

***Print vs Digital, How Fashion Consumers Perceive
Different Mediums.***

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How do consumer perceptions of digital and print advertising media differ when considering fashion marketing materials?

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Abstract

Fashion is an industry fuelled by marketing, with every campaign having unique goals and intentions. The medium used to communicate advertising messages must be selected strategically based on the objectives of the marketing outreach. According to current literature, digital and print mediums each have unique advantages that should be utilized in specific scenarios. This research aims to fill a gap that exists in information based on how print versus digital media affects consumer brand perceptions in fashion. In order to define how the impact of each medium differs, a survey of fashion consumers based on a Canadian fashion brand was conducted, comparing the same 2020 look-book campaign in equivalent print and digital formats. The qualitative results of this experiment were analyzed to inform marketers how to select a marketing medium based on certain advertising objectives. The results suggest print has less of an expansive reach, but creates more memorable and impactful impressions. The study found that print influences viewers to perceive the brand as competent, unique, exclusive and reliable. Digital mediums on the other hand, are suitable for targeting mass audiences, increasing accessibility, colour rich campaigns, and creating the perception that the brand is innovative, and sustainable. Ultimately, the research suggests that fashion brands use both formats in a complementary fashion, choosing a marketing medium based on the current goals and needs of the brand.

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Introduction

Graphic communications is at the core of many industries. It often defines a company's marketing strategy and design, with the function of developing a recognizable visual brand identity that connects with consumers. This is especially true in the fashion industry, where brands are built upon progressive artistic output in the form of graphics, photos, videos, products, and collaborations. Modern fashion businesses utilize these outputs to create an aspirational aesthetic in their advertising with the ultimate purpose of driving sales. In order to have a successful outreach, it is essential that marketing material be executed in a way that takes strategic advantage of both digital and print advertising mediums.

More than ever, as the COVID-19 pandemic disrupts business worldwide, including the fashion industry, marketing innovation must function efficiently and effectively in order to remain competitive. Both print and digital advertising platforms have specific strengths and weaknesses when it comes to customer influence and brand perception. Understanding these differences will allow vendors to make informed decisions about how to connect with customers.

Deliberately marketing to consumers by consciously selecting digital versus print media based on the target demographic, the product being marketed, the type of media being released, and the intention of the material allows for a more purposeful and dynamic combination approach that will maximize the positive emotional response to advertising, and therefore have more significant sales influence. Fashion brands can use this information to increase engagement, boost sales and fuel the growing demand for new clothing that existed prior to the pandemic.

Literature Review

It is vital for modern businesses, specifically fashion companies, to employ a blend of both digital and print media in order to stay current, but what's important is when to choose one medium over the other to elicit the optimal consumer reaction. The purpose of this literature review is to provide context for the comparative research, and paint a picture of the information that has already been discovered about how consumer perceptions differ when considering fashion marketing materials on digital versus print.

Print Mediums

According to an article published in Marketing Letters journal, the decision to use a certain medium should not be based solely on cost, but instead on “empirical research that addresses an organization's marketing goals” (Magee, 2012). Although it may be tempting to favour digital media due to low production costs, the study conducted by Robert Magee (2012) finds that print has a superior ability to connect with an audience. This study, comparing print versus digital using a university magazine, found that due to the method of delivery, print had a higher open rate at 77% of respondents, and only 49% for the digital version. It is hypothesized that a large glossy magazine can stand out amongst postal mail and be set aside for viewing later on, more effectively than an email which can easily get lost amongst the clutter of an ever-growing inbox (Magee, 2012).

Once the publications were opened, it was discovered that respondents had better free recall of the print copy than the digital copy. Cued recall for print was also more effective and accurate over digital, meaning when prompted, the readers remembered more articles and specific content from the printed material. High levels of cued recall for print indicate increased browsing behaviour, and therefore an increased likelihood of serendipitous browsing, exposing the reader to the magazine as a whole, therefore

reinforcing brand identity (Magee, 2012). High colour saturation of the printed images, and the tactile sensation of the physical copy is thought to be responsible for the memorability of print. The oldest and youngest respondents of this experiment had greater recall for print, with the most significant difference being in the younger group. Young generations receive most of their information digitally, meaning print is able to stand out easily, while the older group is just more comfortable with print in general. The middle-aged group in this experiment showed no significant difference in memory related to the medium, possibly due to a balanced exposure to both types of media.

In fashion, images and content encourage viewers to re-create ideals and styles on the basis of social comparison, meaning higher recall has the potential to increase the chances of a consumer acting upon this recreation fantasy, often by purchasing products (Adomaitis & Johnson, 2008). Interestingly, although recall is best for young people with print material, it was found that the younger the reader, the more likely they are to prefer digital versions (Magee, 2012). A 2016 study states that consumers view print as “more accessible, easier to visualize, familiar, and more professional”. Contrary to print, digital media is perceived as convenient, environmentally friendly, cost effective, multifunctional and efficient (Krishen, Kachen, Kraussman & Haniff, 2016).

Digital Mediums

Although print has its advantages, social media is a powerful aspect of digital communication that has significant value and impact on consumers, as they spend more and more of their time online (Anselmsson & Tunca, 2019). As of 2020, Facebook has over 2.7 billion active users (Statista, 2020), Instagram has 1 billion users (Statista, 2020), and Twitter has 330 million users (Lin, 2020). These platforms allow brand communication on a global scale, even on a minimal budget, with the advantage of consistent visibility with most users accessing their social media accounts on a weekly basis (De Souza & Ferris, 2015). Also, as free digital content becomes the norm, customers are less inclined to pay for traditional print media (Krishen et al., 2016).

