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# HOW CAN A FASHION BRAND BENEFIT FROM USING FASHION BLOGGERS AS A MARKETING TOOL

CASE: JULJA FINLAND LTD



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## MITEN MUOTIBRÄNDI VOI HYÖTYÄ MUOTIBLOGGAAJIEN KÄYTTÄMISESTÄ MARKKONNIN VÄLINEENÄ – CASE: JULJA FINLAND OY

Muotiblogeista on tulossa yhä suositumpia ja vaikutusvaltaisempia kuin aikaisemmin. Tästä syystä muotibrändien tulisi oppia hyödyntämään muotiblogeja osana muotimarkkinointiaan. Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli kerätä tietoa muotibrändeille siitä, miten ne voivat hyödyntää muotibloggaajia osana muotimarkkinointiaan aina muotibloggaajan valinnasta varsinaiseen yhteistyöhön.

Tämän opinnäytetyön teoreettinen viitekehys koostui muotimarkkinoinnista yleensä sekä muotiblogien roolista yritysviestinnässä. Kaikenkaikkiset muotibloggaamisen hyödyt ja haasteet käytiin läpi ennen kuin siirryttiin muotiblogimarkkinoinnin vaikutuksiin lukijassa.

Teoreettinen viitekehys osoitti, että muotiblogimarkkinointi auttaa kuluttajia tekemään ostospäätöksiä ja vaikuttaa ostokäyttäytymiseen. Se saa aikaan myös keskustelua lukijoissa, mutta tuo harvoin mitään negatiivista huomiota muotibrändille.

Opinnäytetyö päättyi laadulliseen tutkimukseen ja siitä saadun tiedon tarkkaan analysointiin sekä SWOT – analyysin muodostamiseen. Tutkimusmenetelmänä käytin haastattelua, sillä sen avulla sain tulosten yhteyteen myös haastateltavan henkilökohtaisia mielipiteitä varsinaisen kokemuseräisen tiedon lisäksi.

Tutkimus osoitti yhteistyön muotibloggaajan kanssa tuovan enemmän hyötyä ja mahdollisuuksia kuin haasteita muotibrändille. Se ei kuitenkaan saa olla ainut muotimarkkinoinnin väline, jota muotibrändi käyttää vaan sen tulisi käyttää usempia samanaikaisesti. Yhteistyö muotibloggaajan kanssa tuo muotibrändille näkyvyyttä, lisää bränditietoisuutta, saattaa lisätä myyntiä ja auttaa muotibrändiä saamaan enemmän asiakkaita kuin kilpailijansa.

Muotibrändi voi hyödyntää tästä opinnäytetyöstä saatuja tuloksia kehittäessään omaa muotimarkkinointiaan. Opinnäytetyöstä on apua, jos muotibrändillä on aikomusta tehdä yhteistyötä muotibloggaajien kanssa.

### ASIASANAT:

blogit, markkinointi, muoti, ostokäyttäytyminen, sosiaalinen media, yhteistyö

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# HOW CAN A FASHION BRAND BENEFIT FROM USING FASHION BLOGGERS AS A MARKETING TOOL – CASE: JULJA FINLAND LTD

Fashion blogs are becoming more and more popular. Fashion brands are finding new and exciting ways to do fashion marketing and have recently discovered fashion blogs and collaborations with fashion bloggers. However, there is a huge amount of knowledge that a fashion brand needs to find out before considering any collaboration. This thesis gathered knowledge all the way from fashion marketing and tools to valid experience based information gained from an interview with a fashion brand.

The theoretical framework consisted of fashion marketing in general and the role of fashion blogs in business communication. The overall benefits and challenges of fashion blogging were discussed before moving on to the effects that fashion blog marketing creates in a reader. The theoretical framework showed that fashion blog marketing helps consumers make buying decisions and makes an impact on buying behavior. It also creates conversation and rarely negative attention for the fashion brand.

This thesis ends with a qualitative research and a precise analysis including a SWOT-analysis of the received information. The research shows how many benefits a fashion brand can actually gain from collaboration with a fashion blogger. It's clear that collaboration is more profitable for a fashion brand even with the challenges and threats than when not done at all.

## KEYWORDS:

blogs, buying behavior, collaboration, fashion, marketing, social media

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>VOCABULARY</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2 FASHION MARKETING AND FASHION MARKETING TOOLS</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Fashion marketing tools	9
2.1.1 Blogs compared to other communication tools	10
2.1.2 CREF-model as a tool in fashion marketing	10
2.1.3 Consumer buying behavior models as a tool in fashion marketing	12
2.2 Ethical issues in fashion marketing	13
<b>3 THE ROLE OF FASHION BLOGS IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1 What is a blog and what are the different ways of using them	14
3.2 Features of a successful fashion blog	17
3.3 Benefits of fashion blogging	17
3.4 Challenges of fashion blogging	18
3.5 Ways of doing fashion marketing in fashion blogs	19
3.6 The effect of fashion blog marketing on the readers of the fashion blog and their buying behavior	21
3.7 What kind of fashion blogger should a fashion brand collaborate with	22
<b>4 CASE: JULJA FINLAND LTD USING FASHION BLOGGERS AS A MARKETING TOOL</b>	<b>23</b>
4.1 Case company	23
4.2 Qualitative research	25
4.3 Questions asked and answers received from JULJA Finland Ltd	26
4.4 Reliability of the data	30
4.5 Results	31
4.5.1 SWOT – analysis	31
4.5.2 Rules of co-operation with a fashion blogger	33
4.5.3 Future	35
<b>5 CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>SOURCES</b>	<b>38</b>

## PHOTOS

Photo 1. Esimerkki kuvasta.

**Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

## CHARTS

Kuvio 1. Esimerkki kuviosta (Lähdeviite).

**Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

## VOCABULARY

### Brand

A brand is a name, term mark, symbol, shape or any other feature that identifies one seller's product or service as distinct from those of other sellers. There are five objectives that a good brand will obtain. Firstly, it delivers messages clearly. Secondly, it confirms that the company is worth credibility. Thirdly, it connects target prospects emotionally. Fourthly, the brand motivates the customer. Fifthly and finally, it concretizes user loyalty.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to gather valid information on the usage of fashion bloggers as marketing tools. The approach used in this thesis is the corporative approach which aims to find the best ways to exploit fashion bloggers in marketing from fashion brand's point of view.

