The role of marketing as a determining factor in the production and sale of fashion apparel

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Abstract.
Marketing in the fashion sector gained widespread popularity in the 20th century, particularly after World War II, when the fashion industry became one of the most successful and flourishing sectors of the economy. It was during this century that fashion houses such as Chanel, Christian Dior, Elsa Schiaparelli, and Balenciaga emerged. Fashion evolved into a socio-economic phenomenon that not only reflected societal changes but often initiated them. The fashion world underwent various changes depending on the geopolitical situation, wars, and developments in science and sports. Marketing serves as a regulator of both direct and feedback interactions between consumption and production. Active use of marketing allows producers to organize their activities considering consumer interests, to solve market problems in the most rational way, to maximize profit opportunities, and to plan activities based on anticipated market development trends.

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In the global economy, there are no universal forms of business organization based on marketing principles. Therefore, the development and application of specific marketing methods require a differentiated approach, taking into account the characteristics of enterprises and primarily the specifics of the market they operate in. This demonstrates the diversity of marketing; its fundamental principles can be applied in almost all areas of commercial and non-commercial activity, yet creative thinking and adaptation to specific market conditions are required. Historically, Western European countries and the USA have achieved great success in solving the problems of creating enterprises that meet consumer needs. Therefore, the accumulated knowledge and experience of other countries cannot be ignored. Currently, the global market for textiles and clothing is defined by countries such as China (with approximately $150 billion in exported textile and clothing products), India ($20 billion), and Pakistan ($10 billion). The European Union remains the largest exporter with a volume of $25 billion, and the USA with $14 billion. The experience of countries with developed market traditions shows that the most effective solution to the problem of producing competitive products is a marketing approach.

Modern Management Theory views marketing as a foundational concept in organizational management. In this context, marketing is not just one of the functions of an organization's activities but is recognized as a leading management function that defines both market and production strategies for the enterprise. The main principle of marketing is that, within a market economy, an organization can only ensure its long-term existence and stable profit by effectively satisfying the interests, needs, and demands of customers and consumers. The production of goods becomes rational only when it is based on the principle of customer orientation.

In the fashion industry, the success of a brand, especially nowadays in a highly competitive environment, is crucial. A brand is a collection of distinctive product features (name, packaging, reputation) that ensure its recognition in the market. Therefore, brand promotion is a primary task in marketing.
In the fashion industry, marketing is often referred to as fashion marketing. It gained widespread popularity in the second half of the 20th century and led to the emergence of various styles and trends in global fashion, which became a socio-economic phenomenon reflecting and often initiating societal changes. Fashion marketing helps establish interaction and contacts with the buyer, attracting their attention to the offered clothing, shoes, and accessories. Marketing enhances visual perception with strong emotional and often rational arguments, encouraging a shared understanding of the offered fashion items by the buyer. Music and cinema have a significant influence on the modern fashion world, where idols and directors create new human images in their works, leading to changes in their internal and external appearance. Each of the aforementioned factors is critical in itself, but modern marketing methodology has combined all these aspects and concepts to achieve the goal. Marketing has introduced a systematic approach to managing the commercial activity of light industry enterprises, where a thorough analysis of key factors serves the primary task of satisfying consumer needs.

The fashion industry is highly competitive, and therefore the development of marketing tools that allow maintaining and securing stable market positions is critically important. The 4P concept is often used to implement marketing activities.

Product. To build consumer trust in the brand, a skilled sales policy is necessary, as well as demand forecasting and ensuring the availability of fashionable clothing for the consumer.

Promotion. The product in the store should be associated with a specific scent or music, so that the buyer forms a certain associative series, preparing an image that matches the brand's products.

Price: In the fashion industry, it is especially important to effectively establish pricing policies, taking into account factors such as “new collection pricing” or “seasonal discounts”.

