

FASHION X FACTORS: THE VALUABLE APPROACHES TO A COLLABORATION FOR LUXURY FASHION BRANDS TO APPEAL TO YOUNG CUSTOMERS

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ABSTRACT

A collaboration has been the phenomenon for fashion brands within the luxury fashion market for many years. Although collaboration between designer such as Karl Lagerfeld, Stella McCartney, Roberto Cavalli and Alexander Wang with the high-street retailer H&M is the most widely known collaboration campaign, there are also other relationships or approaches to a collaboration that have been adopted by luxury fashion brands. The report shows consumer trends in the global luxury market would move from the older to younger customers. Therefore, it should be valuable to the luxury fashion brands to take into account the preferences of those young customers in the design of new fashion products as well as the applied fashion marketing strategies. This paper will examine the valuable approaches to a collaboration to appeal to young customers enabling luxury fashion brands to respond to the evolving young customers within the global luxury market and to take advantage of a collaboration.

KEYWORDS: Collaboration, Luxury Fashion Brands, Branding Strategy, Fashion Marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

In the fashion industry, which is characterized by change revolved around season and is highly competitive, it is imperative for fashion brands to consider and implement concepts for fashion marketing at the positive side of high concern for design, profit and customers (Easey, 2009). Consumer trends are constantly evolving; hence, the understanding of the changing trends is essential to fashion marketers and business (Dillon, 2012). By examining the current trends in the global luxury market, the world's leading advisor to the global luxury goods industry, Bane & Company, reports that younger customers are anticipated to comprise three-quarters of the global luxury market by 2020 and will continue to spend on luxury goods including fashion products higher than older customers (Bane & Company, 2016). For this reason, luxury fashion brands should

visualize and implement the strategy to engage with those increasing growth customers within the global luxury market who are young and look for the accessible yet content-rich luxury products and brands.

A well-developed branding strategy would enable a brand to launch successful new products from product development process and one of the strategic branding decisions could be done through co-branding (Marshall & Johnston, 2015). According to Posner (2011), co-branding or what is so called a “collaboration” in marketing fashion brands and products could be the strategic approach to generate new ideas and develop fashion products designed to appeal to the target consumer. By looking into the industry, a collaboration has been employed by many luxury fashion brands in recent years, but the most well-known collaborations that involve luxury fashion brands could be the collaborations between the Swedish high-street retailer H&M with designers from high-end fashion houses (Jackson & Shaw, 2009). In fact, a collaboration could be applied by fashion brands in the different forms of relationships. Since it should be essential to luxury fashion brands to anticipate preferences of increasing young customers, an understanding of the valuable approaches or relationships to a collaboration that would facilitate the luxury fashion brands to appeal to the young customers when they decide on a strategic collaboration could be fruitful to business.

2. OBJECTIVES

- (1) To explore the concept of collaborations in Fashion Marketing.
- (2) To analyze the trends of collaborations adopted by luxury fashion brands.
- (3) To examine the valuable approaches to a collaboration for luxury fashion brands to appeal to young customers.

3. THE CONCEPT OF COLLABORATIONS IN FASHION MARKETING

A collaboration of fashion brands could be the same notion as co-branding in Marketing. Jackson & Shaw (2009) explain that co-branding brings out the strategic link between two brands that believe a team effort develops from a collaboration which enables them to acquire equivalent benefits from the association of their brands. Apart from being determined as strategic branding decision (Marshall & Johnston, 2015), a collaboration could be treated as the strategic approach to create new ideas and develop products designed to appeal to the target consumer and utilized as one of the preeminent sales promotional tools in marketing fashion brands or fashion products employed within the fashion industry as it produces the feeling of limited edition to a customer (Posner, 2011).

There should be the variety of collaborations in fashion marketing that could be explained by forms of relationships. By summarizing the relationships of a collaboration that could be applied into fashion business (Jackson & Shaw, 2009; Posner, 2011; Marshall & Johnston, 2015), there are several approaches to explain the

relationships of fashion collaborations in creating and developing new fashion products, which could be any of the following:

1) Two fashion brands collaborations

This relationship means the two fashion brands join together to design and launch the new products line or collection. For Example, Moncler Gamme Bleu (Thom Browne x Moncler) and A.P.C. x Carhartt.

