

The decline and gradual disappearance of fashion magazines in Armenia
and its effects on the fashion industry

By

Rebecca Taghdweirnian

Presented to the Department of English & Communications
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor
of Arts American University of Armenia

Yerevan, Armenia

10/05/2020

Table of contents

Abstract	3
Introduction	4
Literature Review	5
Overview	5
The significance of fashion magazines	6
Armenia’s inclusion in the fashion scene	8
The downfall of print magazines in general	9
Shortcomings and Conclusion	11
Statement of Research Questions	12
Methodology	12
Interviews	12
Survey	13
Analysis of current trends	14
Findings	15
Interviews	15
Survey	19
Analysis of current trends	25
Conclusion	27
References	30
Appendices	32

Abstract

The fashion magazine industry worldwide has been experiencing a major change with more and more readers switching to new sources of information on the internet to get their daily dose of fashion. Armenia is an extreme example of this as no fashion magazines have survived in the country, with the local creatives working in the fashion industry having very limited platforms to showcase and promote their work on. To reach a conclusion as to why this is the case, I have conducted interviews with people working in the fashion industry, shared an online survey to get the general public's perception on the matter, and analyzed what seems to be working for magazines that are doing comparatively well today. The findings suggest that even though the print industry might be in decline, the fashion press is definitely not dead. The succeeding magazines are combining online and offline publications in a masterful way, while delivering the reader with an immersive, accessible, and inclusive environment, with in-depth features, editorials, true journalism, and high-quality original content.

Introduction

The purpose of a modern day fashion magazine is to inform its readers on the latest trends and developments in the fashion world, who wears what and where, where these clothes can be found, how they might/should be worn, and so much more. Whether it is a well-established magazine with mass appeal and large readership, or a niche magazine serving a specific aesthetic and audience, these mediums have developed so much in the past years that it is hard to provide a definition that fits them all.

Fashion magazines provide a space for companies and advertisers to showcase their products, primarily in the beauty and fashion industries, and aid them in presenting their brand in a way that is optimal both for the brand itself and the magazine. Fashion magazines are also editorial venues for creatives such as stylists, artistic directors, designers, writers, photographers, hair and makeup artists, and so on, to advertise themselves to audiences that are more or less likely to be interested in the services they have to offer, while simultaneously establishing themselves in the field by proving their services are good enough to get acknowledged by mediums of some credibility. Overall, fashion magazines carry both cultural and commercial significance, combining a network of relationships in the fashion industry to act as the intermediary medium between the companies and customers, all the while giving the creatives responsible for the content a place to establish themselves.

As many advancements and developments as there have been in the fashion press, there have also been many factors that contributed to the failure of some fashion magazines in different ways and to varying degrees, be that switching from print to online or ending the brand completely or shifting its focus.

Armenia is an interesting case study as there are currently no fashion magazines being produced or published locally, even though magazines are imported from neighboring countries such as Russia. Furthermore, other advancements in the fashion industry in Armenia are taking place, such as new designers and models finding unprecedented success, and more fashion houses and textile factories opening up, with the only area lacking relatively behind being the press.

There isn't a significant amount of literature that addresses the factors that contribute to the failures of fashion magazines, but there is enough to form a general idea of the industry and its infrastructure. To develop a comprehensive image of the scene in Armenia, I have conducted individual research in the form of interviews and surveys, to understand the successes and shortcomings of the fashion press in Armenia and how they relate to the people working in or with the fashion industry.

Literature Review

Overview

Although Armenia has history in developing and publishing its own fashion magazines (or at least magazines that are primarily focused on fashion), a quick look at magazine sections in stores, or even a search online, would show that no fashion magazines are being produced or published in Armenia at the moment. Not to be confused with celebrity/ gossip magazines, which are relatively more popular both online and offline, Armenian magazines primarily centered around the fashion industry are nonexistent in print and highly scarce online. In fact, despite new fashion houses, textile factories, designers and models emerging more and more, there has been no development in the magazine area of the industry with little to no acknowledgment of this

absence. Therefore, to find an answer to a part of my research question, I turn to existing literature on the fashion magazine scene, on its establishment and development in other areas of the world.

I sourced literature about the history of the fashion press in Russia (as a fellow Post-Soviet country) and the current state of it in other countries that are thriving in the field such as the United States. An overview of the literature suggests that there is push and pull in the industry with some professionals claiming the days of print magazines are over, while others vouching for its success and potential. This pushed me towards the conclusion that even though there are some commonalities in the fashion press around the world, the larger picture is indeed particular to each location and their respective magazines and its practices.

The significance of fashion magazines

Besides being platforms to inform people of the latest trends and where to get them and provide advertising grounds for fashion houses to showcase their works, fashion magazines are also a driving force and key ingredient in securing the success of fashion designers and other creatives in the industry. Moeran writes, “The driving force behind the publication of fashion magazines is, of course, fashion itself” (Moeran, 2006, p. 4), which reinforces this point. In his article “More Than Just A Fashion Magazine ” he researches the complex infrastructure of the fashion magazine and exactly what goes into it. He argues that a fashion magazine is “both a cultural product and commodity” very much intertwined with cultural events and happenings with a mutually benefiting relationship between the two (Moeran, 2006).

The article also applies Becker’s theory of the art worlds being networks of people cooperating (as cited in Moeran, 2006) which reinforces the idea for the fashion industry in

Armenia itself to be successful and for the different people working in it or in relation to it to have some kind of recognition beyond local modest levels. Morean writes, “reception cannot take place without a special institution which serves that reception and which thus brings about a fruitful dialectic between producer and consumer” (Morean, 2006, p. 12), further proving that fashion magazines, “legitimate fashion and the fashion world in cultural terms” (Morean, 2006, p. 12). Regina Lee Blaszczyk also enforces this idea in her book titled “Producing Fashion: Commerce, Culture, and Consumers” saying, “In Western Europe and the United States magazines have been essential for the success of the fashion industry” (Blaszczyk, 2008, p. 21).

Another way in which we can recognize the significance of fashion magazines is through history. For long, fashion and women’s magazines were platforms that defied the mainstream and took daring steps that no other similar medium dared to do. For example, in the very popular article “Women’s magazines are dying. Will we miss them when they’re gone?” Ramanathan writes,

“In 1966, Glamour was the first fashion magazine to feature a black woman, Katiti Kironde, as the cover model, a gesture toward inclusion amid the civil rights movement. In 1976, dozens of editors of women’s and teen magazines agreed to cover the Equal Rights Amendment, with stories that would reach their collective 60 million readers.” (Ramanathan, 2019, para. 11)

Fashion and women’s magazines were also starting points for many prominent journalists and editors, paving the way for the likes of Joan Didion, Gloria Steinem, and Anna Wintour.

Armenia's inclusion in the fashion scene

The way fashion magazines make sure they stay on top of everything and deliver accurate and timely information to their regular and non-regular readers is through getting exclusive access to the happenings in the industry, following the established and up and coming figures, and doing constant and regular analysis of trends. Morean explains that in order to do this effectively “fashion editors and stylists from all over the world attend as many as 100 collections each season. There they pick up on certain ‘moods’ and proceed to imagine the clothes they have seen as ‘themes’ which are then expressed as fashion ‘stories’” (Morean, 2006, p. 7). Similar information about editors and stylists in Armenia and its surrounding regions was not accessible, therefore, even though I need further observation and investigation to reach a conclusion on this specific topic, from the information available in the literature, I can say that the same resources and opportunities are not available as readily for creatives pursuing the same paths in Armenia. This forces them to rely on second hand information for the majority of the time.

There have been cases where Armenia was included in the international fashion scene, and appeared in fashion magazine pages abroad. One example is the multiple page story shot in Armenia in 2015 by photographer David Mushegain for Vogue Russia, titled “Vogue Russia October 2015- Stella Maxwell by David Mushegain.” However, the article “More Than Just a Fashion Magazine” also touches upon how including international audiences that way is infrequent and inconvenient for many publications.

What you should realise about an international fashion magazine is that there's a secret ranking of its contents among those working in the fashion industry. An *A Class* magazine is one whose fashion stories appeal to and are readily understood by the international fashion village. A *B Class* magazine is allowed some local content, while *C*

Class magazines are more or less entirely local. This means that a fashion magazine's fashion pages are crucially important. They *have* to be made abroad for us to get international recognition... But making fashion stories abroad in the way that we do is extremely expensive. (Morean, 2006, p. 9)

Furthermore, even though the Stella Maxwell and David LaChapelle story was shot in Armenia, none of the credited creatives other than the photographer, such as the model, stylists, designers, makeup and hair artists, were Armenian. Therefore, Armenia was used rather for its cultural and historical significance, and the fashion scene in Armenia itself did not benefit in any way.

On the other hand, we have the case of Russia, another post- Soviet country, which has a thriving fashion press going back to the 19th century. Revisiting the previously stated argument that the distance and difficulty of access hinders the creatives in the industry from being as influential in the field, Blaszczyk writes that despite there being “great distances between Paris and Petersburg, imperial Russia developed a vital and fiercely competitive fashion press” (Blaszczyk, 2008, p. 39).

Therefore, further research is needed to conclude just how involved Armenia is with the rest of the fashion industry abroad, and how much of a factor that truly is in the success (or lack thereof) of the fashion press in Armenia. However, existing literature is not enough to answer that question as of the moment.

The downfall of print magazines in general

A lot of literature exists promoting the idea that print publication has been steadily and consistently facing a downfall for quite some time now. Tansy Hoskins, in her book *Stitched Up*:

The Anti-Capitalist Book of Fashion writes, “The internet brought the advent of ‘the fashion blog’, which for the traditional fashion press started as something of a nightmare” (Hoskins, 2014, p. 41). Instead of paying vast amounts of money to showcase their ads in fashion magazines, more and more brands started cutting off print advertisement money and instead dedicating smaller portions to specific people, such as bloggers and influencers with large numbers of followers and a domineering online presence. These people promise a large reach for less money, and with a more personalized image, “fashion blogs can therefore be seen as corporate PR disguised as fresh young opinions” (Hoskins, 2014, p. 44).

Lavanya Ramanathan also writes about the digitization of the fashion press, arguing that in “what women’s magazines once delivered to readers from New York to Topeka to Sacramento can now be found many places online” (Ramanathan, 2019, para. 21). This free and quick access to information has affected many industries and practices and the fashion press was naturally also affected. But the main way in which fashion magazines have felt this change impact them negatively is through the decline of advertisements. A major source of income needed for fashion magazines to thrive and deliver the same quality of issue after issue is through companies paying them for advertisements, therefore, “The magazine industry as a whole has been belt-tightening for years thanks to a print advertising famine” (Ramanathan, 2019, para. 3).

On the other hand, the Association of Magazine Media, with its many reports published regularly throughout the year, argues that print media is still a force and boosts the effectiveness of cross-platform campaigns significantly, providing a lift in combination with other mediums on awareness measures. The 2018 report *Magazine media tells and sells* argues in favor of print magazine effectiveness comparing GRP (gross rating point) levels of magazines to that of TV shows, and reporting that the “the nation’s #1 magazine has bigger reach than the nation’s

number one show” and “The top 25 magazines have a 98% bigger total reach than the top 25 TV shows.” (The Association of Magazine Media, 2018, p. 23) The Association of Magazine Media also published a report on social media engagement factors and analysis in the cases of magazines around the same time, in which it stands by its aforementioned findings that social media indeed does boost brand awareness, but it’s all the more effective in combination with print, with magazines that have a good presence on social media doing better online than names that are exclusively online.

Shortcomings and Conclusion

There is a lot of speculation on why fashion magazines do not have a history of longevity and mass readership in Armenia, however, no research about the topic has been done to further investigate. Some articles can be found online about fashion and the magazine industry in Post-Soviet countries, but a vast majority of them focus on Russia and touch upon some other locations more or less relevant in the fashion industry, without mention of Armenia anywhere in these publications.

My interest in the industry, statements made by local creatives, and arguments made by existing literature about the relevance of the topic urged me to look further into the subject only to find an underwhelming lack of resources. Therefore, by choosing to do my research on the topic of fashion magazines in Armenia, and particularly their failure, while placing it within the larger framework of the complex industry of fashion magazines as a whole, I will be contributing information otherwise inaccessible online for an interested reader/researcher.

Statement of Research Questions

The primary question that this paper aims to address is, what does the lack of fashion magazines mean for the Armenian fashion industry? And what does that say about the Armenian consumers? Therefore, this study will address fashion magazines as businesses and entities of socio-cultural value, having some role in the development of the fashion industry in general, while also analyzing the consumers of the fashion industry and the role they play in the decline and eventual disappearance of the fashion press in Armenia.

Some secondary questions should also be addressed in order to answer the primary question effectively. For that, I look into factors that contribute to the failure of fashion magazines in general, and raise the questions of how significant fashion magazines are for the success of the fashion industry? What are the prompting causes for the vanishing of the fashion press in Armenia?

Methodology

Besides research based on literature which was done to establish general background on the topic, my primary methods of research hereon have been through interviews, an online public survey, and analysis of trends and developments in the industry at the time of this writing.

Interviews

I have adopted a qualitative methodology for my approach in conducting the interviews. The individuals I have targeted and reached out to are involved with and working in the fashion industry in Armenia. To have some insight into the previously existing fashion press in Armenia and its successes and shortcomings, I have talked to ex-editors and directors of previously

existing magazines. I have also interviewed a fashion designer who previously worked as an art director for various Armenian fashion magazines, and a co-founder of a recently founded modeling agency in Yerevan. I have established contact with my interviewees initially by reaching out via email or through mutual acquaintances, by introducing them to the core concept of my paper and how they would be contributing to it by agreeing to participate in the interview. Upon receiving their agreement to participate, I have either met with them in person, or if that was not possible, conducted an online interview.

The interviews are not fully structured Q&As, as I opted for an environment where my subjects can share as much of their experiences as possible without having to worry about answering the questions directly. However, at the start of each interview, it is established that the main area of focus should be around fashion magazines and their significance in the fashion industry. Furthermore, for each interviewee I had tailored questions that would direct the interview in a way that was optimal for my research. The oral interviews are recorded and transcribed by the consent of the interviewees. The interviews done in written form online, through email correspondence, are also consented to be shared in any way necessary for the research.

Survey

Through the online public survey, I gathered both qualitative and quantitative data, as I wanted to get a general idea on the *extent* of interest people have in this topic and what suggestions they might have. The survey is structured, with the mandatory questions being either in a multiple-choice or yes/no format, in addition to a couple of open ended questions at the very end that the respondent can choose whether to answer or not.

The objective of the survey is to provide an outlook of how someone outside of the industry feels about the situation, and whether their answers match that of the people directly involved.

Analysis of current trends

The last stage of my methodology is researching and analyzing what seems to work in the fashion press worldwide. This stage targets specific magazines and publications that seem to grow and prosper despite the general decline, therefore going against the flow. The methods and practices of these magazines are juxtaposed with that of the not-so-successful ones that once existed locally, to have a more comprehensive image of what works and what doesn't in the modern and ever-evolving fashion press.

Note regarding changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic

Initially, I was aiming for a higher number of interviewees for this capstone. Due to unforeseen changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the requirements to self-isolate, the process of meeting people in person and conducting an oral interview was hindered significantly. Therefore, I opted to reach out to people online and offer them the option of either doing a video call or, if that was not favorable for them, answering some questions in written form. I also had to downsize from my initially preferred 5 interviews to 3. Due to extreme changes in everyone's daily schedules, not many people were agreeing to participate (which is understandable). Reaching out and getting responses in time was taking a longer time than usual, making it very hard to have everything done by the required deadlines.

Findings

The initial phase of research outside of the literature review for this paper was done through interviews. The first two interviews were conducted in person and voice recorded to later be transcribed, with the 3rd interview done in a format of online written correspondence due to the COVID-19 pandemic requirements of social distancing. Furthermore, while interviews with people in the fashion industry provide this study with some insight from within, I shared a public survey to get an idea on how the issue is perceived from outside the industry, by the consumer. Finally, after establishing a comprehensive image of the scene in Armenia, I studied and analyzed international fashion magazines that are breaking the mold of the seemingly outdated perception of what a fashion magazine is and actually succeeding in growing an audience.