Many consumers in the fashion industry, specifically the luxury sector, are interested in how the overall experience will contribute to their lifestyle. Consumer motivations for purchasing is often a mix of social and personal, therefore they seek brands that represent an image of fulfilling both desires (De Souza & Ferris, 2015). Repeated interaction with a company on social media streamlines the ability for customers to assess the brand's ability to meet these needs that influence purchase behaviour (De Souza & Ferris, 2015). Digital marketing, such as social media and email newsletter subscriptions also have a positive effect on consumers' perception of brand value. Customers who have a strong sense of involvement with the brand through these mediums are more likely to be loyal to the brand, and make recommendations to other users. Even in high-end fashion markets with expensive products, where constant digital engagement might be seen as diminishing to the exclusivity of the brand, it was found that the connection established through social media is highly valuable in shaping consumer perception (De Souza & Ferris, 2015). Although the positive impacts of marketing messages communicated through print and traditional media have been found to take effect more quickly, there is a significant benefit to establishing relationships online with vast and diverse customer bases (De Souza & Ferris, 2015). Marketing through social media is highly efficient, as digital innovation creates the opportunity to establish a brand, keep the attention of loyal customers, and increase brand awareness instantaneously, and simultaneously.

Unlike print media, digital mediums also have the advantage of being able to combine multimedia and other content types, such as animation and video, which are ideal for complex messages (Magee, 2012). Social media can also be used to gauge success by monitoring consumer responses to posts, and the brand in general. While most traditional marketing campaigns are based on sales values, social media in the fashion space "focuses more on hedonic and empirical values that can be reached by indirect brand experience" (Kim & Ko, 2012). Discrete advertising on social media can draw positive attention, and expose new customers to products and brands they haven't interacted with in the past. One highly successful way this subtle marketing is executed in fashion is through social media influencers who act as brand advocates, influencing

high purchase intention from their followers after recommending the company or product. Sponsored ads and commercials are often annoying to customers, but when an influencer they choose to follow promotes something, it is viewed as less of a nuisance, benefiting both the advocate and brand itself (De Souza & Ferris, 2015).

A recent study in 2019 based on a fictitious fashion brand also supports the notion that marketing medium is to be determined based on intention of the communication and brand goals. The research revealed that different mediums result in unique effects on purchase intention and brand personality. For example, newspaper, and other traditional print mediums are perceived as being competent and reliable, while digital platforms are viewed as contemporary and exciting (Anselmsson & Tunca, 2019). This study also suggests that consumers take cues about the image of a brand from the way it is advertised. Each media channel targets specific audiences, leaving consumers with different impressions. As differing media channels create their own brand personality perceptions, an understanding of how these mediums influence image associations can be used to develop a marketing strategy that uses both print and digital formats in a complementary fashion (Anselmsson & Tunca, 2019). When such a strategy is applied properly, a brand can positively impact “perceived quality, perceived value, uniqueness, and willingness to pay a price premium” (Anselmsson & Tunca, 2019). These findings suggest that in fashion, and other visually promoted industries, manipulating advertising mediums and output to intentionally give rise to specific perceptions, behaviour, and emotions, can give brands more control over the results of their marketing efforts.

A common theme established in the research conducted on this topic is the goal of discovering how managers/owners/marketers can use an understanding of the different impacts that marketing mediums have on an audience to their advantage. Strategically using various digital and print platforms as complementary forces to accomplish specific marketing goals leads to increased control of advertising results and consumer perception, ultimately leading to positive effects on brand equity and purchase intention. Although there is considerable research surrounding this topic, a

gap exists in comparative research focusing on how print versus digital marketing mediums differ in consumer preference, perception, and emotional impact specifically in the fashion industry. The majority of the research reviewed focused solely on the advantages of a certain medium, without comparing the two formats in the same experiment. If both mediums were considered in the experiment, the research was not based on the fashion industry, with the exception of the study by Anselmsson and Tunca (2019). This investigation aims to fill this gap by comparing the same fashion campaign in both digital and print format, using a survey of customers who have made purchases with the brand in the past. The survey will serve to determine how, and what aspects of the different mediums determine certain opinions and behaviour, to confirm if it supports or contradicts the generalized, and fashion-specific findings established in previously published literature.

Methodology

In order to investigate how interpretations of digital and print media differ in the fashion industry, secondary sources were first considered to understand what applicable research already existed on the topic. Sourcing scholarly and peer-reviewed material from Ryerson University's Online Library, and supplementing the information with Google's scholarly articles provided context for the research question. The analysis of this information was divided into three sections in the Literature Review, first outlining the strengths of print and drawbacks of digital mediums, followed by the advantages of digital and shortcomings of print media, concluding with research that suggested a combination approach with the purpose of increasing effectiveness of managerial marketing efforts.

A gap was found in comparative research based on fashion brands, and the primary research conducted aimed to collect qualitative information to fill this gap by administering a survey to customers of a Canadian based fashion label, "*LaFrance*", in order to better understand how medium affects brand perception.

The survey involved 8 questions based on a *LaFrance* 2020 look-book presented in two formats, a 24 page 8" x 8" Inkjet printed look-book on high-gloss paper, and a 24 page digital look-book on a 9.5"x7.31" iPad screen in the *Books* application. The methodology of presenting a customer with two versions of the same material in differing formats, and developing a survey and experiment based on the effects of the medium is highly similar to the approach taken by Magee (2012), where print and digital versions of a university magazine were the subject of testing.



