermore, they have underlined the increasing importance of properly-designed offline and online communication strategies across the whole fashion value chain and have stressed the inconsistency and narrowness of standardized human computer interaction strategies, when facing unattended situations or events (Bowman, 2020; Noris & Cantoni, 2021a). Although the use of the internet during the past years has increased the potential connections and relations among companies and their customers, reducing the time needed to exchange information, data and contents (Noris et al., 2020b), Covid19 pandemic has literally restored physical barriers and geographic boundaries due to interstate restrictions, making the role of online communication and commerce crucial for the survival and future development of fashion companies (Noris & Cantoni, 2021a).

The global pandemic has become key to the fashion industry's digital transformation: in fact, the spread of the virus has led fashion companies across the world to further implement their existing technologies and to adopt new tools to face such unprecedented crisis. If much has been done from a technological point of view with the implementation of increasingly innovative devices and software, allowing people to overcome spatial and physical barriers due to the closure of the borders, not all the knots have been untied, neither cultural nor language barriers. The following paragraphs analyze the role of eCommerce and localization strategies for fashion brands with a specific focus on the communication crises that can arise when companies propose standardized messages, which do not take into account the different cultural sensitivities and traditions of the reached audiences.

In digital fashion communication there isn't anything like *one size fits all* ...

2.4 *Localization: Getting Meanings and Products across Borders*

Despite until 1995 commercial activities were not allowed due to the regulations of the National Science Foundation in the USA, the interest in accessing the internet to create new forms of businesses was growing (Ariguzo et al., 2006). Through the years, the development of business transactions using eCommerce, which can be considered as the purchase or sale of goods or services over any kind of computer network, has emerged as one of fastest growing sectors of the US marketplace (Wigand, 2015; Willis, 2004), mainly due to the fact that ICTs and the internet have established themselves as a source of competitive advantage for those companies able to properly exploit their potentials. They provide a continuous access to information for all involved

stakeholders in eCommerce: suppliers, world markets, and consumers, while providing a 24/7 communication platform.

Within such a digital context, the debate of “standardization versus adaptation (or localization)” has taken center stage in international business research (Yalcin et al., 2011); on the web, technology makes mass adaptation possible, while the forces of global integration support the use of a standardized web marketing and communication strategies (Sackmary and Scalia, 1998; Yalcin et al., 2011).

Standardization is defined in the literature as the strategy by which marketers select and operate within homogeneous global markets and in response offer standardized products and services using a standardized marketing mix (Mooij de 1998, Subhash, 1989; Yalcin et al., 2011). Those who support such a communication and marketing strategy believe that through globalization and through the development and provision of digital technologies globally, cultural distance can be minimized, leading to the convergence of national cultures into one homogeneous global culture. However, research stresses the complex nature of international and intercultural marketing and communication, and underlines the diversity in terms of physical environment, political and legal systems, cultures, product use conditions, and economic development (Singh et al., 2005; Yalcin et al., 2011). Furthermore, according to Yalcin et al. (2011), several researchers argue that due to the substantial differences between the markets that companies choose to approach, it is neither desirable nor feasible to achieve standardization of marketing and communication activities. Lim et al. (2004) argue that cultural differences influence Internet purchasing behavior despite the global reach of the web, and Singh and Pereira (2005) add that consumers prefer to shop and interact with sites designed specifically for them in their own language. Academic studies performed in the touristic field (Mele et al., 2015), for instance, reveal the importance and the best-practices put in act by practitioners to localize and culturally adapt contents and services on the web. Managers from destination marketing organizations invest on localization, assigning content production to experts from the reference markets and offering country-specific versions of their destination websites (Mele & Cantoni, 2017).

The above-mentioned type of technical and cultural adaptation of contents and services takes the name of “localization”. Localization, according to LISA (Localization Industry Standards Association), can be considered therefore as “the process of modifying products or services to account for differences in distinct markets” (Fry & Lommel, 2003: 13) or according to Mele et al. (2016) it can be considered as a “cultural translation”, which consists in the adaptation of different elements such as texts, images, videos, but also units of measure, sizes or calendars.

New markets have highlighted the need of commercialization of appropriate products and services, accompanied by a tailor-made communication strategy, which should take into account people's cultural background, language and interests (Mele et al., 2015). Moreover, the spread of Covid19 pandemic has emphasized the key role of a properly designed eCommerce and online communication strategy localized according to audiences' needs, to help companies survive closures and lockdowns imposed by local governments (Noris & Cantoni, 2021a).

When considering localization, while there is a consensus on its strategic value for eCommerce, some aspects related to it and to the way contents are communicated online are still under-researched. As an example, within the fashion environment, despite academics and practitioners recognize the importance of a properly designed localization strategy for fashion brands, localization is still scarcely researched, in particular when it comes to analyse how fashion companies should culturally adapt online contents to approach different consumers and markets (Noris et al., 2020b).

Within fashion the main studies on localization have been performed examining the offline retail environment, showing the importance of considering the so-called "global-local dilemma", when fashion brands approach new markets such as the Chinese one, in which challenging trading conditions are present and costumers present low levels of brand awareness and loyalty, alongside the brands' need to keep exclusivity and standardization of brand image across all the considered markets (Liu et al., 2014). Within the digital fashion environment, instead, still little research has been performed on the relevance of the localization/standardization issue, in particular when it comes to consider the localization of cultural elements. A first exploratory study on localization and cultural adaptation strategies of fashion companies has been performed by Noris et al. (2020b). The research has taken into account four international fast fashion brands – Boohoo, H&M, Uniqlo and Zara – and three of their country-related eCommerce webpages: the Australian, Italian and Russian ones. It has then presented which are the elements that are mostly localized both from a technical and from a cultural point of view. From the study, it has emerged that the considered sample of fast fashion companies tends on each of the three analyzed countries to consider technical localization elements that include calendars, seasonality, currencies, models and sizes, while it seems that they consider less the cultural values of the countries in their dedicated eCommerce webpages. Considering the following cultural values identified by Hofstede et al. (2010): individualism/collectivism, power distance, masculinity/femininity and uncertainty avoidance, which, depending on the score of each value, characterize and identify the cultural values of each of the country considered (Australia, Italy and Russian Federation), the study shows that the considered brands do not act

homogeneously when it comes to cultural adaptation of online contents, services, and products. Some companies seem to have considered in their eCommerce and online communication strategy aspects related to the individualism/collectivism value, others have considered values such as uncertainty avoidance or power distance, while none of them appears to have considered masculinity/femininity (Noris et al., 2020b).

Moreover, further studies are needed to expand and rethink the concept of localization: for fashion companies to localize does not simply mean to adapt their marketing and communication strategies from a geographical or national point of view in order to meet the needs of a specific target market, but it also means to take into account the different sub-cultures that make up our society and external factors such as for example the Covid19, which demonstrated the (in)adequacy of the communicative choices of fashion brands during the first pandemic wave that forced millions of people to live in lock-down and that led some brands to rethink their communication and marketing strategies to get closer to the needs of their audience (Noris et al., 2021a).

Although it seems quite evident that the fashion field, as well as many others, has started to recognize the importance of a properly designed and executed localization strategy, it appears to be still in a trial-and-error phase, which might bring in the future to practices that will better balance localization and standardization elements. If, in fact, from one side, the standardization of products, services, communication and cultural contents could be considered by fashion companies as a valid strategy to reinforce their brand identity also through the use of positive stereotypes, on the other side, that could be perceived by new and old markets as a lack of cultural sensitivity towards their own culture and interests. In recent years, some fashion stakeholders have slipped into considerable (inter)cultural communication crises. The following paragraph will help better understand such crises through the presentation and discussion of several cases.

2.5 *Intercultural Communication and Crises*

According to Hall (1976), culture has three main characteristics: it is not innate but must be learned; the different nuances of a culture are interconnected, so when we touch one cultural aspect, everything else related to it will be affected; it is commonly shared, defining the boundaries between different groups.

When considering these three main characteristics, the importance of cultural understanding in our increasingly interconnected and globalized society becomes clear. By creating and sharing cultural values, individuals and organizations create communication practices. These communication practices can cause cultural crises, the resolution of which depends on the ability of human beings to transcend the limits of individual cultures. To do so, it is necessary to

first recognize and agree to address the many hidden dimensions of cultures (Hall, 1976).

Researches on intercultural and cross-cultural communication, which took off in the 1970s, go precisely in this direction: intercultural communication refers to the study of all aspects of communication and culture, including cross-cultural communication, a branch of intercultural communication, which involves comparisons of communication across cultures (Gudykunst, 2003).

Almost concurrently with the emergence of intercultural communication studies, since the 1980s, crisis management and crisis communication studies have also been institutionalized as a legitimate organizational practice in private and public organizations in many parts of the world. This development has not taken place at the same time or in the same way in all countries and in all types of organizations (Frandsen & Johansen, 2010). As it has happened for intercultural communication, the discipline has become subjected to scholarly research, transforming itself into a new field of academic study that has proven to be very dynamic in recent years (Frandsen & Johansen, 2010).

Dubrovski (2004) defines crises as temporary, unintentional and unforeseen, negative and critical circumstances that can endanger the existence and development of organizations. They can depend on both exogenous and endogenous situations. Exogenous are all those crises not directly generated by companies' choices, but caused by external factors/events that impact their business. An example would be the Covid19 pandemic (Noris & Cantoni, 2021a). Endogenous crises are all those generated by the company's own choices. Examples in the field of fashion are the Rana Plaza tragedy and the Bravo Tekstil factory crisis (Sádaba et al., 2019), as well as the cases of Donata Meirelles, former editor of Vogue Brasil, Dolce & Gabbana's Chopsticks and Pradamalia retros, Gucci's Sikh turbans, H&M's "coolest monkey" sweater, and so on (Noris & Cantoni, 2021b).

In such a digitally interconnected environment and where technological advances have shortened distances allowing different cultures to meet more and more often, the importance of knowing how to communicate at an organizational level has become evident. In fact, whether they are exogenous or endogenous crises, if not adequately managed from the point of view of communication, they can become global and deeply challenge companies, their image, reputation and business (Noris & Cantoni, 2021a; 2021b). Social media in particular, if on the one hand have brought very different communities to be much closer and interconnected, on the other hand, they have created the conditions for more intercultural misunderstandings, hence the great importance of preventing (or managing) intercultural crises. In fact, these platforms can act as a sounding board for communication crises generated on- or offline, due to cultural misunderstandings caused by the different cultural backgrounds and sensitivities of different audiences (Noris & Cantoni 2021b).

Three different areas of research on new media and its impact on society can be identified here: (i) the analysis of the impact of national/ethnic culture on the progress and development of new media; (ii) the study of the impact of new media on cultural identity; and (iii) the investigation of the effect of new media (especially social media) on aspects of cross-cultural communication, such as cross-cultural adaptation, clash, crisis, and relationship (Guo-Ming, 2012).

While it is worth considering how the latter field of research highlights the mediatizing role of new media and their convergence with popular culture, it is also worth noting that, according to cultural psychology studies, culture also has a constant impact on the surrounding environment, shaping human beings' existence, individual behaviors, motivations and needs, as well as people's reactions and interests towards social media itself (Alsaleh et al., 2019; Hjarvard, 2009; Hjarvard, 2013; Kristensen & Christensen, 2017; Rocamora, 2017; Sheldon et al., 2017).