The reason why I've chosen fashion blog as the target blog in my thesis is that fashion blogs are rising in popularity especially among women. Some fashion blogs have even become highly profitable and the influence of fashion blogs within the industry is growing. It has also been said that fashion blogging is becoming more of a business rather than an interesting hobby. (Wikipedia 2014.)

The popularity of fashion blogs helps fashion brands to separate themselves from competitors if used properly. However, not all fashion brands have the resources to keep their own fashion blog. In these cases, the best alternative is to collaborate with an already existing fashion blogger.

In the fourth chapter of this thesis I'm going to deal with a case company called JULJA Finland Ltd. I interviewed JULJA Finland Ltd's production manager in order to gain information about their collaboration with fashion bloggers.

## 2 FASHION MARKETING AND FASHION MARKETING TOOLS

Fashion industry reached almost \$2,560 trillion in 2010. By the year 2015 the apparel, luxury goods and accessories portion of the market, is expected to generate \$3,180 billion in the US, with a yearly growth rate of 4%. Eu demand for clothing and textiles will likely remain relatively weak through 2015 due to the depth crisis. (Report Linker 2013)

According to Forrester Research (2013), the online retail sales in Europe will grow by 11 % between 2012 and 2017. In Southern European countries, the growth will be fastest, at 18 % per year. (Forrester Research 2013)

Chart below shows the sales in billions. In 2012 the amount of retail sales was \$145,6 billion in Europe and is expected to reach \$248,3 billion by the year 2017. According to the chart below, the growth will be steady from 2012 to 2017.

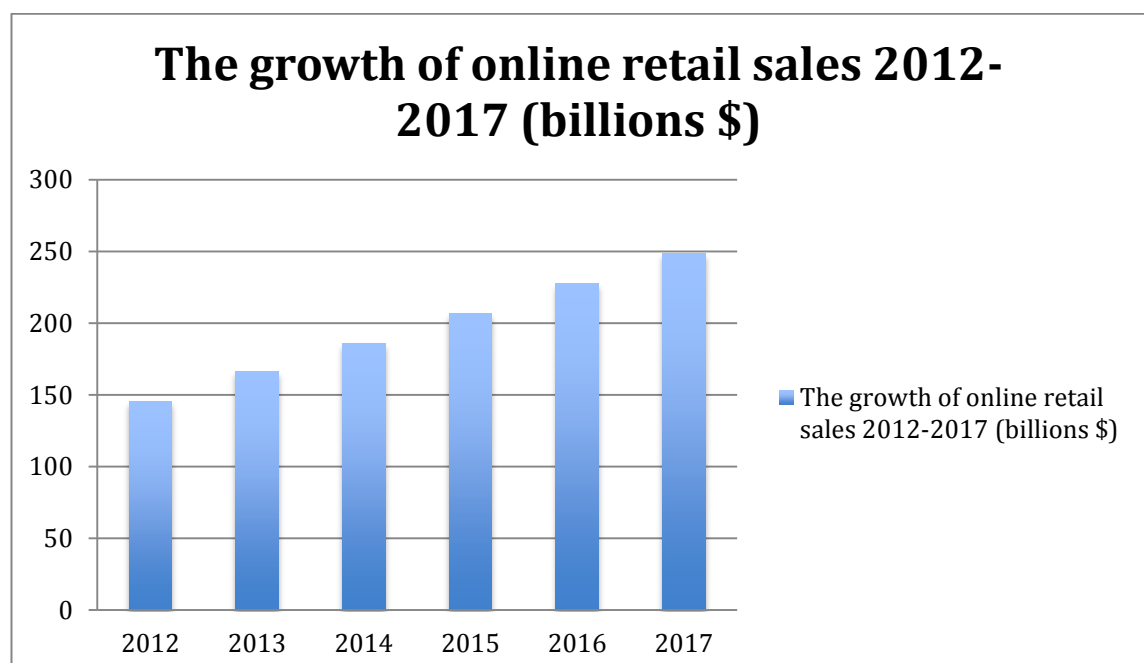


chart 1. The growth of online sales in Europe according to Forrester Research.



“Fashion marketing is the promotion of apparel sales and it involves all the tasks necessary to deliver the clothing requests and meet the needs of potential customers and designers. Fashion marketing involves developing campaigns, displays and advertisements, directing manufacturing and marketing as well as creating sales strategies for the fashion industry or the retail environment.” (International academy of design & technology 2011)

Fashion Marketing is a convenient way to reach more audience and visibility. It provides knowledge for possible customers about the products and services the fashion brand is selling, so that the customers know what it is they're buying or if they are interested in doing co-operation. So basically it's one of the only ways to gain customers. Although a huge part of fashion marketing is advertising, it is much more than just adds and sales. Fashion brands need to keep in mind that they are marketing themselves in a way that they are presenting themselves to the costumers in a desired way so that they're image doesn't collapse. Fashion brands need to show how it's different from all the competitors in the field. (NBM Communications 2014)

## 2.1 Fashion marketing tools

Fashion is social phenomenon that helps an individual show who she or he is and their personality in the terms of visual information. Fashion is communication and can also be considered as the trends that the modern enhancements create. People and societies create fashion and make it the standard of life. Fashion is also considered as the representative of modern ethics.

Fashion marketing tools are the techniques and materials that are used when promoting products or services. Most fashion brands use various marketing tools simultaneously to help further their success. (Business Dictionary 2014)

Recently fashion brands have discovered the potentiality of fashion bloggers as their fashion marketing tools. They've become an inexpensive way to receive publicity and reach potential customers. (Tandfonline 2013)

### 2.1.1 Blogs compared to other communication tools

"A communication tool is a way that people interact with each other. There are many communication tools that are used in everyday life. Some examples of communication tools are billboards, stickers, posters, newspapers, radio etc. Most teenagers use social networking to communicate with each other while older people use email as a communication tool." (Ask 2014b)

Blogs are more successful than other communication tools because of six reasons. Firstly, everyone has an opportunity to publish. Secondly, blogs are easy to find according to writer, content, heading and subject. Thirdly, blogs are more social and interactive than other tools. Fourthly, blogs are in real time and faster than news channels. Fiftly, RSS feed which means that if wanted there will be an announcement when the blog has been updated. And finally, ability to link which enables a huge amount of visitors. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 15)

### 2.1.2 CREF-model as a tool in fashion marketing

Salmenkivi and Nyman (2007) are presenting in addition to Kotler's 4P's, a model called CREF. In CREF-model, Kotler's 4P's ( product, price, place, promotion) are replaced with collaboration, revenue model, experience and findability. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 21)

Collaboration aims to receive interaction between the customers and the company. This sort of interaction can give product development ideas for the company and increase the power of marketing significantly. Collaboration is also great because it doesn't include high costs. It also increases brand awareness, gives information for the company about their customers in the first instance and allows the company to use people's innovation skills in order to develop the business. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 21)

When it comes to the collaboration between a fashion brand and a fashion blogger, the fashion blogger is the fashion marketing tool between the two.