2) High-profile designer and high-street retail collaborations

Collaborations between high-profile designer and high-street retail are the associations between fashion designers from high-end or luxury fashion brands and high-street or mass market fashion retailer to offer the affordable luxury designs. For Example, High-profile designers such as Karl Lagerfeld, Stella McCartney, Viktor & Rolf, Versace, Roberto Cavalli, Isabel Marant and Alexander Wang x H&M, Designers such as Isaac Mizrahi, Anya Hindmarch and Prabal Gurung x the US discount store Target and Mary Katrantzou x Topshop.

3) Fashion brand and celebrity collaborations

This form of relationship happens when a fashion brand teams up with a celebrity to design and launch a product or fashion line. For Example, Kate Moss for Topshop, Madonna and David Beckham for H&M and M.I.A. x Versus Versace.

4) Fashion designer or celebrity and sport brand collaborations

This relationship is the link of sport-fashion collaboration which a fashion designer or celebrity participates in the design of fashionable sports collection for a sport brand. For Example, Y-3 (Yohji Yamamoto and Adidas), Stella McCartney for Adidas and model Christy Turlington for Puma.

4. THE TRENDS OF COLLABORATIONS ADOPTED BY LUXURY FASHION BRANDS

From the collaborations between the legendary fashion designers with artists such as Elsa Schiaparelli x Salvador Dali (1930s) and Yves Saint Laurent x Piet Mondrian (1965) into the high-profile designers x H&M collaborations, a collaboration has been utilized by luxury fashion brands for the more marketing and branding purposes than design purpose as in the past.

By analyzing the trends of collaborations within luxury fashion market, the two brands collaboration is yet adopted by some luxury fashion brands as can be seen from the latest collaborations of Charlotte Olympia x Agent Provocateur and Hussein Chalayan x Swarovski (Vogue, 2016a; Vogue, 2015a). The High-profile designer and high-street retail collaboration is still a popular relationship adopted by many luxury fashion brands and designers. In 2016, H&M announced that Kenzo designers Carol Lim and Humberto Leon would be their designer collaborators after the successful Balmain x H&M collection from the previous year (Vogue, 2016b). Christophe Lemaire also joined the collaborations with the Japanese high-street retailer Uniqlo

for the second time (Vogue, 2016c). Interestingly, some luxury fashion designers participated in a collaboration with high-street or mass market brands but changed the traditional ways of offering products only at the high-street brand's stores. The products from Charlotte Olympia x Havaianas capsule collection are available at Charlotte Olympia stores, Charlotte Olympia's website, Havaianas's website and selected retailers (WWD, 2015). Also, Victoria Beckham x Target items will be launched exclusively at Beckham's stores and website (Vogue, 2016d).

A celebrity is still a favorable factor to luxury fashion brands in terms of a collaboration. Versace announced the new sneakers collaboration with a dancer Charle "Lil Buck" Riley (Vogue, 2015b). An American singer Beth Ditto agreed to join the collaboration with the French designer Jean Paul Gaultier (Vogue, 2015c). Apart from the human celebrity, there has evolved the rising new approach to a collaboration with a celebrity when a number of luxury fashion brands announced their collaborations with iconic figures from pop culture cartoons, movies, toys and games. The idea of a collaboration between luxury fashion brands with an iconic figure could date back to the Moschino capsule collections under the supervision of Creative Director Jeremy Scott which featured SpongeBob Squarepants, Barbie, Looney Tune, Powerpuff girls and Super Mario Bros (InStyle, 2015; Marie Claire, 2015; teenVogue, 2015). Barbie came back in the collaboration game with the British luxury shoes designers Sophia Webster in 2015 (The Guardian, 2015) and Charlotte Olympia in 2016 (Vogue, 2016e). Other recent collaborations between luxury fashion brands and iconic figures from pop culture involve Disney characters including Donald Duck x Gucci by Alessandro Michele (Vogue, 2016f), Disney x Coach, featuring Mickey Mouse (Vogue, 2016g) and Kenzo x The Jungle Book (Vogue, 2016h).

When designers such as Yohji Yamamoto, Stella McCartney and Jeremy Scott have continued their collaborations with the sport brand Adidas, Mary Katrantzou also joined the crew (Vogue, 2016i) by repeating her collaboration with Adidas Originals. The two designers from the French luxury fashion houses - Riccardo Tisci from Givenchy and Olivier Rousteing from Balmain revealed to team up with Nike (Vogue, 2016j; Vogue, 2016k).

5. THE VALUABLE APPROACHES TO COLLABORATION FOR LUXURY FASHION BRANDS TO APPEAL TO YOUNG CUSTOMERS

By analyzing the various collaborations of luxury fashion brands, there could be the two approaches to a collaboration that would be valuable to luxury fashion brands in offering a new product or collection to appeal to increasing young customers within the global luxury market.

The first approach should be *the fashion luxury brands x iconic figures from pop culture collaborations*. Since the iconic figures from pop culture are universally known and liked and they could be linked to childhood experiences of customers, especially young customers (Fashionista, 2016), this cute factor approach to a collaboration would allow luxury fashion brands to design a product or collection appealing to young customers

by associating them with the famous pop culture iconic figures. From the interview with Jeremy Scott about his Moschino womenswear collaboration with Barbie for Spring/Summer 2015, he explained that Barbie was selected because she could be connected with every girl (Vogue, 2014). Moreover, this approach might endow luxury fashion brands to enhance brand identity via the collaboration with iconic figures from pop culture as done before by Sophia Webster and Charlotte Olympia when the designers joined the collaboration with Barbie who share the identity with their brands (The Guardian, 2015; Vogue, 2016e). According to former UC Berkeley marketing professor David Aaker, brand identity, or the unique set of brand associations that represent what the brand stands for and promises to customers, is the significant concept for building brand equity, or the added value endowed to products and services (Kotler & Keller, 2006).



Above (Left to right): Look 10 from Moschino x Barbie (Spring/Summer 2015), Barbie Pink Butterfly high heels from Sophia Webster x Barbie (2015), Barbie Clutch from Charlotte Olympia x Barbie (2016).

Sources: www.vogue.com and www.theguardian.com



Above (Left to Right): Donald Duck x Gucci (Spring/Summer 2017), Kenzo x The Jungle Book (2016), Disney x Coach (2016).

Source: www.vogue.com

The second approach draws the idea from the cases of Charlotte Olympia x Havaianas and Victoria Beckham x Target. This approach is the new way of *High-profile designer x high-street retail collaborations*,

which luxury fashion brands could offer a new affordable high-design product or collection to young customers who seek the high-end products at accessible price, but products must also be available at a luxury brand's stores and/or website in order to elevate brand awareness among new customers and to use a collaboration as sales promotion tool to help gathering sales and profit to a brand.



Above: Flip-flops from Charlotte Olympia x Havaianas (2016), available at Charlotte Olympia's stores and website, Havaianas's website and selected stores.

Source: us.charlotteolympia.com

6. CONCLUSION

A collaboration could be the strategic approach in fashion marketing which facilitates luxury fashion brands to generate new ideas and develop fashion products designed to appeal to the target customer. It could be implemented by various approaches or relationships. Recently, a collaboration has been adopted by luxury fashion brands through two fashion brand collaborations, High-profile designer and high-street retail collaborations, Fashion brand and celebrity collaborations (human celebrity and iconic figures from pop culture) and fashion designer and sport brand collaborations.

There should be the two valuable approaches to a collaboration to luxury fashion brands to appeal to young customers. The first approach could be *the fashion luxury brands x iconic figures from pop culture collaborations* which luxury fashion brands could employ to appeal to young customers by linking the designs with universally-known and liked iconic figures from pop culture to their childhood experiences and to enhance brand identity by selecting the appropriate iconic figures who share something in common with a brand. The second approach could be the new way of *High-profile designer x high-street retail collaborations* which would allow luxury fashion brands to offer young customers with high-design products at accessible price. This approach requires luxury fashion brands to also have products available at their stores as it could create brand awareness and used as a sales promotion tool to help gathering sales to business.

The findings in this paper should be useful to luxury fashion brands to consider the appropriate approaches to a collaboration when they target young customers. It could be applied to both well-established luxury fashion brands and new luxury fashion brands in all countries across the global luxury market including Thailand.

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