Above are images of the digital look-book, in portrait and landscape positions.



Above are images of the printed look-book. Left is the cover and the right side is open.

The participants that were selected were recent customers of the *LaFrance* brand, who made purchases within the last year, in an effort to simulate the scenario and group of people in which a fashion brand would send a new look-book. Although the brand's customer base is Canada-wide, due to COVID-19 and the nature of the in-person survey, the sample population was restricted to recent buyers living in the Calgary area, available for a scheduled meeting. For this reason, the total sample population was 6, and since everything was pre-arranged, the response rate was 100%.

These two versions of the 2020 *LaFrance* look-book were given to the participants simultaneously, in order to prevent giving one format the benefit of having the first impression. An iPad was chosen as the medium for the digital format in landscape position because it closely replicated the size, and navigation experience of the printed photo-book, involving the flipping of pages, and displaying the spreads as a whole. The iPad functionality is also nearly identical to a smartphone, which is where a consumer would most likely view this content through a digital newsletter, or social media. The survey took place in person, and the participants were given a 10 minute viewing period to browse, and swap between the mediums as they please. Once the 10 minutes was complete, the survey was given to the participant on a laptop, and they were given another 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire on Pages, answering in point form or full sentences. A possible drawback of the procedure could have been related to having a very small sample population, which may not have been representative of the public as a whole. On the other hand, fashion look-books are often a highly targeted marketing material regardless, and it was believed that targeting real customers was more representative of an actual campaign than reaching out to the public randomly.

The following is a list of all the questions that were on the survey:

1. Do you notice a difference in colour? Which collection of images appears more vibrant and impactful? Which platform looks more appealing to you and why?
2. Does the print or digital version present a higher quality looking product?
3. Use 2 adjectives to describe how the look-book makes you feel about the brand when viewing the product on print. Do the same for digital (4 total).
4. How would you prefer to receive this type of content, digitally, or as a physical copy, and why?
5. Do you prefer the physical action of navigating the digital version, or flipping pages of a physical copy, and why?
6. Do you think digital media or print is more environmentally sustainable? Is this something that impacts your purchase behaviour?
7. Which presentation would you say is a more effective sales tool, and why?
8. Do you have any other comments?

These questions based on the *LaFrance* look-book were designed to provoke thought about the benefits and shortcomings of both digital and print formats. The first question was developed to test whether the RGB of digital or CMYK of print are preferred by the participants, and what impact colour space has on how appealing the material appears. The second question had the participant consider the product itself in relation to the medium, and what reasons a certain format might make the product look superior to a viewer.

Question three investigates keywords that consumers associate with each medium to gain a deeper understanding of a medium's emotional impact on marketing perception. The method of compiling keywords to analyze and develop conclusions about common themes is used by Krishen et al. (2016) when comparing opinions about digital and print platforms using focus groups.

The fourth question is related to the delivery method, something that greatly impacted the open rate of the university magazine in the Magee (2012) study. Although open rate

was not a variable in the *LaFrance* experiment, it is key to understand this consumer preference in order to maximize marketing effectiveness.

Magee's (2012) tests also cited an advantage to navigating the tactile nature of a printed product, but did not inquire about the preference in navigation. Question five aimed to fill this gap by establishing what fashion consumers prefer, and if the zoom, adjustable brightness, and faux scrolling functions of the digital medium had an advantage over the traditional navigation of the printed look-book.

Question six was designed to uncover what environmental impacts consumers associate with each medium, as the sustainability of digital platforms is often exaggerated when compared to print's footprint. In reality, very little literature actually exists providing empirical evidence for going paperless, as measuring the impact of digital marketing is a highly complex process that has not been defined. This question was also developed to understand if fashion consumers' purchase behaviour is affected by how sustainable they perceive each look-book to be.

Question seven inquired about consumers' view on sales effectiveness. Anselmsson and Tunca (2019) stated different mediums have their own brand personality, and therefore possess different qualities, some of which can increase purchase intention. This question aimed to define what consumers perceive these attributes to be. Question eight left room for the participants to add any comments they wished, in an effort to obtain any opinions, thoughts or information that was not covered by the previous questions.

The meaning behind the participant's answers on the survey was dissected through a content analysis. This method, used by Krishen et al. (2016) in their study comparing digital and print marketing, was used to "interpret the textual data to conceptualize the key ideas derived from it." Analyzing the responses was done by taking note of language, and keywords to reveal common themes that can be compared to previous research on the topic. Similar to Krishen et al. (2016), responses were divided into

comments based on print and digital categories to help organize answers, and distinguish how the participants perceive digital versus print fashion marketing materials overall. To organize the discussion of the analysis, the same approach as the Literature Review was taken, discussing the advantages of print first, followed by digital, concluding with how both platforms act as complementary marketing forces with specific uses that can be used strategically to produce targeted results.

Results

Overall, not one respondent consistently answered in favour of a particular medium, the survey answers gave insight to advantages unique to both formats.

Question #1

The responses to question one showed a slight preference toward the printed version, with three respondents answering in favour of print, two in favour of digital, and one stating that both are equally appealing. Although the printed look-book was described as the more appealing product, four out of six respondents described the colour to be more vibrant and impactful on the digital platform, and the remaining two stated it was unnoticeable or superior on print. One respondent stated that the increased contrast on digital emphasized the white space in the layout, giving the look-book a cleaner aesthetic, even though vibrance of colour on digital was not a variable directly affecting the respondent's overall preference in platform. Reasons for preferring print involved the physical interaction with the printed copy, the use of the look-book as a table-top home accessory, and the contrast of feeling a real book in your hands compared to the digital, which has a less exciting experience, being compared to scrolling through Instagram.

Question #2

The same four respondents who described digital as more vibrant, also stated that the digital version presented a product that appeared to be of higher quality, because of

the increased colour saturation, glossy retina display of the iPad, and appearance of a sharper image. The other two respondents stated that print presented a higher quality looking product, as the book was described as a fine-tuned complement to the image contents that required more effort to put together. It is important to note that these two customers showed an overall bias leaning toward the printed product for the majority of their answers.

Question #3

Adjectives used to describe how the printed look-book made the respondents feel about the brand included: flashy, unique, original, relatable, tangible, interesting, specialty, exclusive, professional, and solid. The word “unique” was repeated three times by separate participants, all who stated in question four that they would prefer to receive this material in print format.

Adjectives used to describe how the digital look-book made the respondents feel about the brand included: consistent, cool, new, clean, high-end, less tangible and attainable, modern, new, avant-garde, innovative, convenient, and smooth. The describing language of the digital version pointed toward a theme of appearing more contemporary and futuristic.

Question #4

Five out of six customers surveyed stated they would prefer to receive this type of marketing material in printed form. It was discovered that flipping through the physical book was a highly intimate and personal experience, more memorable than scrolling through the digital version, supporting the findings of Robert Magee (2012), who discovered increased cued and free recall associated with print. Three of these five participants mentioned wanting to receive the printed copy over digital for the purpose of using it as a coffee table book, and a conversation starter in a social setting. This desire to use the look-book as a personal art piece was also a theme mentioned in favour of print in question one. In the same vein, another respondent had a preference for print due to the ability to grab it off the bookshelf and flip through it for quick

inspiration. One of the other five respondents stated their preference for print because they often disregard digital marketing efforts. The one customer that voted in favour of receiving the look-book in the digital format stated it was in order to save paper. The method of delivery of print versus digital is not something that the respondents considered a factor when expressing a preference for a specific medium in their answers.

Question #5

When asked about navigation preferences of print versus digital, four out of six customers stated they prefer flipping physical pages, and browsing the printed copy more than the faux page flipping and scrolling actions associated with the digital version. One respondent stated they observe and appreciate the content more thoroughly when flipping through each page. This answer was supported by another respondent who expressed an affinity for the tactile nature of flipping pages. Even one of the participants who voted in favour of digital navigation acknowledged the speed by which you can find specific items in a printed copy. The efficiency of browsing a physical copy was also noted by three other participants, one who stated that the printed copy was “much easier to share with others when they come over.” This respondent also expressed that they liked how easily one can flip to a certain page, or flip fast through a physical copy. Another answer used the example of how you can flip multiple pages at a time. One customer who preferred digital navigation mentioned that it has become more familiar than print at this point, as most media people receive is online. The second customer who stated a preference for digital, explained that the zoom feature allows viewers to see details more clearly, and has an overall more futuristic feel.

Question #6

When it came to environmental impact, all six participants believed that the digital look-book was more sustainable than the physical copy. Each respondent also mentioned that the brand’s choice to use one medium over the other would not affect their purchase behaviour, despite viewing print as having a larger environmental

footprint. Question six and seven were the only questions in the survey where there was consensus amongst all customers.

Question #7

Considering the look-book as a sales tool, every respondent stated that the digital version would be more effective for influencing sales behaviour. Despite personal preferences leaning toward the printed book, the respondents mention many advantages to the digital platform as a marketing medium. Four participants favoured digital as a sales tool due to its ability to be sent to mass audiences with significant savings in shipping and production, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Customers also mentioned the incorporation of links that can lead directly to brand websites and product pages, and how many online shoppers are more familiar with digital mediums already. Another response in favour of digital stated that since the product looks superior on a screen, it would be a more effective sales tool than print, combined with the fact that it is highly adaptable across different digital applications. The only point made in favour of print by a customer stated that having physical copies as a fashion brand can be beneficial in meetings with buyers, or can be used as a value add to purchases sold in bundles with other items, for example.

Question #8

In the additional comments section of the survey, the recurring theme of using the printed copy as a table-top display was mentioned again, as one respondent described the printed look-book as a specialty item with a “tangible feel that makes it seem closer to you, that can be incorporated into your life more easily”. The feeling of intimacy with the physical copy was also mentioned by a second respondent when asked about their navigation preferences in question 4. Another participant explained that the layout possibilities of print, where an image can extend past the bleed right on the edge of the page is a unique effect, and looks cleaner than the digital version. Due to the nature of the iPad’s design and *Books* application functionality, there is a border around the iPad (non-screen area), page numbers, and greyscale arrows to indicate touch zones for flipping the pages, which were described as distracting to the content.

This same respondent mentioned how notifications on the iPad can act as an additional distraction when viewing the digital version, and how it can run out of battery when someone is viewing it.

Discussion

The survey responses outlined key concepts that uncover what aspects of digital and print media affect customers differently, and what impact that has on consumer perception of a fashion brand. Understanding the unique interpretations of each format, allows marketers to select a content medium based on its ability to elicit the brand perception they intend to evoke.