Fashion bloggers know their readers and their preferences. The bloggers can grant the fashion brand with vital information about the readers so that the fashion brand can for example segment the readers and give the fashion blogger products to show on the fashion blog that the readers are truly interested in. This information can also be used in other marketing tools.

Revenue model claims that price isn't any longer a factor when it comes to purchasing a product, instead, there are other more influential factors. This complicates competition. The reason for this claim is that the population is more wealthy than before and that customer buying behavior has changed. Indirect revenue models enable companies to receive incomes from other sources than selling, so that products can be offered to customers free of charge. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 21-22)

Experience is a modern day trend. Besides the purchased product, customers are looking for an experience. Giving the customer an experience is cheap, which makes it a great marketing opportunity for companies. Since experience is coming more and more popular, desire to own is decreasing. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 22)

In fashion blogs experience can reach customers through influential pictures taken from the fashion brand's products by the fashion blogger or the fashion brand's own visual adds that can appear for example in banners.

Findability refers to the ease of finding a product, brand or a person. The information needs to be found from a right place, at a right time. This means that the marketers need to know where their customers are at each time so that they can continue to do marketing for the right target groups. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 22)

Currently this so called "right place" to be found by customers is social media. Reason for this is that social media is becoming more and more popular each day and it's used by people of all ages. Especially blogs are increasing in popularity due to the fact that blogs provide knowledge for consumers without serious time commitment.

### 2.1.3 Consumer buying behavior models as a tool in fashion marketing

Consumer buying behavior models are used as marketers as an essential tool in order to help understand why consumers buy or don't buy a product. There are three different types of models that each has a specific focus: the black box model, the personal variable model and the comprehensice model. The first model focuses on external stimuli, the second focuses on internal stimuli within the consumer and the third one studies the combination of external and internal stimuli. (WisegEEK 2014)

Consumer behavior models fluctuate in terms of the complexity of the studied behavior. The main reason consumer behavior is being studied is to gain information for marketers in order for them to better understand and therefore better target consumers according to marketing strategies. Although marketers can make some correlations between consumer response and advertising with the help of one or several behavior models, the real question can't be explained with them: what makes a person buy or not buy a product. The reason for this is that the question is too individual. (WisegEEK 2014)

One of the most simple types of consumer behavior models is the black box model, also called the stimulus-response model. The region of the consumer's brain that is responsible for buying decisions can be thought as the black box. Marketing stimuli, such as price and product, and environmental stimuli, like culture, combine inside the black box. The black box model's main focus is on marketing and environmental variables that produce the desired response and ignores the variable withing the consumer. (WisegEEK 2014)

Another one of the major types of consumer buying behavior models is the personal variable model. The model studies the affect of internal factors on consumer behavior and buying decisions. The personal variable model ignores external stimuli and focuses on internal psychological variables. These variables include lifestyle, motivations and personality. The personal variable model also studies individual decision-making processes. (WisegEEK 2014)

The third and final type of consumer behavior model is the comprehensive model. When studying purchasing behavior, this model takes into consideration both environmental and internal stimuli. Because of how many variables are in play, this model is one of the most complex ones. The comprehensive model is the only model that can be used to study how different external react in different types of personalities and demographics, which makes it beneficial. However, because of the amount of variables, it's extremely difficult to determine the accuracy of the conclusions drawn from these studies. (Wisegeek 2014)

## 2.2 Ethical issues in fashion marketing

Fashion marketing is often criticized. The criticisms can be divided into micro-issues and macro-issues. Micro-issues concern customer satisfaction. In these cases customers are not satisfied with the products and feel like they've not been fairly treated. These problems may be manifested due to poor quality control. In order to take care of these problems, fashion brands should take care of consumers in order to build a durable and profitable relationship with them. Macro-issues are broader. A good example is that fashion brands are criticized for not being interested in environmental issues. For example the unnecessary use of packaging. One way for fashion brands to deal with these issues is to come up with a "Eco-plan" which includes better ways to become a more environmental-friendly brand. This is also a great way to improve brand's image. (Easey 2009,14)

## 3 THE ROLE OF FASHION BLOGS IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Business communication can be described as the contact between people in an organisation in order to carry out business activities. On top of promoting products, services or organisations, this type of communication is used to pass on information within a company. (Ask 2014a)

A fashion blog is a blog which deals with fashion and trends. A fashion blog is held by a fashion blogger who uses his or her own view when writing. They can also introduce new designers and their clothes or give comments on celebrities' outfits. Fashion bloggers also write about their own clothes. For example it's really common among fashion bloggers to take pictures of the outfits they wear and blog about it with a heading "today's outfit". Fashion blogs are one of the most read blogs. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 16-17)

Many different kinds of blogs can be described as a fashion blog but some people prefer the term style blog. Fashion bloggers can decide what they want to write about whether it's for example clothes that they've bought or future trends. A fashion blog can centralize for example on expensive labels, flea market or just on average people walking down the streets. Content of the blog can also focus only on one fashion item such as bags or shoes. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 16-17)

### 3.1 What is a blog and what are the different ways of using them

Blog also known as a web diary is a website that includes diary-type commentary and links to other web sites. Blogs vary all the way from personal to political and can focus on one particular subject or include a huge range of matters. Big part of blogs focus on a particular subject such as fashion, home design or everyday life. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 12-13)