Location: The location of a fashion store, as well as the image of the shopping area, is crucial. The choice of location is determined by competition and the level of socio-economic development of the region, as well as the availability of transportation, parking spaces, etc.
Today, it is noteworthy to highlight a marketing tool such as collaboration with celebrities (film directors, photographers, producers, stylists, artists, actors, musicians, models, trendsetters, bloggers). Collaborating with well-known personalities allows attracting their followers, expanding the brand’s target audience, and increasing sales. For example, for the fashion house Louis Vuitton, the year 2023 started off spectacularly – the brand introduced a long-awaited collaboration with Yayoi Kusama. Kusama and Louis Vuitton first introduced their joint project in 2012, and this collaboration became one of the most successful entries of the French fashion house into the art world. The bold works of the artist adorned the brand’s clothing, bags, and accessories, creating a significant buzz, which led the team to invite her for another creative partnership ten years later. This time, with her creative approach, Kusama literally revived the Louis Vuitton universe, reimagining symbolic elements and going beyond simple advertising banners. The personality selected for such collaboration often matches the style and philosophy of the brand.

In contemporary conditions, the clothing market represents a complex mechanism involving multi-level production plants that handle the manufacturing of raw materials, the processing of the latest fiber samples to produce yarn and fabric, necessary for creating modern and high-quality garments. The main goal of these extensive and knowledge-intensive operations is to meet consumer demand in the context of fierce competition among manufacturers. Fashion producers must focus on marketing, which serves as a methodological basis for organizing the production and sales activities of fashion industry enterprises to ensure high efficiency and profitability. It should be noted that the volume and structure of the consumer market in Azerbaijan, including the clothing market, largely depend on foreign trade. Consequently, the volumes of exports and imports, as well as the efficiency of foreign trade, significantly depend on the state customs policy. Therefore, in the practice of foreign trade activities, it is necessary to make more active use of tariff and especially non-tariff regulatory measures. Strengthening marketing activities to emerge from the crisis and develop local production of fashionable goods, creating conditions for competition with
imported goods would be advisable. Fashion trends in the market are constantly changing. However, companies must continuously monitor these critical processes, but most local enterprises lack such experience. In this context, it is proposed to introduce a special position in enterprises in this sector—a fashion coordinator. All activities of the enterprise should be directed towards fully satisfying customer needs. Conducting marketing research in the area of consumer behavior and market segmentation will help the company more clearly direct its activities towards solving market problems, which are key factors for achieving success and earning profits in the market.

Fashionable clothing serves as a kind of social shell that allows its owner to declare their internal and external world, thus fulfilling the function of human interaction with the world. Marketing enhances this by paying special attention to the design, construction, and production of clothing, the development of new materials, patterns, computer programs, and the application of high technologies. In this context, the human factor is also very important—the skills of fashion designers, designers, engineers, cutters, seamstresses, models, etc. The trends presented allow us to conclude that the modern fashion industry is characterized by rapid changes in fashion trends, which are related to the globalization of the world space, the individualization of consumer demand, changes in climatic conditions, and other factors. This information allows us to build marketing forecasts regarding future changes in fashion so that each brand can find its consumer. According to experts, the fashion of the new millennium behaves boldly.

- First, the rapid change in fashion trends, along with consideration of changing climatic conditions across different countries, make seasonal collections boundless. This process requires the fast and accurate work of marketers who forecast demand and fashion trends.
- Second, the increasing influence of clothing production in China on mass production and sales in the global market is notable. In the second and third decades of the 21st century, China will exert the greatest influence on the global textile and clothing markets. There are about 40,000 textile and clothing manufacturing enterprises in China, including 24,000 textile factories with 19 million workers. It is forecasted that productivity growth rates could reach up to 17% per year.
Fashion is becoming more open and accessible both for producers and designers. Online, especially on social networks, resources are available that allow for initially creating and presenting a product concept before its production to adjust production volumes according to consumer demand. Often, startup brands with small production volumes turn to this model.

The development of the modern fashion industry and fashion marketing is entering a new stage with the growth of online shopping. Modern marketers develop any brand through SMM (Social Media Marketing)—a set of activities aimed at promotion through social platforms. For example, on Instagram, brands post videos from shows, photos from photoshoots, and talk about work in the fashion house. According to a study by Fashionunited.ru, about 42% of women aged 18-29 make purchasing decisions through Instagram. Direct sales through social networks account for 22% of sales for fashion brands on Facebook. There is a trend towards moving stores online and closing offline stores, which is associated not only with minimizing expenses for maintaining retail space and paying employees but also with the actual advantage of online demand compared to traditional methods. Fashion shows, media advertising, personal sales, PR, and interaction with public figures, and other marketing activities stimulate sales and are actively used by manufacturers worldwide.

References: