

ASPIRATIONAL FANG

VS.

REAL CUSTOMERS

ON THE BEHIND OF THE FASHION COMPANY DISCOVERING WHAT CUSTOMERS WANT

"NO ONE TAKES THEMSELVES MORE SERIOUSLY THAN TEENAGERS."

A famous quote by the legendary John Hughes of *Uncle Sam*, *Breakfast Club* and many more.

If the fashion world is made up of legends, trendsetters, then the "teenagers" of the fashion are bloggers. This is not the case on the lips of many fashion critics from *Elle* and *Vogue* in 2010 to the past year. An industry so recognized for distorting the rules and trends has now started back to its listening to the consumer as well as the fans, but where does aspiration stop and real value sales begin?

Bryan Boy (@bryanboy), one of the world's most popular bloggers gets it. He was quoted in *Vogue* 12/ March 2010 issue as saying "Boys inspire - they don't dictate" and after sitting front row and looking at critical questions including a Vera Wang tulle-trimmed top and a tulle from Anne Wilbur Barrett dress at his, his blog reads like a general Top Ten list of his favorite designers.

But aside from the "fan letter" from his dress blog, fashion pages, fan sites and other social networking websites generate money back to the fashion industry?

Pam Barnagar of Unity Marketing states that "while half of affluent consumers use social media to "research" with luxury brands, only one-quarter will actually declare themselves "fans" of these brands"

Some high-end brands seem to be winning over customers anyway. For example, retailer Burberry has nearly 900,000 fans on Facebook. Still, there's no way to tell whether these fans are affiliates or, in marketing speak, "an aspirational customer." If they come off as too friendly, they may be more of their appeal," writes Caitlin Donoherty, of The Big Money.

Street style, which used to be such a pure form for the fashion industry has become watered down by people that try to copy Tommy Ton and Scott Schuman's original vision. Now is the fashion world supposed to get an idea of what real people are wearing and how they are incorporating fashion pieces into their lifestyle if publicly starling may be the camera trying to create the most shocking look possible just to get published?

Martin Roberts, Co-Founder of *Teen*! Fashion Street predicted this some years ago when he said "I think in the end we're all to happy about bloggers and 'real fashion' like Top Shop and H&M because they got girls involved in fashion who never wore before. As they become aware they will have to change trends to something a bit more age appropriate, and they might not make the leap to luxury but they will choose fashion forward emerging brands."

Yet fashion businesses need to use results and focus in getting smart and creating a Fashion App which allows users to click directly on products that they like which should not only engage customer spending for their afterwards, but really need not the aspiration to, the actual sales.



Whether the *Chiclist*.com also gives themselves as being the cutting edge of what the real fashion regime wants which is sharing, interacting and actually updating into their Top 5 brands tagged as H&M, clothing, Zara, Forever 21 and Topshop. A designer brand came in at #22 (Coral) with 226 tags mostly clothing or accessories and the real reads like a high street shopping guide. At their *Chiclist* 12-conference during their Paris Fashion Week in February, the notable founders were unable to connect to any questions or return on answers for their attendees asking:

"When you start a new relationship with a friend you give it time, then about 30% following the first, and not a good year to see the proper results," Corinne Chen, co-founder and CEO of *www.chiclist.com*. However a year is a risky investment for many brands that have a smaller target demographic which is why you see advertising like Forever 21 and H&M on these sites.

How does this cut and paste "mini-journal" movement really put fashion people to work? What effect does it have on the creation? The bloggers are first not reporters, they normally read their favorite fashion blogs to continue on, then donating posts around them. They post the advertisements items create and the photos on blogs and *Instagram* as anyone, and get it out to the public as fast as possible. At the end of the day, they will tell whether the benefits of public opinion will actually produce sales of the real merchandise, rather than a bunch of fans shopping at H&M looking for something that looks "fashion designer" but nothing about the real thing.