Interviews

The 1st person I interviewed is Irina Vanyan, current creative director of 5Concept Store, which is a store located in the centre of Yerevan that features pieces from several Armenian designers. Vanyan used to be an art director at “Prestige” magazine and worked for several other local magazines as well for many years. The 2nd person interviewed is Vahan Khachatryan, well-known Armenian womenswear and couture designer, who also has a background working for and with magazines, both local and international. The 3rd person is Nina Rasyuk, founder of “TES Models,” which was established in Yerevan in 2019. Rasyuk comes from Moscow and used to work as a photo editor at Harper’s Bazaar.

The interviews were all centered about the fashion press and the lack of it in Armenia, with specific questions tailored for each interviewee that relates to their respective fields. Many common points and thoughts were shared among the interviewees which are highlighted below.

- Fashion magazines were thriving until the popularization of the internet and social media

During my interviews with Irina Vanyan and Vahan Khachatryan, they both mentioned that there was a time when fashion magazines in Armenia were doing exceptionally well. According to their experiences of working for these magazines, the period from mid to late 2000s was the high. People were interested in what the magazines had to say and show, the magazines had multiple local and international endorsers and advertisers (among the brands mentioned were Armani and Gucci), the sales were good, and there was actual competition in the field.

It was stated and restated several times during both interviews that everything started going downhill for the fashion press with the popularization of social media, online blogs, and influencers. Advertisements are the main source of income for magazines, and with the introduction of newer, faster, and cheaper methods of showing a product and potentially reaching a wider audience, less and less advertisements were paid to be shown in magazines. Therefore, due to the financial decrease and the inability to sustain the large teams that it takes to produce each issue with quality, all the magazines began to switch online and eventually shut down.

- Less quality, effort, and creativity today

When talking about the current state of the fashion press in Armenia, both Vanyan and Khachatryan agreed that it is practically nonexistent. Social media has replaced fashion journalism in Armenia completely. While Irina says she does not feel the negative consequences of this absence personally, Khachatryan explained that although the consequences are not necessarily negative, the presence of a more active fashion press, even online, would bring a lot of positives. Both interviewees talked about the general lack of effort in producing something creative and original that is lacking today.

Vanyan explained this by bringing the example of photo shoots done in collaboration with 5Concept Store saying,

“There are so many interesting directions they can take their ideas to but they just don’t think that way, and they are not at fault. They have resources and access to information, but they do not know how to utilize that. Starting from sound and the way they talk about fashion, you immediately understand that it’s not going to work.” (Vanyan, I. 2020, Feb. 11. Oral interview)

Nina Rasyuk also explained how this lack of creativity is not only seen in fashion projects but also in people’s perception about the fashion world. She said, “ Because of the fact that there are no magazines, some online platforms about fashion here, people still live in their perceptions about the fashion world, which are Gucci, Kim Kardashian and her sisters, Bella and Gigi Hadid, and that’s it... there is a need to widen horizons” (Rasyuk, N. 2020, May 2. Written interview).

- Not enough good fashion journalists to sustain the fashion press

The subject of the potential to revive the fashion press, and whether it would be worth it, was brought up during all interviews. A common thread was the lack of faith in journalists to produce quality content that would interest the reader. All interviewees, without having been directed, brought up the subject of the inadequacy of the voices representing fashion in the press in Armenia. Vanyan recounted an experience when a journalist sent to report from the annual Fashion Forum offended well-known guests by asking them who they were on air (Vanyan, I. 2020, Feb. 11. Oral interview). Speaking of his experience on the same topic, Khachatryan said “Sadly, we don’t have journalists here who actually understand the fashion industry and are capable of writing intelligent, credible articles, and analyses of fashion and fashion news and trends.” (Khachatryan, V. 2020, Feb. 20. Oral interview) Rasyuk reflected on the same issue saying, “For the magazines to appear, journalists should appear... Let’s imagine that, for example, a fashion magazine appears in Armenia: what will it talk about? There is nothing to talk about yet.” (Rasyuk, N. 2020, May 2. Written interview)

- Armenia is more of an extreme case of this international phenomenon

Although the introduction of the internet and popularization of social media has hindered the growth of the magazine industry as a whole, all interviewees agreed that Armenia is more of an extreme case of the situation. Many magazines all over the world have switched online or decided to end reporting all in all. However, Armenia is one of the very few that went from having an active and thriving fashion magazine industry to nothing at all. Armenia does not have any print magazines, and furthermore, does not have any consistent online form of fashion journalism either. Some influencers and online personalities dabble with the local fashion industry from time to time, but dedicated journalists and platforms that exist to keep up with and report on primarily the fashion industry in Armenia are absent. This puts Armenia in the lower,

more extreme end of the spectrum in comparison to other locations which have experienced a similar but less intense situation.

- Future of the Fashion Press

Vanyan and Khachatryan were conflicted about where the future of the fashion press might be heading, locally and internationally. Both interviewees agreed that there needs to be, and will always be, people who start conversations and talk about fashion brands, designers, stylists etc, even on the internet and social media. However, while Vanyan said that online social platforms are likely to be the only ones remaining in the future, Khachatryan insisted that some fashion magazines will indefinitely remain, even in print.

When asked whether he sees a future for the fashion industry with no fashion press, whether locally or internationally, Khachtryan replied saying, “there is no way that press will vanish” (Khachatryan, V. 2020, Feb. 20. Oral interview). Rasyuk also appeared to be on the same page, and having had experience working for a well-known magazine, said that Armenia is not a hopeless case either. Rasyuk said,

“There is a need of time to form the industry, for people to stop being afraid of thinking and seeing differently. This all will happen, all we need is to work much and be patient. All of us do a big job, gather experience and rise together.” (Rasyuk, N. 2020, May 2. Written Interview)

Survey

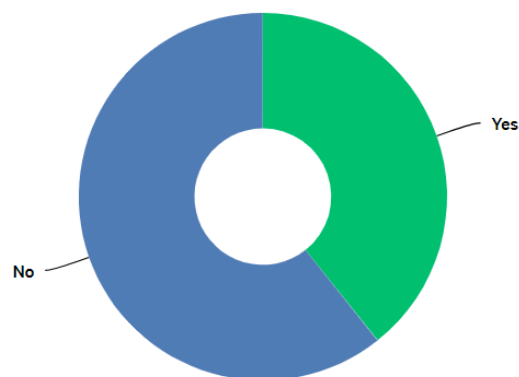
The objective of the survey was to understand whether the absence of fashion magazines was noticed by the general public, and whether they would be interested if the local fashion press

was revived. The survey was shared online on Facebook (particularly Facebook groups where all members are Armenian) and through messages. The only sampling done was requiring the respondent to be Armenian. This was done because the country of focus for this paper was Armenia and collecting responses from non-Armenians would not contribute qualitatively to the results.

The survey had a total of 6 questions with 2 of them being open ended and amassed a total of 56 responses. None of the questions were mandatory so the number of respondents per questions varies. The results were the following.

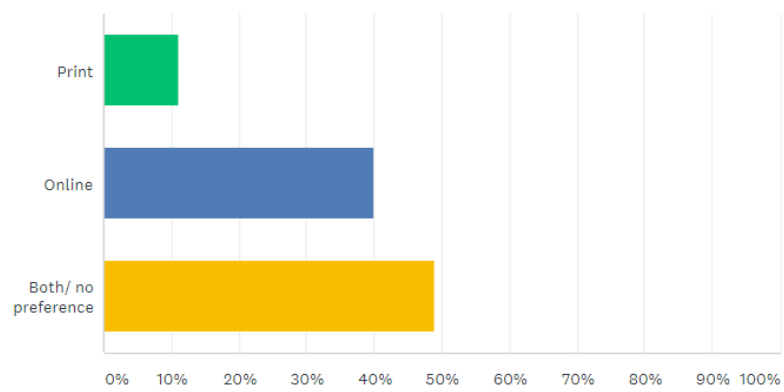
Do you read fashion magazines?