Print Mediums

Ultimately, the results indicate that print media is best suited for marketing goals associated with creating impactful perceptions of exclusivity, showcasing specialty products, and reinforcing brand identity. The research shows that print media in fashion has the tendency to be viewed as artwork, as half of the respondents mentioned their desire to use the physical *LaFrance* look-book as a coffee table book. Marketing materials such as this, which can double as a home accessory, allow users to revisit the content, giving brands exposure for extended periods of time. This type of consistent presence in a customer's life can help breed a sense of involvement, which according to De Souza and Ferris (2015), positively influences consumer loyalty. De Souza and Ferris (2015) discussed this constant engagement and interaction with a brand's marketing as one of the advantages of social media, so it's important to note how this can be achieved through print as well.

One respondent mentioned their desire to share the physical copy with others, using it as a conversation starter. This type of in-person recommendation can have significant impacts on a customer's purchase intention, mimicking the recommendations from

influencers and brand advocates on social media, but with a smaller reach, and perhaps a more meaningful impact due to the personal relationship with the recommender. Print appears to be suitable for marketing efforts that seek these types of quality impressions over quantity and expansive reach.

The quality of impression made by a printed product is supported by the study by Magee (2012), which discovered an improved recall associated with print due to the tactile nature and physical interaction with the product. The participants in the *LaFrance* survey describe similar effects of print, stating that the experience is more intimate, more personal, and highly tangible in a way that influences consumers to observe the content more thoroughly. Another respondent mentioned that the printed material is closer to the user, and more easily integrated into the lives of the customer, which was supported by second participant's desire to have a physical look-book on hand to view for inspiration. The navigation of printed material is not only tangible and close to the user, it is a distinctively different experience than mundanely scrolling through social media, or digital marketing campaigns. As the modern fashion consumer receives most of their marketing material online, printed material has the ability to stand out amongst the clutter, which Magee (2012) also cites as one of the reasons for consumers' higher recall of printed media. One surveyed customer even admitted that they ignore the majority of digital marketing content, which mirrors the findings of De Souza and Ferris (2015), stating that digital outreach is often viewed as annoying to customers. These findings further support the conclusion that print is best suited for highly targeted efforts, likely for a more specialty product.

More evidence for print's use in the promotion of specialty products was revealed by the adjectives used by participants to describe how the physical copy made them feel about the brand. Attributing words like exclusive, original, interesting, as well as unique, which was the most repeated adjective, suggested that consumers perceive print as an overall indication of importance. The research completed by Anselmsson and Tunca (2019) also found print media as an effective medium to communicate

competency and reliability, similar to the *LaFrance* survey, where respondents also described print as relatable, professional, and tangible.

Further contributing to the elevated experience associated with printed marketing material is the lack of distractions. One participant mentioned on the survey how the observation of digital media is often interfered with through message notifications, low battery power, application buttons, and the non-screen border that exists on many tablets. Printed products can be very aesthetically clean in contrast, with the capability of extending images into the bleed, and full spread cover images spanning across the spine from the front to the back side, allowing for a high-quality look. Physical print creates this perception of being upper-echelon in fashion, as the production of a printed product seems out of reach for many consumers, opposed to digital content which many (especially young) consumers are highly capable of producing themselves. A surveyed customer stated that “it feels like more effort was put into it”, when discussing the printed look-book. It is likely that if consumers view a brand as making a strong effort to market to them, it can increase the memorability of the campaign, which according to Adomaitis and Johnson (2008), also increases the likelihood of customers acting upon purchase intentions to replicate the fashion they view in advertising.

Overall, printed marketing material in fashion indicates to consumers that the brand is competent, unique, reliable, and exclusive, and it is advisable to use printed media in marketing efforts that seek these types of connotations. Although the reach might not be as expansive as a digital campaign, the interaction with the physical copy develops a memorable and valuable connection with customers that reinforces brand identity, and indicates a product is truly special.

Digital Mediums

Digital mediums are best applied to fashion marketing situations with goals related to directly influencing sales, reaching out to vast customer bases, creating the perception of sustainability, and promoting colourful products.

Although the printed look-book was preferred by participants as a whole when compared to the digital version, the majority also stated that the colours appeared more vibrant and impactful on the iPad. This discrepancy in colour saturation and contrast between the two formats is likely due to two factors, colour space and lighting. Print uses a CMYK colour space with a much smaller colour gamut than the iPad's RGB display. Since the look-book featured designs and garments with deep blue and purple colours, originally photographed in Adobe RGB, the conversion to CMYK on print can prevent the blue and purple colours from appearing as rich as they do on a screen, even when printed on a high-gloss substrate. In addition, the survey was not administered in a controlled room, therefore the lighting under which participants viewed the look-books varied. The iPad has the advantage of brightness control, offering a more consistent experience where the user is able to select the ideal brightness level to create the optimal personal viewing experience. The increased vibrance and larger colour gamut allow for sharper contrast that emphasizes the use of white space, creating a highly polished aesthetic. The survey found that the same individuals who recognized the difference in colour vibrance, also stated that the digital version presented a higher quality looking product, suggesting a correlation between image quality and perceived product quality. For this reason, digital mediums are advisable in fashion marketing scenarios featuring content with colours outside the printable CMYK gamut, as the majority of surveyed consumers could tell the difference with the naked eye. Expanded-gamut printing is rapidly gaining popularity, and becoming the new standard in print, therefore it would be valuable to further fill this gap in research by comparing the performance of RGB against CMYKOGV in fashion marketing.