Blogs are held by their writers, bloggers. Some of them write their blog in various languages especially if their blog is successful or they want their blog to be more international. Some blogs are held by two bloggers or more but mostly a blog is been written by one writer. For example a blog called Mariannan is held only by one blogger. On her blog, Marianna concentrates mainly on her own life which consists of travelling, fashion, home design and working out. She writes her blog both in English and in Finnish. From her blog we can see that collaboration between fashion bloggers and fashion brands is present and becoming more and more of a vital condition for full-time fashion bloggers. (Mariannan 2014)

The term blog originates from 1997 when an american John Barger started to call his website "weblog". The name weblog comes from the words web and log. The first blogging network was published in 1999. All of these blogging platforms have made it much easier for bloggers to publish and focus on the content. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 13)

Initially blogs were created in order to share opinions and thoughts. Today, blogs are used in multiple ways, for example in marketing by enterprises. According to NM Incite, blogs keep on multiplying and there's no end to blogs continuous success. (Internet retailer 2012)

If we look at the chart below, we can see that the amount of blogs has increased by over 350% from 2006 to 2011. The biggest change occurred between 2008 and 2009. The reason for this might be the fact that blogs were no longer only in the usage of consumers but also in the usage of brands.

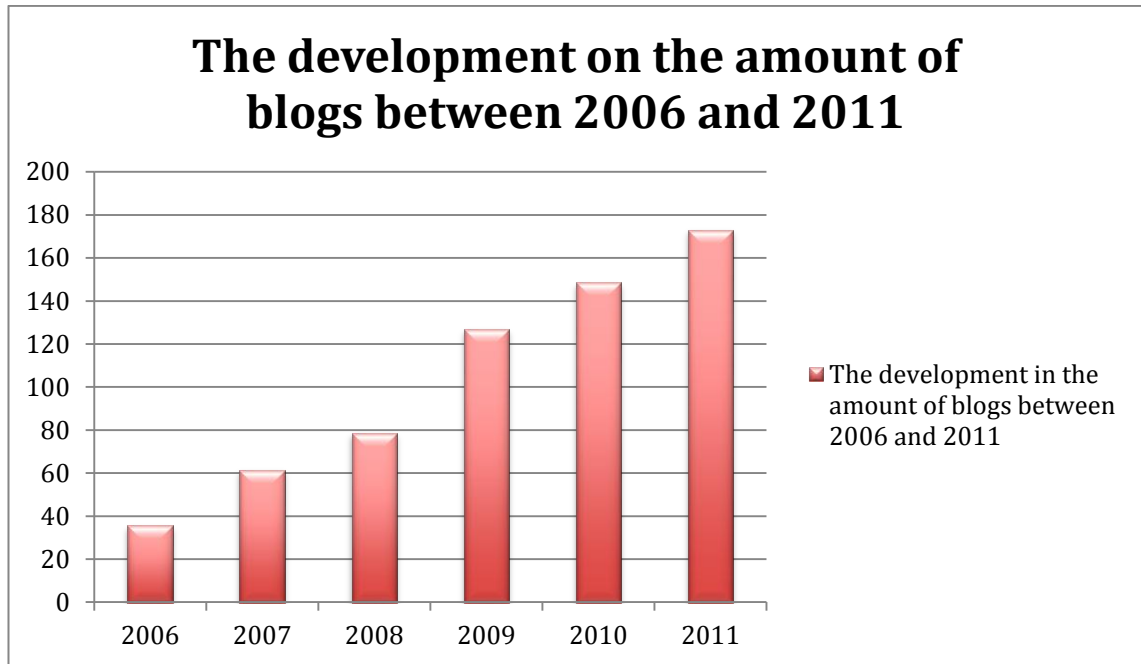


chart 2. NM Incite's view on the development on the amount of blogs between 2006 and 2011.

Blogs are a great way to gain visibility. However, since blogs have their own social hierarchies, it becomes a much more complicated matter. There are these so called Bloglists that list the blogs that are most popular and in the end the blogs that are on the top of the list become the forerunners of blogging. Their opinions matter the most. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 13)

Blogs form a new kind of social network where you can move through links from another blog to another. Linking is what makes blogs great platforms for commenting current phenomena. Personality, sociality, fastness and topicality unite in blogs. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 14)

Nowadays, blogs can be created for personal reflections of the owner, product reviews, political debates, celebrity news, advice giving, religious commentary, etc. Blogs can also be used as a way to advertise for example a business or a brand. (Howtoblogformoney 2012)

On top of all, from a corporate aspect, blogs can be used in learning and innovation. Blogs are a great way for the employee to share knowledge and innova-



tive ideas. The readers can help the employee by giving thoughts and ideas which helps the employee to grow. As a result from this there might be a new product or even a totally new business plan. Blogs also increase mental health and well-being at work because the employees feel appreciated. (Scoble & Israel 2008, 11)

### 3.2 Features of a successful fashion blog

There are 11 main features of a successful fashion blog. To start off the name of the fashion blog needs to be as describing as possible. The person planning to start a fashion blog has to have read several fashion blogs before starting their own. Keeping things simple and concentrating is also important. Writing has to be done with passion and expertise needs to be shown. People reading the fashion blog will leave comments so accept it. A fashion blogger needs to be reachable. Story must be told and links must be exploited and followed. Finally if a fashion blogger wants a successful fashion blog she or he needs to explore reality. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 15)

### 3.3 Benefits of fashion blogging

The most important benefit of fashion blogging is the financial benefit from it. Some fashion bloggers gain money from companies when fashion bloggers test a fashion brand's products and then advertise the products in their fashion blog. The more readers the fashion blog has the more visibility it receives which means that the fashion blog has more chances to be sponsored by certain companies or brands. (Digisecrets 2014)

A fashion blog offers fashion bloggers a possibility to pursue their hobbies and interests. They get to write about the things they love with passion. Fashion blogging is also cheap. Especially when starting your own online business. Fashion blogging doesn't involve any additional costs, for example location, and

because of this, especially small entrepreneurs choose fashion blogging. (Digisecrets 2014)

In addition, fashion blogging improves writing skills. The more posts the fashion blogger has, the more his or hers writing skills are improving, accuracy and the vocabulary used. Furthermore, through fashion blogging, fashion bloggers have the shot of meeting high-influenced persons and getting sponsors. (Digisecrets 2014)

And finally, fashion blogging can develop the fashion bloggers features and personality. If the fashion blogger is a shy person in real life, they can express themselves in the virtual environment. So, fashion blogging can also boost self-confidence, communication skills and interrelation skills. (Digisecrets 2014)

### 3.4 Challenges of fashion blogging

According to a blogger from Blogelina.com there are five main challenges when it comes to blogging. Firstly, finding a niche. There are a huge amount of blogs and for that reason finding a niche is important. A blogger needs to clarify if he or she wants to write about one topic or more and which is their main topic. (Blogelina.com 2012)

Secondly, producing quality content. When a blogger has been writing for several months there might come a time when she or he doesn't come up with anything to write about. In these cases, the blogger should take time for themselves and slowly but surely come up with new ideas. Thirdly, growing traffic. When a new blog is built, it might be hard to gain readers. One good way is to use guest blogging which means that the blogger writes something to a blog that already exists. (Blogelina.com 2012)

Fourthly, encouraging reader interaction. This basically means that the blogger posts new topics without getting responses from the readers. According to a blogger in Blogelina.com, in these situations the best solution is to answer to all the comments that the blogger receives. Fifthly and finally, making money. Alt-

though many bloggers blog because they enjoy it, some blog because they want to receive money from it. A good way to do this is for example advertising. (Blogelina.com 2012)

### 3.5 Ways of doing fashion marketing in fashion blogs

There are lots of different ways a fashion brand can do fashion marketing. However, each fashion brand needs to identify which of the marketing modes suits them the best. This is because not all marketing expedients are suitable for everyone. They also have to come across who they're trying to attract as customers. Once these are all done, it's much more easier to build a fashion marketing plan. (NBM Communications 2014)

Marketing fashion brands in fashion blogs shows in many different ways and a lot of enterprises have noticed the effectiveness of fashion blogs as marketing tools. The most common marketing ways in fashion blogs are banners, guerrilla marketing, discounts, WOM and sponsored links. Most of these require collaboration with the fashion blogger which is why the main tool is the fashion blogger rather than the fashion blog itself. In addition to these fashion marketing ways can be considered the affiliate marketing, in which fashion brands reward fashion bloggers for each visitor or customer brought to the fashion brand's website by the fashion blogger's own marketing exertion.

Banners are the advertisement spaces sold in the website. By clicking the add, the reader will automatically switch over to the advertiser's website. The meaning of banners is to gain attention. But because there are so many banners these days, the competition is tight. This is why the advertisers have had to develop their adds. Nowadays the banner doesn't have to include a link to the advertisers website, instead the banner can include for example a competition which the reader can participate in. This is a great way for the advertisers to stand out and gain new customers. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 25)

The most common way of marketing in fashion blogs is guerrilla marketing. This marketing practise is used by fashion bloggers when they tell about the clothes

of an enterprise. The fashion bloggers can send their readers information of the fashion brand and their products. This way other companies can't see that the fashion brand is being marketed to potential customers. Enterprises say that because of guerrilla marketing, they run out of stock on products. However, it's extremely hard for the readers to figure out what is the purpose of this marketing practise, because they can't identify if the fashion blogger's text is an add or if the fashion blogger wishes to unintentionally tell about the product. (Kuvaja, Talvivaara 2010, 41)

Some fashion bloggers have offered their readers an opportunity to receive discount from a certain shop when mentioning the fashion bloggers name. For example a fashion blogger called Laura writes in her newest blogpost about an nailsalon that made her new nails that have stayed in great shape for a while already. She gives the company's contact information and mentions that by saying Laura's blog, the reader will receive a 20-procent discount on all the new treatments. (Laura's blog 2014)

Product sponsoring happens when a company or a brand gives the fashion blogger products that she or he can give to readers. The fashion blogger can give the products to readers for example through a lottery. In most cases, all the readers that comment on the comment box within the given time, are automatically participating in the lottery. This kind of product sponsoring is also extremely beneficial for the fashion blogger, because she or he will also get free products for themselves. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 41)

WOM (Word-Of-Mouth) refers to the communication between consumers about products, services and brands. Other consumers are more likely to participate on the WOM-conversation and talk about labels than others. (Talentum 2011)

In co-creation marketing, companies and fashion bloggers work together as partners. Both partners gain advantage from it. For example, the fashion blogger puts the company's adds to his or hers fashion blog and the company advertises the fashion blogger on the company's website. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 56)

### 3.6 The effect of fashion blog marketing on the readers of the fashion blog and their buying behavior

Blogs play a huge role in helping consumers make a buying decision. Blogs affect buying behavior much more than the social networking platforms. Blogs have always raised a loyal readership. If the emotional connect between the blogger and the readers is tough, it can lead to a mark where the reader makes a buying decision. (Hello bloggerz 2011)

According to eMarketer's report, bloggers make an impact on buying behavior. Among several types of bloggers, hobbyists and professional bloggers (both part-timers and full-timers) regularly write about brands. (Hello bloggerz 2011)

What the consumers read from the blogs heavily influences their buying behavior. Professional bloggers are a tool for consumers for example in discovering new products, deciding on a product or a service, seeking advice or inspiring into purchase. (Worldpress 2012)

Fashion blog marketing creates conversation in fashion blogs and it's usually positive. Although the readers are loyal to the fashion blogger, sometimes they criticize for example the lay-out of the fashion blog or the competition the fashion blogger is having. According to numerous sources, this is changing. Now fashion blog marketing is becoming more and more approved by the readers which decreases negative conversation in fashion blogs. The most important thing for the readers is that the fashion blog marketing is upfront and truthful. Also the respect towards the readers provides more positive results than pushing products at them. (Kuvaja & Talvivaara 2010, 46-49)

The increased approval from the readers clearly indicates that there's an opportunity for fashion brands to use fashion bloggers as their marketing tools without gaining any negative attention from it. However, fashion brands need to keep the collaboration as transparent as possible in order to gain positive advantage from the fashion blog marketing.

### 3.7 What kind of fashion blogger should a fashion brand collaborate with

To begin with, fashion brand needs to determine what it wants from the fashion blogger: is the brand looking for a long-term collaboration or short-term, and does the brand want reviews of itself or for example banners.

When a fashion brand starts looking for a fashion blogger whom to collaborate with, it needs to do some research on the bloggers first. The fashion brand has to approach the fashion blogger and not be afraid of it because this way the brand can also ask about the statistics and readers. The fashion brand also needs to pay attention to the style of the blog. The fashion blogger needs to be on the same page with the fashion blog and they both are clear on what they want to do and what they don't. It's also important for the fashion brand to find a fashion blogger who is flexible. This means for example willing to do a review on a fashion brand's product earlier, if possible. (Lacquerheads of Oz 2013)

## **4 CASE: JULJA FINLAND LTD USING FASHION BLOGGERS AS A MARKETING TOOL**

As stated before in the introduction, the purpose of this research is to gain valid information on the usage of fashion bloggers as a marketing tool from fashion brands' point of view. This point of view handles the benefits and challenges of co-operation with fashion bloggers for the company. It includes the rules of co-operating with fashion bloggers; choosing them, the amount of fashion bloggers used at the same time as well as the length and terms of the co-operations. In order to gain a wider picture, the interview questions also handled other social media tools and fashion marketing ways without forgetting the ethical issues in them. On top of all, the future was discussed.

In order to receive the information needed, qualitative research method was used. In this case, the method was interview. I interviewed the production manager of a company called JULJA Finland Ltd and asked about their usage of fashion bloggers as a part of their marketing.

### **4.1 Case company**

JULJA Finland Ltd is a Finnish women's clothing label that was founded in 2012. Their story started in Turku when a young entrepreneurship – course began in the fall of 2012. In the course final JULJA won the Hyundai Brilliant Young Entrepreneur – prize which was a 15.000 € worth of investment on the company that was seen to have the best business plan and qualifications to succeed as a proper company. (Interview 9.6.2014)

After the young entrepreneurship – year JULJA participated in the Startup Journey – program organized by BoostTurku. In this program, their business ideas were developed forward within the following three months. During June 2013, JULJA was set up as a limited liability company (Ltd.) and their official business started to come in to operation fast. Since September 2013, JULJA has been

involved in Creve - program, located in Turku. Creve has included mentoring from business professionals. (Interview 9.6.2014)

JULJA's clothes are flattering, flirting and easy to use. The clothes consist of bright colors and cuts that highlight the female body. JULJA Finland Ltd's target group isn't defined by age. Instead, they aim to define it with personality: a JULJA woman is modern, strong, brave and self-conscious townswoman who appreciates her body, wants to invest in clothing and requires standing out from the mass fashion. Their clothes are sold internationally through their online store and retailers. (Interview 9.6.2014)

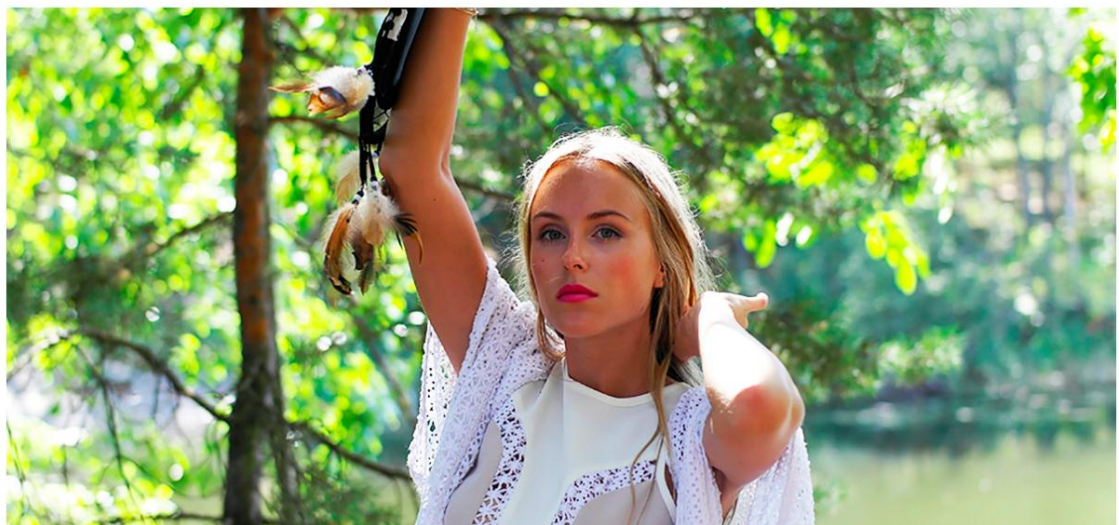


Photo 1. A screenshot of JULJA's front page from [www.juljafinland.com](http://www.juljafinland.com).

JULJA Finland Ltd aims to hold on to the ecological and ethical principals when it comes to both production and the entire business. They are perfectly aware of where their clothes are manufactured and in what kind of working conditions. JULJA finds informing customers with all the knowledge concerning manufacturing major. At this time, their clothes are mostly manufactured in the Baltic countries as close to Finland as possible and as cost-effective as possible. Ho-



wever, for example the second hand clothes are manufactured in Finland. (Interview 9.6.2014)

#### 4.2 Qualitative research

”Qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. Qualitative research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem. Qualitative data collection methods vary using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. Some common methods include focus groups, individual interviews, and participation/observations. The sample size is typically small, and respondents are selected to fulfill a given quota.” (Snapsurveys 2011)

As a qualitative research method I chose interview. Reason for this is that I wanted to get specific information from a fashion brand that has experience in using fashion bloggers in fashion marketing. Interview as a research method allowed me to clarify the questions and get answers that were mostly about facts but also contained a little bit of interviewee’s personal thoughts.

I structured the interview questions so that the data received from the interview wouldn’t be too difficult to analyze and summarize. Although the questions were specific, they allowed me to get extensive information about the company’s fashion blog marketing. The interview was carried out via e-mail due to my own schedules. This didn’t cause any difficulties and it was still easy to ask follow up questions.

### 4.3 Questions asked and answers received from JULJA Finland Ltd

17 questions were asked from JULJA in English. However, since they are a Finnish company, the answers came back to me in Finnish and I translated them to English. This is how they replied. (Interview 9.6.2014)

1. Can you tell a little bit about your company?

Answer to this question is summarized in the beginning of chapter 4.