Given the value of the topic and the scarcity of studies that combine intercultural communication and crisis communication in the fashion field, in the next pages some intercultural communication crises occurred in this domain and emphasized by the digital environment will be presented, involving the following companies: Carolina Herrera, D&G, Gucci, H&M, Prada, Uniqlo, *Teen Vogue* and *Vogue Brasil*. All such cases demonstrate the need for fashion stakeholders to have a thorough understanding of cultural aspects in order to avoid crises or, in case they occur, to promptly deal with them. Well-thought digital communication strategies, which pay due attention to intercultural communication issues, are needed in order to reach such goals.

2.5.1 Carolina Herrera

The first case of intercultural crisis analyzed here took place in June 2019, when the brand Carolina Herrera and its creative director Wes Gordon were accused of cultural appropriation by the Mexican government, while presenting their 2020 collection.

In 2018, after having spent 37 years in the fashion world and 72 runway shows, the Venezuelan designer Carolina Herrera left the helm of the brand she created in 1981 to Wes Gordon. In 2019, he was in charge of creating the Resort 2020 collection, which was presented on the company website through the following statements: "takes on the playful and colorful mood of a Latin holiday from a sunrise in Tulum, the waves in José Ignacio and dancing in Buenos Aires to the colors of Cartagena," and is about "visceral reactions of delight-eclectic patterns, unexpected silhouettes, pulsating energy" (EFE, 2019; Jones, 2019).

What might have seemed a tribute to some Latin American countries or cultures, led instead to an unexpected reaction from the Mexican government,

which through Alejandra Frausto, its Culture Secretary, accused the brand and its creative director of having used designs “whose origins are well documented” (Jones, 2019).

In a letter dated June 10, sent to Herrera and the company’s creative director, seen by the Spanish Newspaper *El País*, Frausto claimed that the issue has to do with an ethical matter, which obliges the Mexican government to speak out and to bring such an urgent issue to the UN’s sustainable development agenda, in order to promote inclusion and to make those who are invisible visible. Moreover, she requested the company to justify the use of “cultural elements whose origins are fully documented” (Friedman, 2019b; Secretaría de Cultura, 2019).

Among the designs involved in the dispute there is a white dress with animal and floral embroidery, which, as the Secretary explained, comes from the community of Tenango de Doria in Hidalgo (EFE, 2019; Secretaría de Cultura, 2019). Furthermore, according to the same letter, there were also short dresses with colorful floral embroideries like those made in the area of Tehuantepec in Oaxaca and a dress, which is based on a typical sarape from Saltillo, Coahuila, which are used by indigenous people to make outerwear such as ‘ponchos’, ‘jorongos’, ‘gabanes’ and other blanket-like shawls (EFE, 2019; Secretaría de Cultura, 2019). The creative director of Carolina Herrera insisted that in the Resort 2020 collection there was no cultural appropriation intention, on the contrary: the brand through the collection wanted to pay an homage to the “cultural wealth” of Mexico (EFE, 2019; Friedman, 2019b). In his statement, Gordon declared that the collection “pays tribute to the richness of Mexican culture” and it aims to celebrate “the wonderful and diverse craft and textile work of Mexican artisans”. Moreover, he added that the collection had also been inspired by the country’s colors and artisanal techniques and that the pieces have “an undeniable Mexican presence” (EFE, 2019).

Wes Gordon claimed that his admiration for the Mexican artisanal work has grown over the years during his travels to Mexico: with the Resort collection he wanted to focus the attention in the different techniques and traditional aspects of Mexican heritage and to celebrate and highlight the value of the Mexican cultural heritage (EFE, 2019; Jones, 2019).

Due to Latin American Carolina Herrera’s origins, the brand with the Resort collection sought to celebrate its roots and to be considered as one of the main ambassadors of the Latin American spirit across the whole world. Gordon, in conclusion, stated that one of the reasons why he accepted to work for Herrera was its respect for artisan techniques, that led the company to have an artisan workshop in the middle of Manhattan; since he landed in the company, he felt the need to honor such different artisanal techniques that still exist and are utilized across the world (EFE, 2019).

The Mexican government, which is among the first governmental institutions to raise publicly the issue of cultural appropriation in fashion, considered – on the contrary – the collection more a misappropriation of the cultural heritage of Mexico and its indigenous peoples than an inspiration; this is why it is working on a legislation to protect their art and creativity in order to prevent such cases. Carolina Herrera has not been the first brand to be accused of cultural appropriation by the Mexican government: Zara, Mango, Isabel Marant, Louis Vuitton, Michael Kors, Santa Marguerite and Etoile have all been warned by Mexico in the past (EFE, 2019).

Despite the fact that taking inspiration from different cultures has always been part of fashion design practices, the importance of recognizing and crediting the source of inspiration has been more and more stressed in recent years. The advent of the internet and of social media has amplified a brands' reach, underlining the importance of giving credit to communities' textile heritage not only from a monetary perspective but also from a communicative one, hence avoiding intercultural crises generated by the fact that what designers call inspiration can be perceived as a matter of cultural appropriation by the involved communities, which do not feel as duly recognized.

2.5.2 D&G

The Italian brand in November 2018 has been accused of racism by Chinese social media users after having released three videos online titled “Eating with Chopsticks” featuring the Asian model Zuo Ye. They appeared to be as video tutorials aimed at “teaching” how to eat three typical Italian dishes – pizza, spaghetti and a Sicilian “cannolo” – with traditional Chinese chopsticks (Fig. 7) (*Dolce & Gabbana in Cina*, 2018; Li, 2018).

The videos, which were meant to promote “The Great Event”, a Shanghai fashion show dedicated to D&G and accompanied by the hashtag #DGLovesChina and #DGTheGreatShow, provoked some positive or hilarious reactions but also huge criticisms, due to the fact that many internet users perceived them as stereotyping China (through an extensive use of lanterns, music and red colors) and offending Chinese people. The video featuring the Sicilian cannolo was also accused of being sexist: a male voiceover asked the model “is it too big for you?” (*La causa di Dolce & Gabbana contro Diet Prada*, 2021).

The controversy spread fast on Chinese social media: the three videos were removed from Weibo – one of China's widely used social media – within 24 hours; on Instagram, however, they remained visible for longer. The discontent regarding the campaign continued and the hashtag #BoycottDolce became a Weibo trend. Via their social media users from all over the world asked Dolce & Gabbana to remove the videos, which, despite being deleted from the platforms, were



FIGURE 7

Dolce & Gabbana's controversial advertisement

Source: www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzoxIb2Fa74

republished by other users such as @diet_prada (Fig. 8), a social media account that is supposed to be held by the two designers Tony Liu and Lindsey Schuyler and whose main aim is to report copies and plagiarism of fashion designers from all over the world (Diet Prada, 2018a; Hall & Suen, 2018; Pratten & Ap, 2018).

It was Diet Prada that, through its collaborator Michaela Tranova, posted on Instagram a screenshot reporting an exchange of private messages between Stefano Gabbana's personal account and Michaela. There, the designer insulted the Chinese community by defining it "China Ignorant Mafia Dirty Stinking" (Fig. 9) (Diet Prada, 2018c).

After these posts, the crisis became even more evident, and the fashion company declared that Gabbana's account had been hacked and that consequently the messages had not been written by the designer himself (Fig. 10) (Dolce & Gabbana, 2018a).

Despite the justification, many celebrities such as Vogue China editor Angelica Cheung, Chen Kun, Li Bingbing, Wang Xiaoming, who were supposed to join the runway, decided to boycott it, and the brand was forced to cancel the planned Shanghai event. According to Diet Prada, the Shanghai Cultural Affair Bureau was instrumental to the decision (Diet Prada, 2018b; Hall & Suen, 2018).

The actress Zhang Ziyi, for instance, announced that she would never use Dolce & Gabbana products again, while the modeling agency China Bentley announced that 24 of its models would have no longer taken part in the event (Hall & Suen, 2018; Pratten & Ap, 2018).

Also, some independent models such as Estelle Chen and Lucky Blue Smith, who collaborated or were supposed to walk the runway in Shanghai posted their criticisms on social media (Fig. 11) (Estelle, 2018).

Dolce & Gabbana released a further statement on social media, in which they explained to their audience: "Our dream was to bring to Shanghai a tribute



FIGURE 8 Diet Prada's Instagram post on Dolce & Gabbana's advertisement
 Source: www.instagram.com/p/BqXYtsZl6D5/

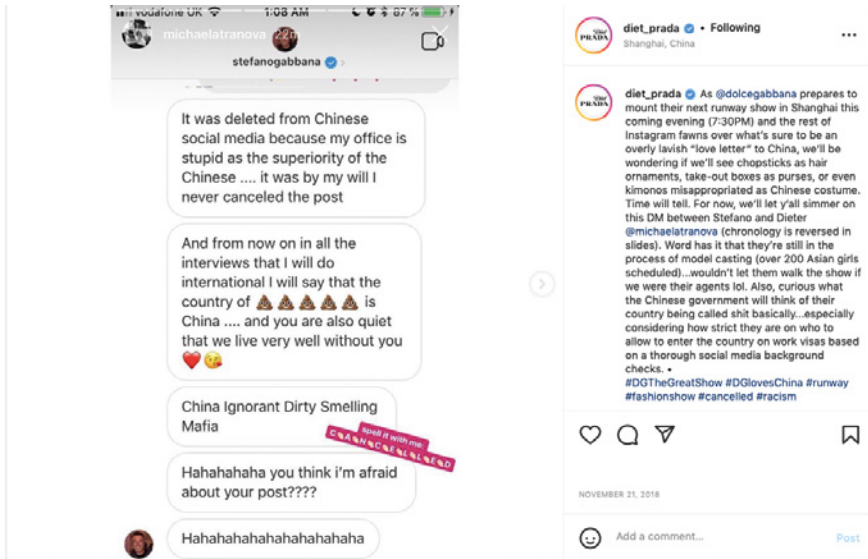


FIGURE 9 Diet Prada's Instagram post
 Source: www.instagram.com/p/BqbTkY_FB7X/

Our Instagram account has been hacked. So as the account of Stefano Gabbana. Our legal office is urgently investigating. We are very sorry for any distress caused by these unauthorized posts. We have nothing but respect for China and the people of China.

DOLCE & GABBANA



FIGURE 10 Dolce & Gabbana's Instagram first apologies statement
Source: www.instagram.com/p/BqjjuT3nYa4/

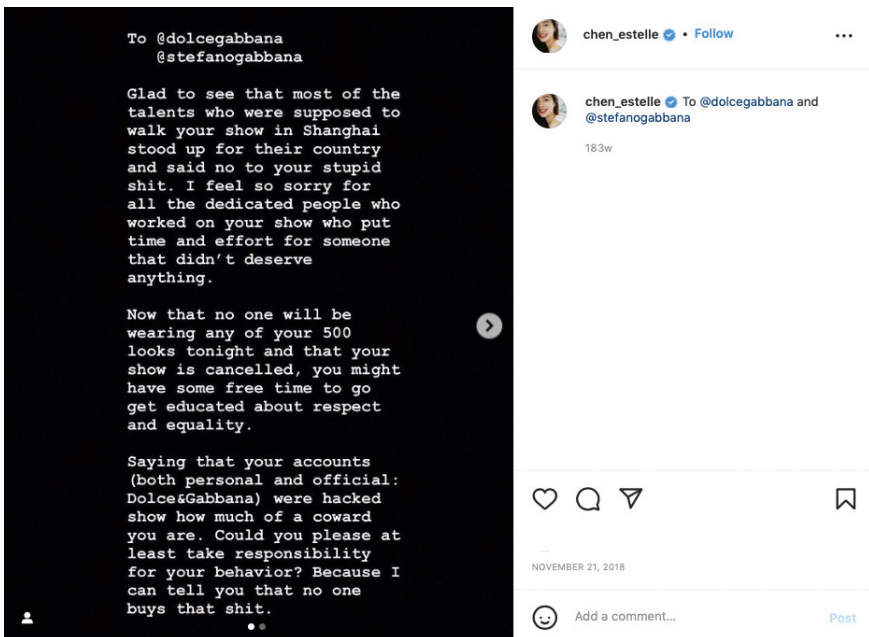


FIGURE 11 Estelle Chen's, French model of Chinese origins, comments on Dolce & Gabbana behavior
Source: www.instagram.com/p/Bqb3ouH1fc/

event dedicated to China that spoke to our history and vision. It was not just a runway show, but something we created with love and passion exclusively for China and all the people around the world who love Dolce & Gabbana. What happened today was a misfortune not only for us, but also for all those who worked night and day to bring this event to life. From the bottom of our hearts, we want to express our gratitude to our friends and guests. Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana” (Dolce & Gabbana, 2018b).