Digital formats are also suitable for marketing images with small details, as one respondent mentioned that the zoom feature on the iPad was a favourable part of digital navigation. The zoom ability of digital mediums, combined with brightness control, audio, and multimedia capabilities allows better accessibility for visually impaired consumers, allowing them to experience the content the way it was meant to be. According to Magee (2012), video and multimedia approaches are the most effective way to communicate complex messages, making digital mediums highly suitable for marketing campaigns with more intricate meaning. Similar to the study by Anselmsson and Tunca (2019), which found that consumers view digital mediums as contemporary and exciting, respondents to the *LaFrance* survey used adjectives such as modern, new, innovative, and avant-garde to describe the brand when presented through the digital look-book. This information implies that digital media is the appropriate medium to use when marketers want consumers to have these types of perceptions of the brand.

Where print might be well suited to reinforcing brand identity through high-quality impressions, digital media has the advantage of being accessed daily by most consumers, which reinforces brand identity in its own way (De Souza & Ferris, 2015). Involvement and consistent interaction with a brand keeps it top of mind with customers. Combined with the fast rate at which content is released on social media, it makes it very easy for consumers to assess the brand's ability to meet their desires in a way that can influence purchases (De Souza & Ferris, 2015). This streamlined assessment of brand identity is key when the outreach of social media is so vast and diverse, allowing users outside of the brand's loyal following a quick glance at the brand's aesthetic and values as a whole. Individual printed products are much less flexible in their ability to communicate an understanding of the brand as a whole, and therefore it seems digital media is best suited for marketing goals associated with attracting new customers who've never interacted with the brand in the past.

The expansive and cost-effective reach of digital media is one of the main reasons respondents stated that the digital look-book is a more effective sales tool. Combined

with a generally superior representation of the product itself, it makes digital the go-to medium for marketing goals concerned with sales over anything else. Survey participants also mentioned how digital mediums are highly adaptable with many different applications, and have the advantage of linking directly to product pages, websites, and other information that can increase the chances of purchase. This perception of multi-functionality was also noted by focus groups in a study by Krishen et al. (2016).

Lastly, digital is the medium of choice if marketing efforts seek to communicate environmental sustainability. All respondents surveyed viewed the digital version as more sustainable than print, which reflects similar findings as Krishen et al. (2016). Although empirical research concerning the environmental impact of digital marketing is limited, and consumers may or may not be aware of this, avoiding print appears to create the perception that a brand is sustainable. Interestingly, although respondents stated digital was the more sustainable format, they also stated that this opinion is unlikely to influence their fashion purchases, so it's important to note that this perception of sustainability associated with digital mediums does not directly drive sales. This suggests that motivating sales using digital marketing is more about sharp colour presentation, expansive reach, links to product pages, and the ability to convey messages, more than it is about sustainability.

Digital is a valuable marketing medium that can perform in many areas, acting as the ideal complement to printed material. If the goals of a campaign or marketing effort involve instigating engagement with new customers, broadening the customer base, portraying content with deep colours outside the CMYK colour gamut, and creating perceptions of modernity, innovation and sustainability, then digital is the appropriate medium to use.

Conclusion

The results of the primary experiment support much of the existing literature and secondary sources that explored print versus digital media in fashion and non-fashion industries. While the small sample population used may limit generalizability, it is key to note that strategically approaching marketing medium selection based on specific marketing goals is a valuable exercise in any business. As fashion marketing platforms “continue to grow and change with the evolution of technology and society, consumers’ relationship with their medium of preference will continually transform” (Krishen et al., 2016). It is vital that fashion marketers understand these relationships in order to select the correct medium for campaigns, to increase the control of consumer responses, developing perceptions that align with the purpose of the marketing effort. More specifically, the experiment and supplemental research indicate that print is preferable for marketing objectives related to creating tangible, highly memorable first-hand impressions, and perceptions of exclusivity, relatability, and uniqueness. Digital mediums are preferable for sales driven marketing objectives related to promoting highly saturated and colourful products, reaching new audiences, offering increased user accessibility, and creating the perception of being new, innovative and sustainable. With strengths unique to each medium, it is advisable to use both formats with strategic purpose, and intention to elevate consumer experiences, and achieve fashion marketing goals.

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Appendix

PRINT VS. DIGITAL SURVAY QUESTIONS

1. Do you notice a difference in colour? Which collection of images appears more vibrant and impactful? Which platform looks more appealing to you, and why?
2. Does the print or digital version present a higher quality looking product?
3. Use 2 adjectives to describe how the look-book makes you feel about the brand when viewing the product on print. Do the same for digital (4 total).
4. How would you prefer to receive this type of content, digitally, or as a physical copy, and why?
5. Do you prefer the physical action of navigating the digital version, or flipping pages of a physical copy, and why?
6. Do you think digital media or print is more environmentally sustainable? Is this something that impacts your purchase behaviour?
7. Which presentation would you say is a more effective sales tool, and why?
8. Do you have any other comments?

SURVAY ANSWER SHEET

Name: Gregor Zed

1. No difference in colour. I found the hard copy to be more impactful solely because of the physical interaction with the book. The hard copy is more appealing.
2. I found the hard copy to present a fine tuned finished look at the collection that compliments the contents of the pages very well.
3. Print-Flashy, Unique, Digital-Consistent, Cool
4. Physical copy. I find the personal experience while viewing and holding the book to be more intimate than when swiping through a digital version.
5. Flipping pages. I feel I observe and appreciate the content more thoroughly when flipping through each page.
6. Digital is likely more sustainable. Not particularly.
7. As a sales tool, the digital version. This is because of the streamlined process of a variety of links that can be associated with a digital image (links to purchase etc.)
8. Both look very complete and clean.

SURVAY ANSWER SHEET

Name: Kayden Livingstone

1. The colours in the digital version are more vibrant and stand out more, although the hard physical copy is more appealing to me as I enjoy table top books.
2. The digital copy provides more higher quality product.
3. Print: Original and Unique Digital: New, Clean
4. I would want a physical copy as I mentioned before I enjoy table top books.
5. I enjoy a hard copy, flipping the pages is what I need.
6. Digital is more sustainable but this would not impact my purchase behaviour as I would like a hard copy.
7. As a sales tool the digital copy would be more impactful. It is easier to send to mass amounts of people as well as save costs in shipping and production.
8. *Left Blank*

SURVAY ANSWER SHEET

Name: Glenda Bourk

1. Yes, there is a difference in colour between the two. The digital presentation is more vibrant in colour. Both platforms are appealing, each in their own way.
2. Digital version appears higher quality because of the vibrance and gloss effect to the images.
3. Print: relatable, tangible. Digital: High-end, less tangible and attainable.
4. Digital copy for sake of convenience and less waste of paper.
5. For browsing I prefer the digital version as it's more familiar at this point, however flipping pages is a faster way to find specific items.
6. Yes, Digital media is more sustainable, no this does not impact my purchase behaviour.
7. Digital viewing would be a more effective sales tool for todays customers who are used to searching on-line for everything.
8. The Look book is more of a special item these days. Like a coffee table book. The tangible feel also you the sense that it is closer to you, where the item can be integrated into your life more easily.

SURVAY ANSWER SHEET

Name: Brenden Villeneuve

1. I do notice a slight variation in colour. The colour seems more vibrant on the digital format as opposed to the print version. I find the digital version more appealing.
2. The digital version seems to present a higher quality looking product than the print version.
3. Print- interesting, unique Digital- modern, new
4. I would prefer to receive it in physical form. This is because I would want to put it somewhere in my apartment for people to look at when they come to my place. Its a good conversation starter.
5. The physical version. I like the feeling of flipping the page over for real, and as I mentioned above, I think it's much easier to share with others when they come over. I also like how you can easily flip to a certain page, or flip fast through a physical copy.
6. Digital is definitely more sustainable. This would not impact my purchase behaviour though.
7. The digital copy would be more effective in my opinion, because at a lower cost the brand would be able to reach more people.
8. *Left Blank*

SURVAY ANSWER SHEET

Name: Hamza Cenanovic

1. It felt as if the colours in the physical copy were slightly more vibrant. The physical copy was immediately more appealing as soon as I picked it up and felt it in my hands. It felt like a real experience in contrast to the digital copy which felt similar to scrolling through Instagram.
2. Print definitely presents a higher quality product for me. It feels like there was more effort put into making it.
3. Print: professional and solid, Digital: convenient and smooth
4. Definitely physically if possible. I like having quick inspiration available on a bookshelf to flip through. I'm more of an analog person in general though so I'm biased in that way for sure.
5. The flipping action on the iPad is definitely better than just clicking an arrow but I prefer physical. I enjoy having the option to flip multiple pages at a time and easily flipping between them while comparing something on page 12 to page 5 for example.
6. Digital media is more sustainable. It impacts my purchase behavior in other ways but not for books. I mostly consume digital media and I feel like carefully picking and choosing my favorites to put on a shelf is a beautiful thing.
7. The digital version is probably generally more of an effective sales tool because you can link it to any potential customer/client in a few seconds no matter their location (especially during COVID). However having a decent sum of physical copies at your disposal as a designer for when you're in meetings or people come to your studio is a good idea. You can even sell them in bundles with the clothing.
8. The page with the blue hat with the model wearing the purple stuff stuck in my memory the colours seemed extremely vibrant. Also the way the image didn't have any white border before the edges of the page made for an extremely satisfying and clean look, like a painting on a wall without a frame, if that makes sense. The picture/colours end at the very edge of the page in the physical copy, compared to the slightly "messy" look on the digital version with the border and page numbers/arrows/extra stuff distracting you from the actual art. Also notifications on the iPad can distract from the experience or the battery can run out which obviously isn't ideal when showing a client.

SURVAY ANSWER SHEET

Name: Dana-Marie Menzies

1. There is a difference in colour, it seems digital is more vibrant and saturated than the print. For this reason the digital is more appealing to me, as the contrast is higher I notice the white space more and it looks cleaner.
2. I think digital makes the product look higher quality due to the sharper image.
3. Digital: avant-garde & innovative Print: specialty & exclusive
4. I would prefer to receive this as a print copy because I often disregard social media and email promotions.
5. I prefer the digital, it allows you to zoom-in on details and feels more futuristic.
6. I believe digital is the more sustainable option, but this probably would not affect my purchase behaviour.
7. I would say the digital is a more effective tool because the product looks better on it, it can be sent to a large audience very easily and can be adapted to many different digital apps.
8. *Left Blank*

RESPONSE ORGANIZATION & ANALYSIS

Pro-Print:

Respondent: Gregor Zed

1. No difference in colour. I found the hard copy to be more impactful solely because of the physical interaction with the book. The hard copy is more appealing.
2. I found the hard copy to present a fine tuned finished look at the collection that compliments the contents of the pages very well.
3. Physical copy. I find the personal experience while viewing and holding the book to be more intimate than when swiping through a digital version.
4. Flipping pages. I feel I observe and appreciate the content more thoroughly when flipping through each page.

Respondent: Kayden Livingstone

1. Although the hard physical copy is more appealing to me as I enjoy table top books.
2. I would want a physical copy as I mentioned before I enjoy table top books.

Respondent: Glenda Bourk

1. However flipping pages is a faster way to find specific items.
2. The Look book is more of a special item these days. Like a coffee table book. The tangible feel also you the sense that it is closer to you, where the item can be integrated into your life more easily.

Respondent: Brenden Villeneuve

1. I would prefer to receive it in physical form. This is because I would want to put it somewhere in my apartment for people to look at when they come to my place. Its a good conversation starter.
2. The physical version. I like the feeling of flipping the page over for real, and as I mentioned above, I think it's much easier to share with others when they come over. I also like how you can easily flip to a certain page, or flip fast through a physical copy.

Respondent: Dana Marie-Menzies

1. I would prefer to receive this as a print copy because I often disregard social media and email promotions.

Respondent: Hamza Cenanovic

1. It felt as if the colours in the physical copy were slightly more vibrant. The physical copy was immediately more appealing as soon as I picked it up and felt it in my hands. It felt like a real experience in contrast to the digital copy which felt similar to scrolling through Instagram.
2. Print definitely presents a higher quality product for me. It feels like there was more effort put into making it.
3. Definitely physically if possible. I like having quick inspiration available on a bookshelf to flip through. I'm more of an analog person in general though so I'm biased in that way for sure.

4. The flipping action on the iPad is definitely better than just clicking an arrow but I prefer physical. I enjoy having the option to flip multiple pages at a time and easily flipping between them while comparing something on page 12 to page 5 for example.
5. Digital media is more sustainable. It impacts my purchase behavior in other ways but not for books.
6. The digital version is probably generally more of an effective sales tool because you can link it to any potential customer/client in a few seconds no matter their location (especially during COVID).
7. The page with the blue hat with the model wearing the purple stuff stuck in my memory the colours seemed extremely vibrant. Also the way the image didn't have any white border before the edges of the page made for an extremely satisfying and clean look, like a painting on a wall without a frame, if that makes sense. The picture/colours end at the very edge of the page in the physical copy, compared to the slightly "messy" look on the digital version with the border and page numbers/arrows/extra stuff distracting you from the actual art. Also notifications on the iPad can distract from the experience or the battery can run out which obviously isn't ideal when showing a client.

Pro-Digital:

Respondent: Gregor Zed

1. Digital is likely more sustainable. Not particularly.
2. As a sales tool, the digital version. This is because of the streamlined process of a variety of links that can be associated with a digital image (links to purchase etc.)

Respondent: Kayden Livingstone

1. The colours in the digital version are more vibrant and stand out more
2. The digital copy provides more higher quality product.
3. I enjoy a hard copy, flipping the pages is what I need.
4. Digital is more sustainable but this would not impact my purchase behaviour as I would like a hard copy.
5. As a sales tool the digital copy would be more impactful. It is easier to send to mass amounts of people as well as save costs in shipping and production.

Respondent: Glenda Bourk

1. Yes, there is a difference in colour between the two. The digital presentation is more vibrant in colour. Both platforms are appealing, each in their own way.
2. Digital version appears higher quality because of the vibrance and gloss effect to the images.
3. Digital copy for sake of convenience and less waste of paper.
4. For browsing I prefer the digital version.
5. Yes, Digital media is more sustainable, no this does not impact my purchase behaviour.
6. Digital viewing would be a more effective sales tool for today's customers who are used to searching on-line for everything.

Respondent: Brenden Villeneuve

1. I do notice a slight variation in colour. The colour seems more vibrant on the digital format as opposed to the print version. I find the digital version more appealing.
2. The digital version seems to present a higher quality looking product than the print version.

3. Digital is definitely more sustainable. This would not impact my purchase behaviour though.
4. The digital copy would be more effective in my opinion, because at a lower cost the brand would be able to reach more people.

Respondent: Dana Marie-Menzies

1. There is a difference in colour, it seems digital is more vibrant and saturated than the print. For this reason the digital is more appealing to me, as the contrast is higher I notice the white space more and it looks cleaner.
2. I think digital makes the product look higher quality due to the sharper image.
3. I prefer the digital, it allows you to zoom-in on details and feels more futuristic.
4. I believe digital is the more sustainable option, but this probably would not affect my purchase behaviour.
5. I would say the digital is a more effective tool because the product looks better on it, it can be sent to a large audience very easily and can be adapted to many different digital apps

Respondent: Hamza Cenanovic

1. I mostly consume digital media and I feel like carefully picking and choosing my favorites to put on a shelf is a beautiful thing.
2. However having a decent sum of physical copies at your disposal as a designer for when you're in meetings or people come to your studio is a good idea. You can even sell them in bundles with the clothing.

Adjectives From Question #3:

Print Adjectives: Flashy, Unique, Original, Unique, Relatable, Tangible, Interesting, Unique, Specialty, Exclusive, Professional, Solid

Digital Adjectives: Consistent, Cool, New, Clean, High-end, Well Made, Less Tangible & Attainable, Modern, New, Avant-garde, Innovation, Convenient, Smooth