2. What are the benefits and challenges of co-operation with a fashion blogger?

"Co-operations with fashionbloggers bring visibility to our company and reaches out to new customers. Meanwhile of course brand knowledge increases. The challenge is to find the right bloggers who's readers are our target group. On top of this, to get bloggers to co-operate and modify an appropriate co-operation that suits our brand. Communication with bloggers is also a challenge because usually they are really busy. You may have to wait for a while to receive an answer." (Interview 9.6.2014)

3. With how many fashion bloggers is your brand co-operating at the moment?

"This is a difficult question because co-operation is done occasionally (new collection appears, there will be something new to inform people about). Recently we launched a new collection and due to that we are contacting bloggers (new and old)." (Interview 9.6.2014)

4. For how long has your brand been using fashion bloggers in marketing?

"As soon as our first collection came available (31.9.2013). When we opened our online store, we started to contact bloggers straight away." (Interview 9.6.2014)

5. Does your brand have specific terms when it comes to co-operation with a fashion blogger?

"Until this day, we haven't made any written contracts with fashion bloggers. We might do them in the future." (Interview 9.6.2014)

6. What kind of fashion blogger should a fashion brand co-operate with?

"It depends on the brand and the most important factor is to find a blogger that suits the brand's style and with whom the co-operation will create the right image of the brand. It's also important to find bloggers who's readers are the brand's target group. On top of this a brand should be aware of the amount of visitors of the blog (or other benefits), so the co-operation is profitable for both." (Interview 9.6.2014)

7. In what ways has using fashion bloggers in your marketing been profitable? For example improved sales or increased the amount of customers.

"It's really hard to evaluate, how co-operations with bloggers actually affect on the company's sales et cetera. Of course we can see from Google Analytics, how many people have entered to our website through various blogs. But the sales itself is very hard to evaluate. I believe that until now the co-operations with blogs have increased the knowledge of our fashion brand, rather than have yet af-

fected our sales. But on the other hand, this is only guessing.” (Interview 9.6.2014)

8. In what ways does your brand measure the effects of co-operation with fashion bloggers?

”We have observed the number of visitors that enter our website via blogs with Google Analytics. We are also observing what kind of attention and comments has a post caused in the readers.” (Interview 9.6.2014)

9. What other marketing tools does your brand use besides fashion bloggers?

”Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Youtube, LinkedIn...), event marketing (fashion shows, pop-up events etc.), and releases.” (Interview 9.6.2014)

10. In your opinion, are blogs more successful than other communication tools? Why?

”This day bloggers are extremely influential and reach a huge amount of new potential customers. Depends on the brand if bloggers are the most useful communication channel. We believe, that in the visibility of JULJA, blogs have played a huge role.” (Interview 9.6.2014)

11. Does your brand buy for example bannerspace from blogs?"

"We haven't been using banner advertising. Mainly because we haven't regarded it as useful to as as it may be to others. In addition, from customers' point of view banners can be annoying." (Interview 9.6.2014)

12. From what other sources does your brand receive incomes besides selling?

"JULJA receives assistance from ELY-center." (ELY-center is The Center for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment) (Interview 9.6.2014)

13. How does your brand offer experience to your customers? Especially in fashion blogs.

"In co-operations with bloggers the aim is to bring JULJA forward with the brand's methods." (Interview 9.6.2014)

14. Does your brand have specific target groups and how does your brand make it easier for the target groups to find your brand?

"Company's target group hasn't been defined with age but personality. JULJA woman is modern, strong, brave and self-conscious townswoman who appreciates her body. She wants to invest in clothing and to stand out from the users of big clothing chains. In order to our target group to find our brand, we're aiming to be visible in blogs, that our target group is reading and of course in all of our marketing (For example active social media)." (Interview 9.6.2014)

15. Does your brand use consumer buying behavior models as a marketing tool?

”Of course we try to exploit consumer buying behavior, for example in the form of offers/discounts, campaigns and pricing.” (Interview 9.6.2014)

16. Has your brand encountered any ethical issues in fashion marketing?

”Things related to production (where the production is held, what are the working conditions like etc.). It hasn’t yet been brought up much in our marketing.” (Interview 9.6.2014)

17. What does your brand think will happen to blog marketing and cooperation with fashion bloggers in the future?

”It will continue to grow and bloggers and blogs are the ”women’s magazines” and trendsetters of today and future.” (Interview 9.6.2014)

#### 4.4 Reliability of the data

It is challenging to gain reliability because each interview is different. People being interviewed have different beliefs and experiences of the discussed matter. Also the interviewer can interpret the data differently than others would. However, interview is still a great way to get exact information. The interviewee can ask follow up questions and in this way extend their judgement on the matter. It is important that the questions asked are logical and clear so that there are no unclearities in how to answer them.

## 4.5 Results

The results are divided in three parts on the basis of information obtained from the interview. Firstly, a SWOT – analysis. A SWOT analysis consists of the benefits, challenges, opportunities and threats of using fashion bloggers as a marketing tool. Secondly, the rules of co-operation with a fashion blogger which consists of the things that has to be taken into consideration before co-operating with a fashion blogger. And thirdly, the future.

### 4.5.1 SWOT – analysis

There are a huge amount of benefits when it comes to using fashion bloggers in marketing. I'm only going to go through the ones that emerged from the interview. Firstly, it brings visibility to the company. Reason for this is the next benefit, which is that fashion bloggers are influential and reach out to a massive amount of consumers/potential new customers. Thirdly, it increases brand knowledge among the readers of the fashion blog. It also can be assumed that the readers will talk about the fashion brand to their friends and family which further increases the possibility of new customers. Fourthly, fashion blogs are a great way to provide customers with experience, using fashion brand's own methods. Finally, findability. Fashion blogs are easy to spot, especially if they have a large number of readers. When the fashion blogger places a link to their fashion blog which shifts the reader straight to the fashion brand's online page, the possibility of potential customers finding the brand increases.

There are a couple of challenges in using fashion bloggers in marketing. Firstly, finding the fashion blogger who has the readers that could be potential customers. Secondly, finding ways of getting the potential fashion blogger to co-operate with the fashion brand. And thirdly, communication with the fashion blogger since they are usually very busy and don't have the time to answer contact requests on a daily basis.