On November 22nd, some retail partners in Asia responded to the controversy by discarding D&G products from their inventory. YOOX-Net-a-Porter Group, Alibaba, JD, Secoo, VIPshop, Lane Crawford and Netease announced that they would have no longer sold Dolce & Gabbana on Chinese eCommerce platforms (Ap, 2018; Steger & Lahiri, 2018).

On November 23rd, Dolce & Gabbana shared first on Weibo, then on other platforms, an official message of apologies via a video. Stefano Gabbana and Domenico Dolce asked the Chinese community for forgiveness for their behavior (Steger & Lahiri, 2018).

The video, titled *Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana apologize* (Fig. 12), has been published in Italian language and made available with Chinese and English subtitles. Domenico Dolce was the first to take the floor by saying that they have thought back so much and that they regret what happened and what they caused in China and that they apologize very much. He added that their families have always taught them to respect the various cultures around the world and that is why they want to apologize if they have made mistakes (*Dolce&Gabbana 杜嘉班纳致歉声明*, 2018).

Then, Stefano Gabbana explained that they also want to apologize to all Chinese people around the world, because there are many of them and they



FIGURE 12 Dolce & Gabbana's official statement of apologies on YouTube
Source: www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3yJTpoOOIE

take this apology and this message very seriously. Back to Domenico Dolce, the man highlighted that the couple has always been very much in love with China, they have visited it and they love the culture and they still have a lot to learn so they apologize if they made mistakes in expressing themselves. Finally, Stefano Gabbana concluded saying that they will treasure this experience and surely it will never happen again, on the contrary they will try to do better, and that they will respect the Chinese culture in everything. The video ends with the two Italian designers saying “duì bu qǐ”, “we are sorry”, in Mandarin language (*Dolce&Gabbana* 杜嘉班纳致歉声明, 2018).

After some months, in January 2019, the model protagonist of the Dolce & Gabbana advertisement accused of racism and followed by the boycott of the company in China, apologized for acting in the videos, explaining that she felt really guilty and very ashamed and that her career had been almost completely ruined because of that incident (*La modella cinese del video di Dolce & Gabbana*, 2019). She explained that she would never disrespect her motherland and that she loves her country and is proud to represent China on runways. She also added that she had learned the lesson, and, in the future, she will represent Chinese people in a better light. Zuo explained that she had remained silent to avoid any further trouble and that she agreed to work for such an international brand like Dolce & Gabbana to enhance her career and that the brand presented her the campaign as a series of “funny videos” about Italian cuisine. Zuo said she often felt uncomfortable during the three-hour shooting, during which the director told her in English to show surprise, bewilderment or appreciation concerning the food and the dishes, even though she felt out of place. She also expressed concerns about the request of using chopsticks, but she was told to follow the instructions. Zuo concluded by explaining that, as a mere model, she was not able to watch the final recording and would have never been able to have a say on that (*La modella cinese del video di Dolce & Gabbana*, 2019).

In March 2021, Diet Prada founders, Liu and Schuyler declared that they have been battling a lawsuit from the Italian brand since early 2019. In fact, following the criticisms and the suspension of “The Great Event” in Shanghai, Dolce & Gabbana filed an action against Diet Prada in civil court in Milan. They claimed defamation and asked Diet Prada for €3 million for Dolce & Gabbana and €1 million for Stefano Gabbana in damages. According to Diet Prada, the non-profit Fashion Law Institute at Fordham has decided to represent Liu and Schuyler *pro bono* in collaboration with the Italian law firm AMSL Avvocati, which is offering Diet Prada a reduced rate. Furthermore, the bloggers created a fundraising campaign on GoFundMe to cover legal expenses⁴⁹ (*La causa di*

49 www.gofundme.com/f/diet-prada-legal-defense-fund.

Dolce & Gabbana contro Diet Prada, 2021; Nguyen, 2021). End of July 2021, Diet Prada had collected 55,091 USD from 1.5k (mostly micro) donors.

In November 2018, the London-based Brand Finance consultancy estimated that the scandal could wipe up to 20% off Dolce & Gabbana brand's value of USD 937 million. This loss was never officially confirmed by the fashion company (ET Online, 2018).

2.5.3 Gucci

The first case that involved Gucci happened in February 2018 and lasted more than one year. The controversy started when the company shared its new autumn–winter collection on- and offline. Many reacted with enthusiasm to the runway presentation, others, instead, had a critical reaction. Among the internet users that negatively reacted to the campaign, there was the Canadian actor and dancer Avan Jogia, of Indian origins, who on February 22nd, 2018 criticized the brand for having decided to let the runway be walked by a majority of white models and for asking non-Sikh people to wear turbans (Fig. 13) (Avan Jogia, 2018).

A day later, the US Sikh Coalition made on its social media a public statement underlying the fact that Gucci culturally appropriated the Sikh turban



FIGURE 13 Avan Jogia's, Canadian actor of Indian origins, Twitter comment on Gucci's choice to utilize turbans for the presentation of the autumn–winter collection 2018
Source: twitter.com/avanjogia/status/966464402047229952

by transforming it into a mere fashion item, without considering its symbolic value for Sikh people and without observant Sikh models wear it (Fig. 14) (Sikh Coalition, 2018).

The initial backlash had little effect, in fact, despite the criticisms addressed to the company, Gucci in 2019 started to sell an item called “Indy Full Turban”, described as a “gorgeously crafted turban”, “ready to turn heads while keeping you in comfort as well as trademark style” on Nordstrom platform for a price of nearly \$800 (Chiu, 2019).

The placing on the market of the product caused once again a prompt reaction from the Sikh community, which through the Sikh coalition released a second post on their social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) on May 14th, 2019, underlying once again the concept of cultural appropriation (Sikh Coalition, 2019) (Fig. 15). According to Rajanpreet Kaur (2021), from the Sikh Coalition, the association perceived the choice of commercializing such a product as a trivialization of an item of faith, whose wearers often face discrimination and attacks due to their religious identity. In addition to that, according to the Sikh Coalition, both Nordstrom and Gucci when commercializing the product, made no effort to provide any kind of historical and cultural information on the turbans and on the community that has been wearing them for centuries not as an accessory but as a symbol of faith and to represent who they are.



The Sikh turban is a sacred article of faith, @gucci, not a mere fashion accessory. #appropriation
 We are available for further education and consultation if you are looking for observant Sikh models.

[Traduci il Tweet](#)



huffingtonpost.co.uk

Gucci Criticised For Cultural Appropriation On A Global Scale

'Imagine growing up being mocked for wearing a turban and then seeing it on a catwalk considered to be fashionable and its actual cultural importance ...

FIGURE 14

Sikh Coalition's Twitter

Comment on Gucci's autumn–
 winter collection 2018

Source: twitter.com/sikh_coalition/status/96711961313005570



The turban is not just an accessory to monetize; it's a religious article of faith that millions of Sikhs view as sacred. Many find this cultural appropriation inappropriate, since those wearing the turban just for fashion will not appreciate its deep religious significance.

[Traduci il Tweet](#)

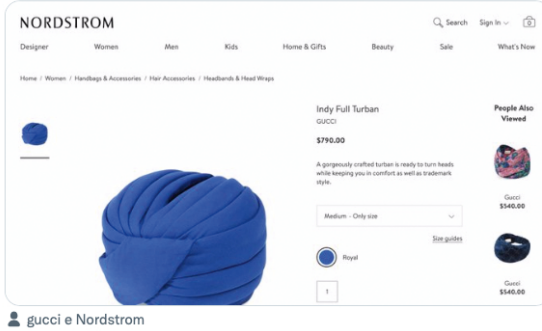


FIGURE 15
Nordstrom eCommerce platform selling Gucci's turban
Source: twitter.com/sikh_coalition/status/1128377686353764353

Rajanpreet Kaur also explained that the Sikh coalition promptly tried to reach out Gucci and Nordstrom to get to know more on their position concerning the issue.

On May 15th, the turban's listing on Nordstrom's eCommerce was listed as sold out, its \$790 price tag was no longer visible and the company sent a letter to the Sikh Coalition apologizing for selling turbans by saying "we've made the decision to stop carrying the 'Indy Full Turban' and by asking to the Sikh Coalition their availability in becoming a resource on these types of issues in the future" (Snow, 2019). On May 16th, Nordstrom also stated on Twitter: "We have decided to stop carrying this product and have removed it from the site. It was never our intent to disrespect this religious and cultural symbol. We sincerely apologize to anyone who may have been offended by this" (Nordstrom, 2019).

Gucci has never issued an official statement of apologies, although the company in summer 2019 nominated Renee Tirado as its first diversity chief officer in order to face the accuses of having produced religiously insensitive and racially offensive designs and to carry out new projects based on diversity (Muret, 2019).

A second case that brought Gucci to the hire of a diversity chief officer happened at the beginning of 2019, when Gucci put on the market a piece of the autumn–winter 2018 collection, a \$890 "balaclava" knit, which covered the bottom half of the model face and had a cutout mouth with large red lips. Due to the fact that it was soon judged as racist by internet users, it had to be pulled from the market in a few days (Ferrier, 2019; *Gucci accusato di razzismo*, 2019).

The accusations started from the social media, where people started to tweet or repost photos of the sweater, worn by a white woman, commenting on it. Some of the users remarked and criticized the fact that the sweater was also made available to the public during the US Black History Month (Fig. 16) (Cocolo Minaj, 2019; Ferrier, 2019).

In this case, the apology from the company arrived promptly, and on February 7th, without giving time to the social accusations to spread globally, Gucci shared on its social media account a message of apologies: “Gucci deeply apologizes for the accusations made. We consider diversity a fundamental value that must be fully upheld, respected and put at the origin of every decision we make. We are fully committed to increasing diversity in our company and turning this incident into a powerful lesson for the entire Gucci team” (Fig. 17) (Gucci, 2019).



FIGURE 16

Twitter user's reaction to Gucci's sweatshirt

Source: twitter.com/i/events/1093355062875676672

Gucci deeply apologizes for the offense caused by the wool balaclava jumper.

We consider diversity to be a fundamental value to be fully upheld, respected, and at the forefront of every decision we make.

Full statement below.

[Traduci il Tweet](#)



FIGURE 17

Gucci's apologies on Twitter

Source: twitter.com/gucci/status/1093345744080306176

2.5.4 H&M

In January 2018, H&M launched in its online store an advertising campaign representing the image of a 5-year-old boy of color son of Kenyan immigrants, wearing a green sweatshirt showing the words “coolest monkey in the jungle” written in white capital letters, while a Caucasian child model was presenting an orange sweatshirt with the phrase “Mangrove Jungle – Official Survival Expert” (*Case Study: H&M’s Coolest Monkey in the Jungle*, n.d.).

Soon after the launch of the campaign, H&M had to face the reactions on social media from celebrities, journalists, lawyers and activists, consumers and internet users in general across the globe, who commented on the advertisement. Many of them accused the company of lack of empathy, insensitiveness and considered the advertisement as being racist, inappropriate and offensive (Fig. 18–19) (Cancel Rent & Mortgages, 2018; Selene, 2018).

Others commented on the fact that the reference to a monkey is historically perceived as inappropriate due to the fact that it features racial and ethnic decrial. Comparing black people to a ‘monkey’ is in fact a negative stereotype of people of African origins and could imply a racist undertone while dehumanizing people of African descent (Fig. 20) (IEA, 2018).

According to Plous and Williams (1995), comparing black people to ape can be traced back to the 18th and 19th centuries, during the American slavery period, where many people in Europe and the U.S. considered black people as mentally inferior, physically and culturally unevolved, and apelike in their external appearance. According to Goff et al. (2008), such ideas started to attract interest when the anthropologist Franz Boas and scientist Charles Darwin hypothesized that there might be an evolutionary spectrum among primates that from one side contained apes and monkeys at the less evolved level, continuing through wild and/or deformed anthropoids, and culminating with whites at the other side. According to such theory, peoples of African descent could be placed in the classification as residing somewhere in between.

Such a “scientific” theorization laid the foundation to support the stereotypes and racism that accompanied peoples of African descent during the 19th and 20th century: they were depicted as lazy, belligerent, unintelligent, hypersexual, etc. Such representation culminated with the use of such stereotypes also within visual culture, when many US films played on this iconography. As an example, the 1933 film *King Kong*, despite being often referred in popular culture as the story of “Beauty and the Beast”, according to Goff et al. (2008) it has other allegorical elements to be mentioned: Kong is in fact associated with the use of negative caricatured Black savages on “Skull Island” and presents “Negro features”; furthermore, many film researchers claim that “King Kong” has imprinted in

← Tweet

I bet folks creating this ad look nothing like this young boy. It's just appalling how insensitive these companies continue to remain given these past and recent racist ads like Pears Soap and Dove. @hm, you sure won't be seeing my dollar! #HM #Racist #Apologize

Traduci il Tweet

Charles M. Blow @CharlesMBlow · 8 gen 2018

. @hm, have you lost your damned minds?!?!?

Printed hooded top
£7.99

Green

Select size

10 12 14 16 18

ADD TO SHOPPING BAG FIND IN STORE

DESCRIPTION DETAILS SHARE DELIVERY AND PAYMENT

Top in soft, printed neocashmir fabric with a wrapover hood and ribbing at the cuffs and hem. Soft brushed inside.

6:34 PM · 8 gen 2018 · Twitter for iPhone

← Tweet

.@hm this is inappropriate, offensive, and racist. Why is the white kid "a jungle survivor" and the black kid the "coolest monkey in the jungle"? How do you think this is okay? REMOVE this and the clothing piece. This is completely distasteful! #racist #hm

www2.hm.com/en_gb/productp...

Traduci il Tweet

Printed

4:29 AM · 8 gen 2018 · Twitter Web Client

FIGURE 18-19
Twitter users' reactions to the H&M kid sweater advertisement

Sources: twitter.com/realgaraad/status/950420436331978752, twitter.com/ArianelaSelene/status/950207848910290944

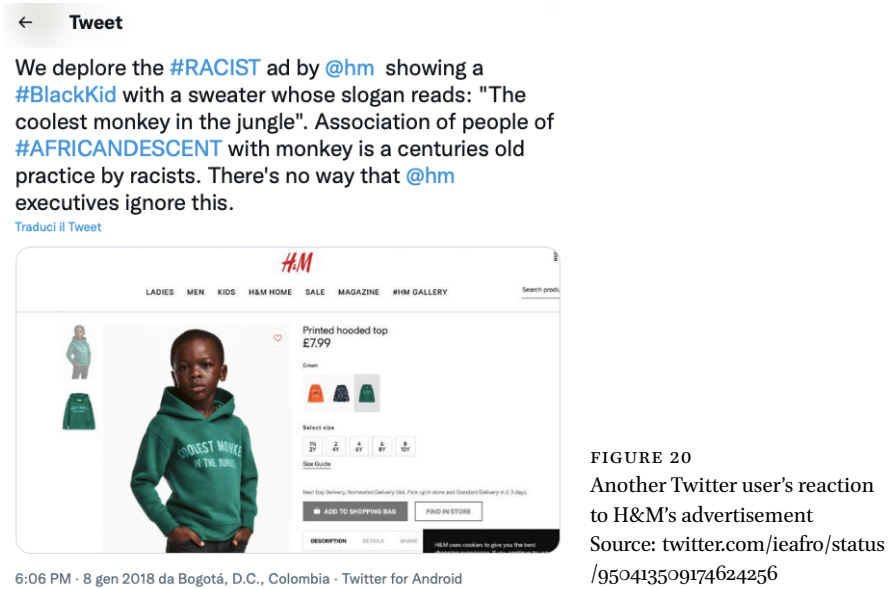


FIGURE 20
Another Twitter user's reaction to H&M's advertisement
Source: twitter.com/ieafro/status/950413509174624256

the American cinematography a racist tale about interracial romance in which the “Beauty” is represented as “white” and the “Beast” as “black”.

The H&M backlash spread globally also due to the criticisms made by well-known celebrities such as the singers Diddy (Sean Combs) and The Weeknd, a Canadian artist of Ethiopian descent, who publicly condemned H&M's choices (Fig. 21–22) (LOVE, 2018; The Weeknd, 2018).

Drawing their attention to Terry Mango, the child's mother, who had to face a backlash for defending H&M and the ad, some internet users explained their concerns on the criticisms made to H&M (*Case Study: H&M's Coolest Monkey in the Jungle*, n.d.). They claimed that the only negative aspect of the campaign was mainly due to the negative attitude of internet users who saw racism in the image (Fig. 23–24), (Evan, 2018; Shannon Bell, 2018).

H&M first replied to the accuses on Twitter on January 8th. The customer service apologized to users for having offended some, but not for posting the ad, and it clarified the company had removed the image from its online stores (Fig. 25–26) (H&M Customer Service, 2018a; H&M Customer Service, 2018b).

However, such apologies were not considered enough by many internet users, since the sweatshirts were still available on the European eCommerce, while the only thing which had been removed was the picture of the model.

The following day, January 9th, H&M issued another statement. The brand stated that it stopped selling the sweatshirt and recycled it. The apologies were released both on H&M website and on social media. Part of the updated apology, still posted on H&M China website reads: “We agree with all the criticism



FIGURE 21
Diddy's reaction on Twitter on H&M sweater
Source: twitter.com/Diddy/status/950474809653301258

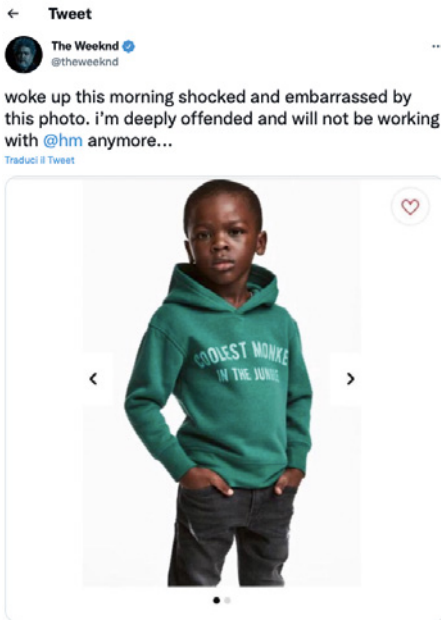


FIGURE 22
The Weeknd's reaction on Twitter on H&M sweater
Source: twitter.com/theweeknd/status/950447182829699072



FIGURE 23–24 Twitter users' reactions in defense of H&M
 Sources: twitter.com/xshannonlb/status/950837149183692801,
twitter.com/EvyKing_/status/990619939651407874



FIGURE 25–26 H&M first apologies published on Twitter provided by the Customer Service
 Sources: twitter.com/hm_custserv/status/950333228786823168,
twitter.com/hm_custserv/status/950346140129644544

that this has generated – we have got this wrong and we agree that, even if unintentional, passive or casual racism needs to be eradicated wherever it exists. We appreciate the support of those who have seen that our product and promotion were not intended to cause offence but, as a global brand, we have a responsibility to be aware of and attuned to all racial and cultural sensitivities – and we have not lived up to this responsibility this time” (*H&M Issues Unequivocal Apology For Poorly Judged Product And image*, 2018). The official statement was accompanied on H&M social media by three apology messages respectively on January 9th, 13th and 16th (Fig. 27–29) (H&M, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c).

Despite the apologies, the company had to face boycotts and protests, in particular in South African cities such as Cape Town, Pretoria, and Johannesburg, in which the company has been forced to temporarily close some stores. Among the protesters, there were also the South African Economic Freedom Fighters, which marched through shops, and destroyed some H&M stores (*Case Study: H&M’s Coolest Monkey in the Jungle*, n.d.).

Nearly two weeks after the backlash, H&M nominated Annie Wu, a Taiwanese immigrant raised in New York, as global leader for diversity and inclusiveness. According to the Walter Page Center/Public Relations Ethics (*Case Study: H&M’s Coolest Monkey in the Jungle*, n.d.), H&M after the hire of Wu took some actions to fight racism and to recover from such intercultural crisis: (i) the company hired a Nigerian-American as North America head of inclusion and diversity; (ii) developed a seven-step system for all new clothing before they are sold; (iii) developed a 12 people system in order to have a minimum number of people, who observe a photo after it is uploaded; (iv) proposed a new system to flag clothing at every stage and to make notes about possible sensitivities; (v) augmented the number of employees doing final-round quality checks; (vi) affirmed that by 2025, 100% of H&M employees would feel they have the same opportunity within the company (*Case Study: H&M’s Coolest Monkey in the Jungle*, n.d.).

In addition to that, in June 2020, H&M donated \$500,000 to the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Color of Change, and the American Civil Liberties Union, soon after the death of George Floyd on May 25th, 2020, in Minnesota and the subsequent protests against police (*Case Study: H&M’s Coolest Monkey in the Jungle*, n.d.).

2.5.5 Prada

In November 2018, the company debuted with the Pradamalia line of products, a series of branded keychain, cell phone cases, clothing, jewelry, and various

← Tweet



We understand that many people are upset about the image of the children's hoodie. We, who work at H&M, can only agree.

We're deeply sorry that the picture was taken, and we also regret the actual print. Therefore, we've not only removed the image from our channels, but also the garment from our product offering.

It's obvious that our routines haven't been followed properly. This is without any doubt. We'll thoroughly investigate why this happened to prevent this type of mistake from happening again.

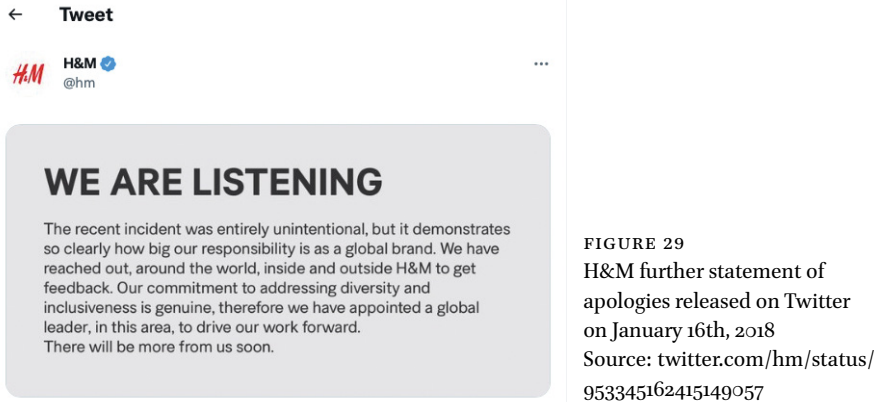
FIGURE 27
H&M further statement of
apologies released on Twitter
on January 9th, 2018
Source: [twitter.com/hm/status/
950680302715899904](https://twitter.com/hm/status/950680302715899904)



We are aware of the recent events in several of our South African stores. Out of concern for the safety of our employees and customers we have temporarily closed all stores in the area. We strongly believe that racism and bias in any shape or form, deliberate or accidental, are simply unacceptable.

We stress that our store staff had nothing to do with our poor judgement of producing the children's hoodie and the image.

FIGURE 28
H&M further statement of
apologies released on Twitter
on January 13th, 2018
Source: [twitter.com/hm/status/
952267740143906816](https://twitter.com/hm/status/952267740143906816)



leather goods ranging in price from \$260 to \$860 and described on its website as “a new family of mysterious tiny creatures that are one part biological, one part technological, all parts Prada” (*Prada Blackface Scandal Results in Major Settlement*, 2020; Williams et al., 2018).

Soon after their put on the market, the seven fashion characters designed by the fashion brand became the subject of a debate that spread and went viral on social media. Prada had in fact to retire its products after the monkey named Otto displayed in New York City’s SoHo neighborhood in Manhattan store was perceived by some customers as racist, since it appeared to represent blackface imagery (*Prada Blackface Scandal Results in Major Settlement*, 2020).

The issue raised due to the fact that some of the items of the collection, in particular the monkeys Toto and Otto, have been compared by New York-based civil rights attorney Chinyere Ezie to Little Black Sambo, a character from an 1899 children’s book written by Helen Bannerman. Despite the intention of the writer at the time was to portray people of color under a positive light, in contrast with the stereotypes that portrayed black people as uneducated and uncivilized, over the time that character became subject of discussion and controversy, especially during the 20th century (Chinyere Ezie, 2018). According to Robin Bernstein (2011), the character was represented following the so-called “pickaninny style”, an American word that suggests that racist caricatures follow three criteria: the figure is colored, youthful, and resistant/immune to ache.

The lawyer noticed the products at the Prada store in Manhattan’s Soho shopping district by happenstance, after returning from a conference in Washington. She wrote on Facebook that she was struck by how the items looked similar to images she saw in an exhibit on blackface at the museum the same day and that seeing the products left her “shaking with anger” and she also criticized the company on her Facebook account (Fig. 30) (Chinyere

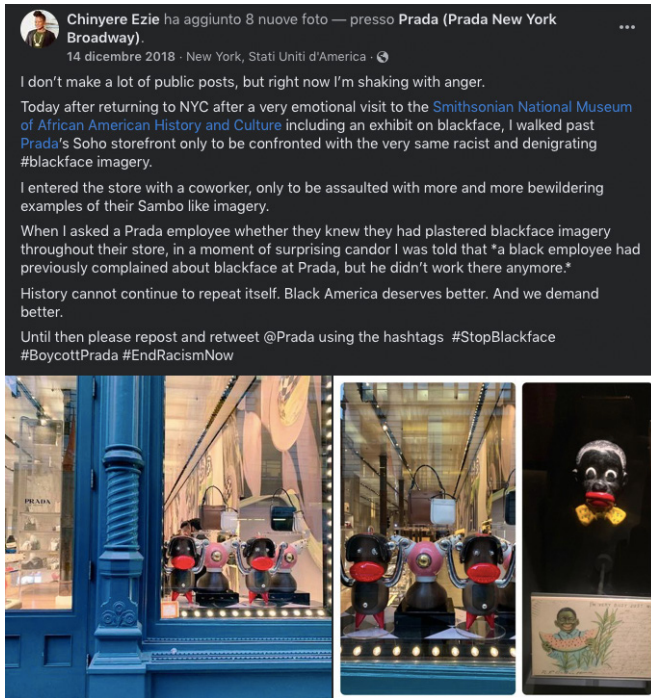


FIGURE 30 Chinyere Ezie's reaction to Pradamalia gadgets
 Source: www.facebook.com/300322/posts/10102198924210054/

Ezie, 2018). Ezie's Facebook post had been shared more than 11,000 times and commented more than 5,000 times (Chinyere Ezie, 2018).

Prada released on December 14th a statement in which it declared that the Pradamalia products depict "imaginary creatures not intended to have any reference to the real world and certainly not blackface" and that Prada Group never had the intention of offending anyone; they also added that they abhor all forms of racism and racist imagery, therefore claimed that would have withdrawn the characters in question from the market (Fig. 31–32) (PRADA, 2018a; 2018b).

On December 16th, Prada released an official statement in which they further highlighted that all products had been removed from the Pradamalia collection and that the company would learn from its mistakes (Fig. 33) (PRADA, 2018c).

The lawyer who started the controversy criticized Prada's excuses explaining to the CNN that the same kind of excuses from Prada have been heard throughout history about racist imagery and that a multinational company could have done its research about what these painful images mean for people of color. She also added that there was no mistaking it and not ambiguity (Williams et al., 2018).

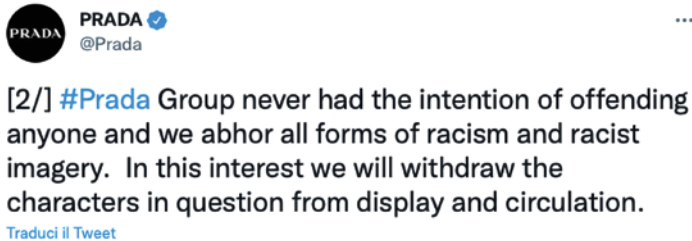


FIGURE 31–32 Prada’s statements of apologies released on Twitter
 Sources: twitter.com/Prada/status/1073614897207017481,
twitter.com/Prada/status/1073615042753519617

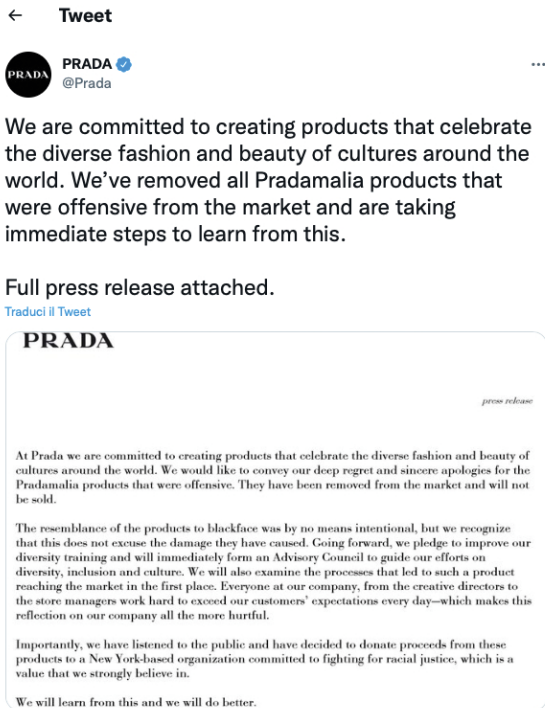


FIGURE 33
 Prada’s official press release shared on Twitter
 Sources: twitter.com/Prada/status/1074408250299375621

On February 5th, 2020, more than a year later, Chinyere Ezie announced she had reached an agreement with the luxury fashion company over the brand’s advertising and sale of products featuring blackface representations. The official complaint filed by Ezie to the New York City Human Rights Commission over the racist imagery, led to an agreement in which Prada has been required to: create a scholarship and a paid internship program at Prada for racial minorities and other under-represented groups; develop a racial equity training program and a series of trainings on equal employment opportunity laws for Prada employees, including the executives in New York and Milan on a reoccurring basis for six years; be fully committed in the recruitment and retainment of underrepresented employees, including racial minorities; have a permanent diversity officer, who among her/his aims has to strengthen Prada’s policies on discrimination, retaliation, and racial equity, and to ensure Prada’s business activities and hiring are conducted in a racially equitable manner; enforce and report to the NYC Human Rights Commission for a period of two years (*Prada Blackface Scandal Results in Major Settlement, 2020*).

Finally, Prada, after its blackface scandal, has also decided to launch a Diversity Council, pursuant to settlement terms, that works to create new

← Tweet



A note from teen vogue’s staff

[Traduci il Tweet](#)

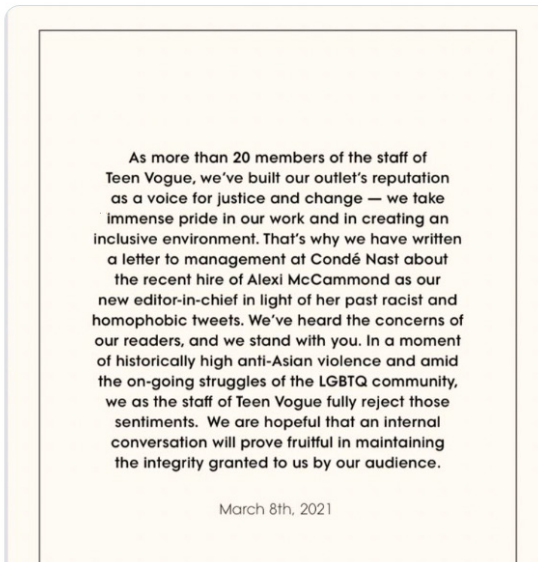


FIGURE 34
 Teen Vogue staff’s Twitter statement on the accuses toward Alexi McCammond
 Source: twitter.com/allegrakirkland/status/1369071340544753665

relations and partnerships between Prada and different social justice organizations for a period of six years (*Prada Blackface Scandal Results in Major Settlement*, 2020).

2.5.6 Teen Vogue

This crisis took place in 2021, it involved *Teen Vogue* and Alexi McCammond, who was supposed to become editor-in-chief of the magazine by March 2021. McCammond has resigned from *Teen Vogue* after being accused of racism and homophobia for a series of tweets she published on her account a decade earlier, in 2011 (Robertson, 2021).

The woman started her career as a political reporter, she was also involved in the President Biden's campaign for Axios and contributed to MSNBC and NBC. In 2019, the National Association of Black Journalists gave her the title of emerging journalist of the year and according to the *New York Times* she would have been the third Black woman to become *Teen Vogue's* top editor, after Lindsay Peoples Wagner and Elaine Welteroth (Robertson, 2021).

However, due to the fact that some of McCammond's tweets from 2011 that were considered offensive towards the Asian community had resurfaced, more than 20 *Teen Vogue* staff members pointed it out and complained through an internal letter and a shared statement on social media, distancing themselves from McCammond's past behaviour (Fig. 34) (Allegra Kirkland, 2021; Peiser, 2021).

McCammond posts included comments on Asian people physical and appearance features, as in the following images (Fig. 35–36), (Jamal, 2021).