Opportunities weren't discussed in the interview specifically, however, because the production manager of JULJA said that it's hard to evaluate how using fashion bloggers in marketing actually increases sales, I'm going to consider it as an opportunity. It's also an opportunity to gain more customers than competitors if the right fashion bloggers are used.

Benefits	Challenges	Opportunities	Threats
Brings visibility to the company	Finding the right fashion blogger to co-operate with	Increase in sales	Not making written contracts
Fashion bloggers are influential and reach out to a massive amount of potential customers	Getting the fashion blogger to co-operate	Gaining more customers than competitors	Damaging brand image
Increases brand knowledge	Communication with the fashion blogger	-	Time related issues
Great way to provide customers with experience	-	-	Readers of the fashion blog are not part of the fashion brand's own target group
Findability	-	-	-

chart 3. SWOT-analysis of using fashion bloggers as a marketing tool.



There are a number of visible threats in using fashion bloggers in marketing. Firstly, not making written contracts with fashion bloggers. This could lead to misunderstandings between the fashion brand and the fashion blogger. Also in these cases the fashion blogger might not do the things that were discussed previously. Secondly, the fashion blogger could write something bad about the fashion brand, which can easily damage the image of the fashion brand. For example, something to do with the fashion brand's working conditions which brings out some ethical issues that can be hard to fix. Thirdly, time related issues. For example, the fashion blogger doesn't write a post about the fashion brand when agreed because of lack of time. It might also be difficult to find a suitable time for the two to arrange a meeting. Fourthly and finally, the readers of the fashion blog aren't the ones included in the fashion brand's own target group.

#### 4.5.2 Rules of co-operation with a fashion blogger

According to the data collected from the interview with JULJA Finland Ltd, co-operating with a fashion blogger is beneficial. However, there are a few things that a fashion brand should take into consideration when co-operating with a fashion blogger.

A fashion brand needs to determine the kind of fashion blog they want to co-operate with. JULJA says that it's important to find a blogger that suits the brand's style and with whom the co-operation will create the right image of the brand. Also it's important to make sure that the readers of the fashion blog are also part of the fashion brand's target group.

When is the right time to co-operate. JULJA co-operates occasionally but they say that every time they for example launch a new collection, they contact fashion bloggers. So the right time is especially when something new is happening within the fashion brand. The right time could also be whenever because there isn't a time when a fashion brand wouldn't receive more visibility or more customers. These two are needed constantly and there can never be too much

customers. Visibility is also important and needed in order to gain new customers but the fashion brand needs to be sure that the reason they are more visible is positive instead of negative.

For how long should a fashion brand co-operate with a fashion blogger? There isn't a specific time. Usually when both the fashion blogger and the fashion brand have done the things agreed and gotten the benefits from it, they can finish the co-operation.

With how many fashion bloggers should a fashion brand co-operate with? This question like the previous one, doesn't have a right answer. A fashion brand can co-operate with just one fashion blogger or many simultaneously depending on their own preferences. Sometimes quality over quantity. If the fashion blogger has a huge number of readers it might be more profitable to co-operate with that fashion blogger rather than ten or eleven whom all have just a few readers.

The fashion brand needs to argue different tools when it comes to measuring the effects that come from a co-operation with a fashion blogger. In JULJA's case they use google analytics in discovering how many visitors enter their website via various fashion blogs. This sort of measuring helps determine which co-operation is actually useful and which isn't.

Co-operating with a fashion blogger isn't the only social media tool a fashion brand should use in order to increase their visibility. JULJA uses various social media tools on top of fashion blogs which is important in order to create a network that functions. They are also an example of the fact that although they co-operate with fashion bloggers, they maintain their own blog as well. They also use consumer buying behavior models in their marketing.

Many fashion brands use banners in their marketing. However, banners are not mandatory in order to have a functional social media marketing plan. JULJA hasn't used banners in their marketing because they feel like their possible customers might find banners annoying. Also they feel like banners aren't as useful as other tools. Personally I feel this is a great strategy because nowadays blogs are full with banners which is why it is extremely hard to stand out.

It's important to have a written contract with a fashion blogger so that there'll never be issues in the co-operation. JULJA doesn't have any written contracts but they are considering to possibility in the future.

#### 4.5.3 Future

According to JULJA Finland Ltd, fashion blog marketing and co-operation with fashion bloggers will continue to grow and bloggers and blogs are the "women's magazines" and trendsetters of today and future. This means that fashion brands that aren't already using fashion blog marketing and co-operating with fashion bloggers, should start because this isn't a trend that's just passing by, it's here to stay.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The fashion industry is growing rapidly within the next three years. This means for fashion brands that they need to start looking for different ways to do marketing. Social media is growing in popularity among both young and old. More and more consumers are looking things to buy from Internet and especially from fashion blogs.

Fashion bloggers know their readers and can promote a fashion brand's products or services so that the readers will get interested. This is why a fashion brand should be aware of few things before starting collaboration with a fashion blogger. Firstly, determine the kind of fashion blogger they want to collaborate with. Secondly, when is the right time to collaborate. Thirdly, how long will the collaboration last. Fourthly, does the fashion brand want to collaborate with just one fashion blogger or as many as possible. Finally, fashion brand needs to find a tool that different effects coming from collaborations can be measured.

Collaboration with fashion bloggers shouldn't be the only marketing tool a fashion brand is using. Using simultaneously other marketing tools such as WOM, banners and sponsored links creates a network that further increases advantages gained from the collaboration. However, the fashion brand needs to determine the right tools in order to receive full advantage and the right customers.

A fashion brand should have a written contract with the fashion blogger including all the terms and conditions concerning the collaboration. This helps to prevent possible problems and misunderstandings in the future. They should also take into consideration the possible ethical issues/threats that might do harm to their brand image. These issues can be knocked down with active response to rumors concerning for example the working conditions or quality of the products. The collaboration should also keep as transparent as possible in order to prevent any misunderstandings.

From corporative approach, using fashion bloggers as a marketing tool is profitable. It brings visibility to the fashion brand, increases brand knowledge among readers, can increase sales and allows the brand to gain more customers than their competitors. A fashion brand should make their own SWOT-analysis and find out if collaborating with fashion bloggers gives them more benefits and opportunities than challenges and threats. A fashion brand should also find ways to overcome those challenges and threats before saying no to collaborating with fashion bloggers. After all, fashion blogs and social media are here to stay.

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