Despite the fact that McCammond, in 2019, after having apologized for the tweets, removed them from her account, screenshots started to recirculate in March 2021 after the news of her hiring at *Teen Vogue*. The woman apologized for her actions again both in front of her followers/audience and in front of Condé Nast staff by clarifying that there's no excuse for perpetuating those awful stereotypes and that she felt sorry for having utilized such a hurtful and inexcusable language against Asian communities (Fig. 37) (Alexi McCammond, 2021a).

After the criticisms that raised on social media and the debate that spread across the world, Condé Nast, *Teen Vogue's* publisher, in agreement with McCammond announced her resignation as reported by *The New York Times*, Stan Duncan, the chief people officer at Condé Nast, released the following statement: "After speaking with Alexi this morning, we agreed that it was best to part ways, so as to not overshadow the important work happening at *Teen Vogue*" (Robertson, 2021).

Alexi McCammond claimed on Twitter that: "past tweets have overshadowed the work I've done to highlight the people and issues that I care about" (Fig. 38), (Alexi McCammond, 2021b).



FIGURE 35-36 Screenshots of Alexi McCammond's posts released on Twitter in 2011 (later deleted)
 Source: www.hindustantimes.com/lifestyle/fashion/post-alexi-mccammond-s-racist-tweet-outcry-ultra-beauty-pauses-teen-vogue-ads-101615532021519.html

Stakeholders pressuring Condé Nast, in addition to the staff itself, readers, and social media, include at least two advertisers: Ulta Beauty and Burt's Bees, major advertisers for *Teen Vogue*, which had suspended their campaigns with the magazine. Moreover, according to *The New York Times*, Alexi McCammond's application had been directly reviewed by executives such as Roger Lynch and Anna Wintour before she was hired by Condé Nast to work at *Teen Vogue* (Robertson, 2021).



Alexi McCammond @alexi · 11 mar

I hope you'll read this note from me to the @TeenVogue community, staff, readers, writers, photographers, content creators, and friends: beta.documentcloud.org/documents/2050...

To our Teen Vogue community, staff, readers, writers, photographers, content creators, and friends:

What an awful introduction we've had to each other this week. I'm Alexi McCammond, incoming EIC of Teen Vogue, and this is only the beginning of our journey together. I'm all for trusting Teen Vogue and helping build our brand to be a leader in this space.

I hope to earn that same trust from you, but I know I don't yet have it, and have a lot to do to get it.

This has been one of the hardest weeks of my life, in large part because of the intense number of conversations internally with the staff and others outside of Condé Nast. I've been watching, reading, and listening to so many of your concerns that you've raised and apologized for my past racist and homophobic tweets and will reiterate that there's no excuse for perpetuating those awful stereotypes in any way.

It's really difficult to share who you are in a digital world, and I'm committed to sharing all of myself — as a partner, a daughter and sister, and now as a newsroom leader.

I hope you share my desire for healing and I know all of you. I promise you that I see you, I hear you, I care for you. I'm deeply sorry that our introduction has happened. I'll judge us based on the work that we do from here on out. I'm accountable as we embark on this journey together. This is eternally grateful to continue with all of you.

I am so sorry to have used such hurtful and inexcusable language. At any point, I was totally unacceptable.

I hear that you're hurt, angry, confused, and skeptical of how we move on from now would be too if I were you.

I've dedicated my career to giving a voice to the voiceless, and the last thing I want to do is make anyone — but especially our Asian brothers and sisters in particular — feel like that is a unique source of pain in all of this, too. That historical community has been left out or ignored in critical conversations around race, identity, and equality. I am determined to play a part in changing that.

Your lived experiences aren't always given the platform and attention they deserve. We're grateful that you've looked to Teen Vogue throughout the years as a safe space with the world. We are better for it and I know we are only scratching the surface.

In the coming weeks, I'll be putting together and sharing Teen Vogue's editorial commitment to uplifting and reflecting the AAPI community. I'm heartened by the conversations with other industry leaders who are willing to help me think through lasting, longterm, critical changes to our coverage and remain a safe and inclusive workplace.

To better days ahead — of which I know there are many.

Alexi McCammond

1,024 replies, 454 retweets, 2,232 likes

FIGURE 37 Alexi McCammond's official releases on Twitter after the accuses of racism Source: twitter.com/alexi/status/1369835727094157318

← Tweet



Alexi McCammond @alexi

Hey there: I've decided to part ways with Condé Nast. Here is my statement about why -

Traduci il Tweet

I became a journalist to help lift up the stories and voices of our most vulnerable communities. As a young woman of color, that's part of the reason I was so excited to lead the Teen Vogue team in its next chapter.

My past tweets have overshadowed the work I've done to highlight the people and issues that I care about — issues that Teen Vogue has worked tirelessly to share with the world — and so Condé Nast and I have decided to part ways.

I should not have tweeted what I did and I have taken full responsibility for that. I look at my work and growth in the years since, and have redoubled my commitment to growing in the years to come as both a person and as a professional.

FIGURE 38 Alexi McCammond's resignation from Condé Nast after the accuses released on Twitter Source: twitter.com/alexi/status/1372603793825751040

Vogue's chief content officer and global editorial director were aware of the woman's past racist tweets, and McCammond herself mentioned them during the interview process. According to a corporate executive who spoke with the newspaper, but asked to remain anonymous, Ms. Wintour discussed the tweets firsthand with leaders of color at Condé Nast before the job was offered to McCammond. The candidate in addition to impressing Condé Nast's leadership with her career path, had also demonstrated with the 2019 apology that she had learned from her mistakes (Robertson, 2021). However, the interviewee declared that the editorial group although it was aware of the racist tweets, was not aware of some homophobic tweets and a photo, also from 2011, but recently published by a right-wing website, showing the woman in a Native American costume at a Halloween party. The vetting process had not revealed the additional material since it was deleted (Robertson, 2021). According to *The New York Times'* sources, Anna Wintour at an early stage tried to offer her support to McCammond by having her attend meetings with staff members and other groups to allow her to further apologize and listen to their concerns. In addition, Condé Nast's human resources department also met with *Teen Vogue* staff and reminded employees of the importance of checking with the communications team before making public statements, and staff members were also reminded of the importance of keeping criticism "in the family" (Peiser, 2019; Robertson, 2021).

2.5.7 Uniqlo

In October 2019, a dispute between South Korean internet users and the Japanese clothing brand Uniqlo raised after a new advertisement campaign launched by the company was criticized as mocking Korean victims of wartime forced labor and brothel workers (Cha, 2019; *Uniqlo ad withdrawn in Korea after being accused of condoning wartime atrocities*, 2019).

In the commercial, the 99-year-old American entrepreneur and interior designer Iris Apfel, who has more than 1.6 million followers on Instagram (Iris Apfel, 2021), was having a conversation with the teenage fashion designer Kheris Rogers. The girl asked the lady how she used to dress when she was a teenager and Apfel replied: "I can't remember that far back!" (Cha, 2019).

In the South Korean version of the advertisement, the company instead of making a literal translation of that phrase had subtitles saying: "Gosh! How can I remember something that goes back 80 years?" (Cha, 2019). The reference to 80 years triggered a reaction from some South Koreans, since 1939 is considered the year in which Japan's campaign of forced labour camps and sexual slavery started to take place in the country (Min, 2003), therefore the mention of that specific period within the translation has been perceived as being deliberately offensive.

The Japanese colonization of Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945, apart from forced labour, included also the use of “comfort women”, a cruel euphemism to address girls and women, most of them Korean, obliged to work in wartime brothels (Cha, 2019).

Criticisms of the Uniqlo campaign went viral, the spread of the protests across the whole South Korea both online and offline forced the company to remove the video from the web. The backlash happened after South Korea's Supreme Court in 2018 stated that Japan's Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corp. and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries had to compensate South Korean victims of forced labor. Moreover, in July 2019, Japanese authorities strengthened controls on the export of some chipmaking materials to South Korea, causing on the other side a boycott of Japanese products, going from beer to pens and clothing (Cha, 2019). Furthermore, soon after the beginning of the protests, a 19-second parody YouTube video became viral, receiving more than 101,000 views in two days (Fig. 39) (Cha, 2019).

In the video, the South Korean history major college student Yoon Dong-hyun acted with Yang Geum-deok, a nearly 90-year-old woman, who was a forced laborer for Japan's Mitsubishi during World War II. The student asked the woman how hard it was for her when she was young, and she replied: “It is impossible to ever forget that awfully painful memory”. Yoon posted the video with subtitles in English and Japanese (Minji, 2019).

According to a Reuters' internal anonymous source from Uniqlo “There was no intention to touch on the issue of comfort women or South Korea-Japan dispute”. The Uniqlo official also added that the translation, which was done in South Korea, was meant to help convey the message of the original commercial. She furthermore refused to name who had done the translation (Cha, 2019).



FIGURE 39 Yoon Dong-hyun and Yang Geum-deok's reply to Uniqlo's advertisement

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4dficChRQ&t=4s>

The fact happened after Uniqlo suffered a first backlash on July 11th, 2019, when the Uniqlo's CFO Takeshi Okazaki during the earnings press conference explained that he "thought" that the impact of a boycott of Japanese goods from Korea, due to the above mentioned political and economic tensions among the two countries, wouldn't have last long (Hyun-woo, 2019).

On July 4th, 2019, Japan had in fact started to apply export curbs on South Korea for three fundamental materials for the development of semiconductors and displays, in response to Seoul's handling of a wartime forced labor issue. The boycott was joined as a form of protest by many South Koreans (Lee, 2019).

After those affirmations, FRL Korea, the operator of Uniqlo in Korea, sent a first message of apology to reporters and journalists, who asked for a brand statement over the CFO's phrases, but it decided not to post the apology on its official website or on its social media accounts, causing a further reaction by some Korean consumers who felt under considered by the company (Hyun-woo, 2019). On July 11th, 2019, Japan's Fast Retailing Co. finally released an official statement of apologies on its Korean and Japanese websites claiming that the CFO had "hoped" not "thought" the impact would not have lasted long (*Apology Posted on the UNIQLO South Korea Website*, 2019; Hyun-woo, 2019).

2.5.8 Vogue Brasil

This case (Noris & Cantoni, 2021b) involved Donata Meirelles, former *Vogue Brasil* director, who resigned from her position after receiving accuses by social media users of having organized a "slavery party".

The event took place from February 8th until February 10th, 2019, in Salvador de Bahia. To celebrate her 50th birthday, the woman invited guests from all over the world. Moreover, in order to further promote the event on social media, Donata also launched an *ad-hoc* hashtag "#doshow50", to be utilized by guests on their personal profiles, in particular on Instagram, to share contents related to the party (Noris & Cantoni, 2021b).

Among the pictures shared on Instagram during the party through the #doshow50 hashtag, some of them showed the woman and her guests sitting on an ornate chair and accompanied by standing Afro-Brazilian workers dressed in white typical Bahian clothes (Fig. 40–41) (Aldersley, 2019; Maria Lucia Hohan, 2019; Paulo Germano, 2019).

Such pictures did not go unnoticed by social media users, who reacted in different ways to the images and started to post their comments and opinions about the party through the hashtag #doshow50. Some Internet users found the party a celebration of the Afro-Brazilian culture and of its black community



FIGURE 40-41 Two images from the party. Donata Meirelles (Post Deleted); Maria Lucia Hohan, Donata Meirelles' Guest

Sources: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6708147/Vogue-Brazil-style-director-resigns-invoking-slavery-birthday-photo.html>, www.instagram.com/p/Btq3Gi6IqY9

(Fig. 42) (Ella Show, 2019), others instead accused her of having chosen a racist theme party, whose many symbols were disrespectful for the Candomblé folk religion and alluded to the colonialist period when Brasil heavily relied on slave labor. The debate led to an unexpected crisis (Fig. 43) (Áurea Carolina, 2019; Luciana Genro, 2019; Stephanie Ribeiro, 2019).



FIGURE 42 An Instagram post in favor of Donata Meirelles party
Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bt6AHU4gRVn/>



FIGURE 43 An Instagram post against Donata Meirelles' party
Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BtrYzj6hhqZ/>

Many Instagram reactions referred to the chair used to take some of the pictures, which was compared to the *cadeira de sinhá*, an ornate chair utilized during colonialism by slave masters. Furthermore, also the Afro-Brazilian workers attire was considered as inappropriate, since, according to user opinions, the clothes that the ladies were wearing could be compared to the white uniforms worn by Brazilian house slaves (Noris & Cantoni, 2021b).

Although on February 9th, Donata Meirelles apologized on Instagram (Fig. 44), through a post in which she clarified that the chairs were an artefact chosen to celebrate Afro-Brazilian Candomblé religion and that the Bahian workers' clothes were not slave uniforms, but traditional clothes (Donata Meirelles, 2019), the woman after a few days had to resign from her position at *Vogue Brasil*.

Also *Vogue Brasil* apologized on its Instagram account (Fig. 45) and clarified which would have been its next steps within the company to increase awareness on the topic, to fight racism and to increase empathy (Voguebrasil, 2019).

Beside published posts and comments, we should report that six of the ten Afro-Brazilian workers portrayed dressed in white, who had been hired to welcome the guests, and who have been referred to as the victims of the racist party, went to the police in Salvador De Bahia to fill an official complaint due to the offenses suffered on social media for having taken part to the party as workers for the ABAM Association. Moreover, the ladies complained for a drastic reduction in terms of work due to their clients' fear of racial repercussions as a consequence of the backlash they have suffered after the party (Noris & Cantoni, 2021b).



FIGURE 44 Donata Meirelles's apologies
Source: www.instagram.com/p/Btq5iMBhgXb

Nota de esclarecimento

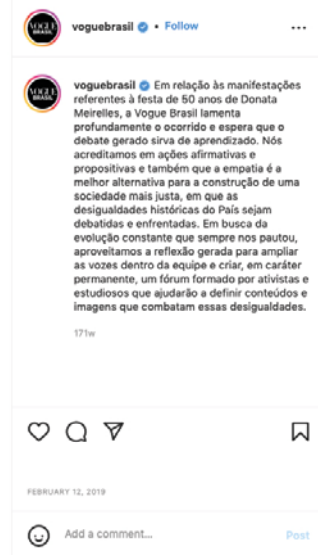


FIGURE 45 *Vogue Brasil's* apologies
Source: www.instagram.com/p/BtwzL97lSE6

Noris & Cantoni (2021b), who reached ABAM, the Association from which the workers were hired, reported a statement released by the Association, who explained that:

What happened on social media is not the real story and no one asked us what happened before, spreading false claims on social media [...]. On Friday, we arrived at 3 pm to get ready, which was in a different part of the palace where the reception would take place. All ten of us got our make-up done. At 7 pm, we went to the reception area, where there was a veranda-type room and stairs and white flowers. They had placed four chairs in each corner for us to take turns sitting in, while we welcomed guests. We were a surprise for Donata, she didn't know we would be there. She was the first to arrive. The last guest arrived at 10:30, which was when we were free to go. The next day, social media had posted something different....

Noris & Cantoni (2021b), through Donata Meirelles' case, present the limits and the challenges that social media users still need to consider when it comes to intercultural communication aspects. Not all the people on social media have perceived Donata Meirelles and her guests' message in the same way, and this might be due not only to the fact that social media mediate messages and

act as communication filters, but can also depend on people's different cultural and societal backgrounds, on their past and present experiences, ideas, thoughts and (pre-)judices. Moreover, even if ABAM ladies were supposed to be the victims of racism by many social media users, their voices and perspectives had not been considered as relevant by the majority of commentators.

2.6 *Understanding and Mapping Crises*

After having presented some recent cases (many others might have been added), it is now time to reflect on some lessons learned, outlining the most frequent issues, which dimensions of digital media make them possible, and how to avoid them (if possible).

2.6.1 A Three Layers Map

First of all, let us consider the main issues at stake – the reasons presented by critics to explain why they are against a message or campaign.

If we go back to the three layers of “colo” – agriculture, culture and cult – as presented in the previous Part (*Fashion, a fascinating history*), most of the crises refer to the second and the third ones. However, in a recent case in which Versace has been accused of suggesting that Macau and Hong Kong are independent states because of their names being listed on a T-shirt (Fig. 46), leading to an official statement by the company apologizing with China (Fig. 47), also the first layer might have a role (Chen, 2019; Donatella Versace, 2019; Glenday, 2019; Versace, 2019; *Versace ha fatto un pasticcio con la Cina*, 2019).

The second layer is where most crises happen, as it has been documented through the above presented cases. Among the most frequent issues, we can list accuses of cultural insensitivity and stereotyping, up to racism, missing credits or appropriation, disrespect for (vulnerable) groups or minorities.

When it comes to the third layer, the inappropriate use of religious images or symbols is the most important case. In the above examples, we have seen it in the case of Gucci and the Sikh community, as well as in Donata Meirelles's case, about the Candomblé folk religion. In fact, similar cases might be mentioned for other faiths. For instance, if we think of the Christian religion, images of Jesus, of Mary and other saints, or of religious ministers have been used in commercials in controversial ways that spurred debates (e.g. by Benetton, Robert Kalinkin, Marithe and Francois Girbaud, just to name a few). While extensive studies are missing on this, it seems that they did not ignite similar online discussions or apologies from the companies. Maybe because companies do not perceive their business to be threaten, and/or because of what Jenkins (2003) has called “The Last Acceptable Prejudice” referring to “The New Anti-Catholicism”.



FIGURE 46-47 A piece of Versace T-shirt and Donatella Versace's statement of apologies on Instagram
 Sources: www.businessoffashion.com/articles/china/versace-loses-chinese-brand-ambassador-amid-t-shirt-controversy, www.instagram.com/p/B1BNIAMInBo/

A recent case might help exemplify the issue. In 2019, the American art collective MSCHF customized Nike Air Max 97 sneakers inserting in the bubble water from the Jordan River and calling them “Jesus shoes”. While such pairs were using Christian religious symbols and even a representation of the Vatican logo on the box, no official intervention by the company has been initially reported. Rather, the online debate might have “brought Nike good press, or at least an enormous amount of attention” (Ernest, 2021). In March 2021, the same collective has launched, in collaboration with the rapper Lil Nas X, a new customized version of the same Nike model, called “Satan shoes”, this time with a drop of human blood in the soles and related symbols, still referring to the Christian religion.

Contrary to the first case, Nike has decided very soon to file a trademark infringement lawsuit. In April 2021, BBC News reported that Nike won its lawsuit against the art collective MSCHF. The sneakers that were sold for \$1,018 were once again Nike Air Max 97s, this time modified with an inverted cross, a pentagram and the Gospel citation “Luke 10:18”. The 666 pairs made available from the art collective went sold out in less than a minute from launch, and all but one had already been shipped. MSCHF launched the shoes in coincidence with the launch of Lil Nas X’s latest song *Call Me By Your Name*. Each shoe also featured a signature Nike air bubble cushioning sole, containing red ink and a single drop of human blood, donated by members of the MSCHF art collective.

The fashion brand asked the New York federal court to stop MSCHF from selling the shoes and prevent it from using its famous Swoosh, and in the filing with the District Court it reported that “MSCHF and its unauthorised Satan Shoes are likely to cause confusion and dilution and create an erroneous association between MSCHF’s products and Nike” and that “There is already evidence of significant confusion and dilution occurring in the marketplace, including calls to boycott Nike in response to the launch of MSCHF’s Satan Shoes, based on the mistaken belief that Nike has authorised or approved this product”, MSCHF’s attorneys countered that the 666 pairs created were not typical sneakers, but rather individually-numbered works of art that were sold to collectors for \$1,018 each (*Nike wins court bid over ‘Satan Shoes’ with human blood*, 2021; *‘Satan Shoes’ to be recalled as Nike agrees to settle lawsuit*, 2021).

Siding with Nike, a federal judge issued a temporary restraining order, even though MSCHF had indicated it had no intention of producing any additional pair of shoes. Nike explained that the MSCHF art collective that made the “Satan Shoes” agreed to issue a voluntary recall as part of a legal settlement, resolving the trademark infringement lawsuit filed by Nike. No further details about the agreement, which also included the “Jesus Shoes” produced by MSCHF in 2019 also using the Air Max 97 as a base, have been made public

(*Nike wins court bid over ‘Satan Shoes’ with human blood, 2021; ‘Satan Shoes’ to be recalled as Nike agrees to settle lawsuit, 2021*).

Nike said in a statement that MSCHF modified the shoes without Nike's permission, and that the company had nothing to do with the “Satan Shoes” or the “Jesus Shoes”. In any case, no official statement from the company has been found on social media.

2.6.2 Digital Media Conditions for Such Crises

It is now time to further reflect on the conditions of such online communication crises. The most important one, as already mentioned while introducing the localization topic, is the fact that contents published online are technically available to global audiences – hence unintended publics can access them and feel offended. However, this is not the only condition. A major component is linked to the amplification effect of social media, together with the easiness of posting, liking and sharing. Highly followed accounts are able to raise issues and point at problems, mobilizing their followers and, through them, triggering a snowball effect. *Ad-hoc* created hashtags (Karamalak & Cantoni, 2021) as well as digital activism campaigns can lead to major digital storms. The interconnectedness of the online world and its being active 24/7 allow communication crises to escalate very fast and require an immediate crisis management from concerned companies or individuals. Specific players might take the role of watchdogs or whistle-blowers, up to the point of becoming able to create storms even based on very thin reasons. The phenomenon of echo chambers or information bubbles (Cinelli et al., 2021) can play here a role as well. Crises might be amplified well beyond the original incident just because of the fast diffusion of similar messages within like-minded communities, communities that are almost “immune” from alternative views and interpretations, and not interested to in-depth analyze the cases at stake.

One more element has to be mentioned here: the persistency of digital media. As we have seen in some cases above, posts that might have been published several years earlier, maybe intended just for a few friends, or posts that people decided to remove because they changed their minds, can still be accessible and resurface the public debate in ways that were almost impossible in previous media. In some cases, a very severe censorship approach seems to find its way among the online debate, where there is no space for change, repentance or forgiveness ... A kind of social media Jacobinism seems to require the constant construction of enemies to be humiliated, fired, damned. In order to moderate the negative issues connected with the persistency of digital media, the “right to be forgotten” has been attracting more and more attention, being ruled for instance under the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (*Everything you*

need to know about the “Right to be forgotten”, n.d.). However, “given competing interests and the hyper-connected nature of the Internet, the right to be forgotten is much more complicated than an individual simply requesting that an organization erase their personal data” (*Everything you need to know about the “Right to be forgotten”, n.d.*) and is still very difficult, if not impossible, for individuals to get full erasure of their digital traces.

2.6.3 Is It Possible to Avoid Such Crises?

Inter-cultural comprehension and careful localization practices can help preventing possible misunderstandings and minimizing such crises. However, we should make here two further considerations, which suggest that crises cannot be avoided in all cases.

First, misinterpretation can happen also on purpose, for reasons different from a genuine defense and protection of a culture. For instance, someone might have interest in feeding online campaigns against competitors, so to damage their business in specific areas or with specific publics. Second, even if in most cases crises are not sought by companies, nor even anticipated, in other cases they might be planned, for political or other reasons. In fact, fashion media and companies are having more and more their own political agendas, hence leading to debates and conflicts (Ambás & Sádaba, 2021; Linfante, 2021; Motta & Biagini, 2017). They might even expect that such online debates could benefit them, by attracting the admiration of like-minded prospects.

Third, cultures are very complex “entities”: what seems to be correctly localized and acceptable by some, could be considered still inadequate or even offensive by others. They are not crystallized and homogeneous positions, rather constantly changing and debated. A last case can help to shed light on this complexity and on the internal tensions within cultures: the case of the “Sauvage” campaign by Dior.

In August 2019, Dior released on its digital channels a Native American-inspired campaign for its Sauvage fragrance, but due to accusations of cultural appropriation and racism it removed it almost immediately (Lieber, 2019). The short video, directed by Jean-Baptiste Mondino, had as its main characters Johnny Depp, who is seen dressed in a poncho while playing a guitar in an attempt to “capture the spirit of Native Americans”, and a dancer in traditional native clothing, performing to the beat of a drum, followed by a narrator saying: “We are the earth. Dior” (Adegeest, 2019; Lieber, 2019).

The fashion house described the social media campaign as “an authentic journey deep into the Native American soul into sacred, foundational, centuries-old territory” (Fig. 48) (Bain, 2019) and explained that it had actively partnered with

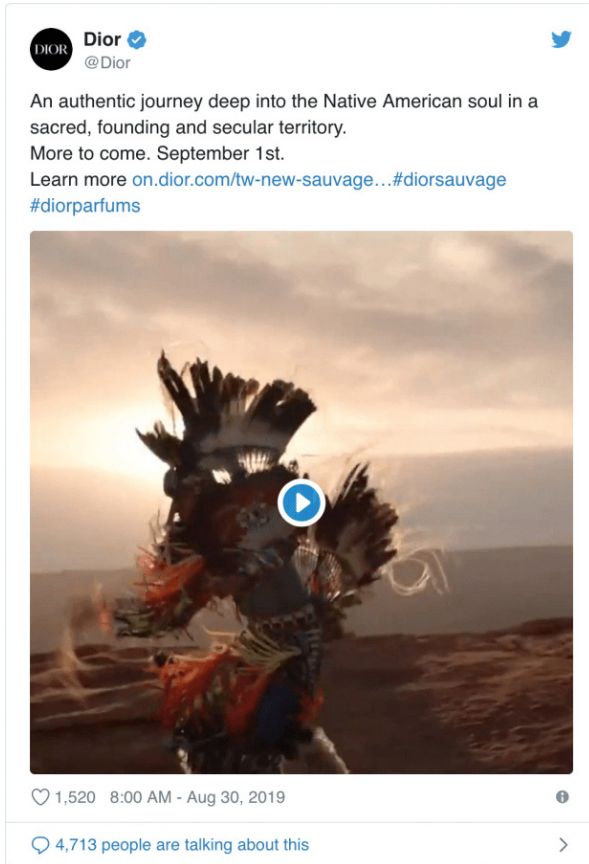


FIGURE 48

A screenshot of Dior ad on Twitter

Source: qz.com/quartz/1699531/dior-partnered-with-a-native-group-for-its-contentious-sauvage-ad/.

Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO), an indigenous advocacy group, to produce the clip. Nevertheless, the backlash was almost immediate.

As stated by BoF and Fashion United, Dior later released a statement and the behind-the-scenes video-making to support its idea of building awareness of indigenous heritage and culture. The statement explains that the company is “very proud of this collaboration with AIO”, explaining that the organization was part of the ad campaign to “change the misperceptions about Native Americans, to share accurate American history, to build awareness about Native Americans as contemporary peoples and to promote Indigenous world-views”. Dior also stated: “As soon as we began to evoke Native American imagery and symbols in this new film, the House of Dior, Jean-Baptiste Mondino and Johnny Depp immediately decided to contact Native American consultants who are enrolled citizens of the Comanche, Isleta and Taos Pueblos and the Pawnee Nation, with years of experience fighting cultural appropriation and promoting authentic inclusion” (Adegeest, 2019; Liber, 2019).

Despite the clarifications and despite the fact that Dior consulted with AIO to ensure that the campaign was culturally appropriate and not offensive, many social media users perceived it as racist for relating Native Americans alongside the fragrance name *Sauvage*, or *Savage* in English. The word in its French form was used to refer to French indigenous, while the English word might also have a racist connotation, since it is utilized in a derogative way to describe people of Native American descent (Adegeest, 2019; Anderson, 2019; Lieber, 2019).

On Twitter, the hashtag #NotYourSavage was coined by users to express their disappointment and criticism concerning the campaign. Among those who criticized the brand, one Twitter user stated, “Calling us *Savage* in a different language and accent doesn’t remove the long-standing historical violence and racism we continue to experience!” (Lieber, 2019).

Adrienne Keene, a Native American academic, writer and activist, who writes the popular blog *Native Appropriations* claimed on Twitter: “So the fact that ‘*Sauvage*’ is on some ‘we are the land’ BS is not surprising, but as always I find it deeply disturbing when brands force Native people to make the choice between stereotypes and misrepresentation, or utter invisibility” (Fig. 49) (Adrienne Keene, 2019).

The jewelry designer Kristen Dorsey, member of the Chickasaw tribe, expressed to BoF her disappointment concerning the Dior campaign, explaining that the brand’s choice annoyed her and many Native American artists like her, because, according to them, the company relied on tropes and stereotypes. Moreover, she stated: “It’s a classic example of the white men who come and take whatever from Native American culture that they want. That’s why it’s so offensive” (Lieber, 2019). She also highlighted that the company should have got in contact with other native designers and artists, who would have suggested Dior to invoke modern Native American art, which does not rely on such stereotypes (Lieber, 2019).



FIGURE 49 Adrienne Keene's post against Dior's advertisement campaign
Source: twitter.com/NativeApprops/status/1167468489642250243

Although Dior has put in place protocols to avoid these types of incidents, including working with representatives of the culture portrayed in the campaign, the combination of the fragrance name and the stereotypical imagery has angered many. Moreover, despite Depp has claimed some Native American origins (Cherokee or Creek), has been formally adopted by the Comanche tribe in 2012 due to his performance in *The Lone Ranger* and he has received the Comanche language name of Mah-Woo-Meh (“Shape Shifter”), Dior was criticized by some users for having chosen a non-native American testimonial. Finally, the choice to never mention the collaboration with AIO within the social media ad campaign may have exacerbated the backlash (Friedman, 2019a; Weinberg, 2019).

After the clamor, AIO organization initially released a statement noting: “The goals of Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO) for providing consultations on media productions are to ensure inclusion of paid Native staff, artists, actors, writers, etc., to educate the production teams on Native American contemporary realities and to create allies for Indigenous peoples. AIO does not speak for all Native Americans. We are proud to have successfully achieved our goals of education and inclusion for this project with Parfums Christian Dior” (Friedman, 2019a). Shortly afterwards, on Instagram it disclaimed its involvement stating; “Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO) deeply regrets its participation in the Dior campaign ... AIO takes responsibility for our actions and has much to learn from this unfortunate set of events ...” (Fig. 50) (Americansforindianopportunity, 2019). Dior decided to erase the video campaign from Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube and to only utilize print stills, featuring Johnny Depp, and removed the Native American contribution (Adegeest, 2019; Friedman, 2019a; Lieber, 2019).

On September 13th, the company released a statement saying “The House of Dior has long been committed to promoting diversity and has no tolerance for discrimination in any form. Recently, a film trailer for the Sauvage fragrance was posted on social media and immediately withdrawn. We are deeply sorry for any offense caused by this new advertising campaign, which was meant to be a celebration of the beauty, dignity, and grace of the contemporary Native American culture. As a consequence, we have decided not to release this version of the campaign” (Friedman, 2019a).

This last case shows how fashion-related communication can be seen as a relevant field where cultures are being discussed: due to their high visibility within popular culture, they provide opportunities for interested parties to highlight a culture’s importance, its values and characteristics, at the same time, those elements are being negotiated and co-created within the debate ...

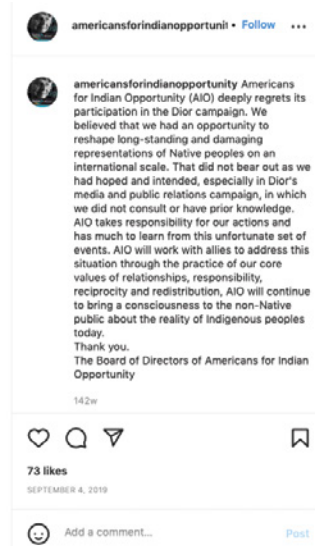


FIGURE 50 Americansforindianopportuniti's statement
Source: www.instagram.com/p/B2AJXUxljIV/

Concluding Remarks

Fashion has an impact on people's everyday life and lifestyle not only because it fulfils functional needs, but also because it allows individuals to communicate who they are and who they would like to be. Moreover, it helps human beings to integrate and be part of certain groups and be accepted by society at large or by specific (sub)cultures (Kalbaska et al., 2018b). In fact, people cover themselves to reveal that they are much more than their bodies, hence unveiling their immaterial, spiritual dimension.

Fashion, when it comes to the framework of cultural studies, plays an active role in shaping the outside world, modeling and integrating itself in the popular culture sphere and impacting on fields such as art, music, cinema, sport, media, tourism and business. Up to developing a symbiosis with the pop culture itself.

Pop culture elements such as tales, music, photography, cinema, television, sport, museums and exhibitions play an important role in pushing fashion to become more "populist, popular and public" (Danesi, 2019). In particular, the relationship between fashion and museums, as seen from the examples in Part 1, is becoming stronger and more valuable. The world of fashion is no longer seen as an accessory element to be included in some temporary or permanent sections of museums, but it has been transformed from the "ugly

duckling” to a swan, increasingly occupying a central role in the museum scene. The extreme interest by the general public for fashion is also demonstrated by fashion capitals such as London, Milan, New York and Paris: fashion weeks and districts have become major attractions within them.

Digital transformation processes have deeply affected, and still are, both fashion and popular culture. The fashion world has been amplified by its connection with digital communication media, which have contributed to make fashion a major player within the pop culture landscape. By digitally transforming related information and communication, as well as several processes, including that of selling/buying, fashion companies, influencers, styles and trends have become globally visible, with the related opportunities and threats.

The digital transformation has made it possible to shorten the distances between nations and to give a global echo to fashion communication, however, cultural misunderstandings have been equally amplified, leading to several crises within the fashion world. What might be culturally acceptable for one audience might not be so for another one, depending on different cultural backgrounds, hence the need for a wise localization, or cultural translation.

The presentation of several crises, and a reflection on their very reasons, has shown how the new digital media (echo)system requires a major effort to care for different cultures and approaches. At the same time, it has demonstrated how fashion – as a major part of popular culture – is becoming a place where culture is being discussed, defended, and (re)negotiated among different parties.

A (battle) field that is likely to provide even more interesting cases for those interested in popular culture!

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