Answered: 56 Skipped: 0



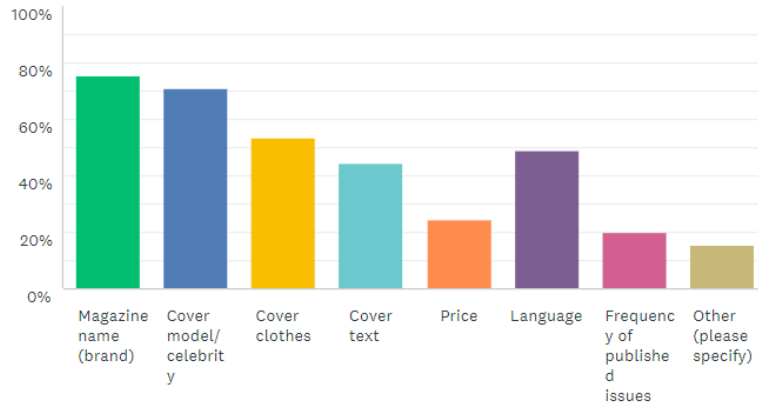
If you answered yes, do you prefer to read them in print or online?

Answered: 45 Skipped: 11



What factors influence your choice when purchasing or subscribing to a fashion magazine? (choose all that apply)

Answered: 45 Skipped: 11

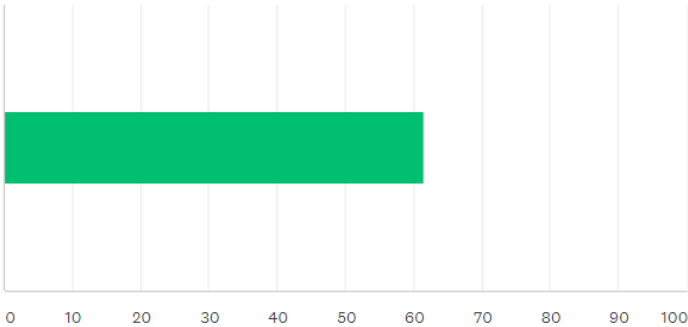


Responses filled in the other slot:

- ~I don't read fashion magazines (x4).
- I don't buy them, I find them at home.
- What the magazine believes in.
- I don't have access to them in print so I follow them online.

If a fashion-oriented magazine was to be produced and published locally, would it interest you?

Answered: 47 Skipped: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
Responses	62	2,891	47

This question was in a slide form where the respondent can place the cursor somewhere on a scale of 1(not at all) to 100 (very much).

Please elaborate:

The answers to this question were grouped into these categories:

- I don't read fashion magazines at all (x4).
- I don't follow fashion, but I would check it out (x8).
- I would check it out and continue to follow if ____ (x7).
- I would be very interested in a local magazine (x10).

What would you like to see in a locally produced and published fashion magazine? (what would interest you in terms of content, visuals, writers, etc.)

The answers to this question were grouped into the following categories.

- Strong visuals (shoots, pictures, clothing, models, celebrities) (x8).
- Good journalism, quality articles and columns, and analysis of happenings in the fashion industry locally and worldwide (x15).
- Representation of Armenian designers, models, photographers, and other creatives (local and from the diaspora) (x12)
- Other

Summary and analysis of survey findings

From the survey results we understand that most people associate magazines with print. Therefore explaining why the majority of the answers to the first question, which asked the survey taker whether they read magazines, were “no,” with a lot of people then admitting they follow magazines online when presented the option. The brand of the magazine was chosen to be the most influential factor when purchasing a magazine, with the cover model/celebrity coming in at a close second. This can be explained as the general customer turning to trusted and established sources and figures for advice and inspiration more so than to unknown and/or newly emerging people. More than half of the respondents would be interested in an Armenian produced and published fashion magazine. However, there is a general lack of faith in what could come out of the local fashion press. People would like to see an Armenian perspective to represent the local fashion industry but, maybe due to previous experiences, they have little to no faith in the success of it.

Nonetheless, the survey shows that the general image is not one of overall disinterest as most respondents wrote that they would give a local magazine a chance. However, quality is important and it is crucial to be on par with the internationally established standards in order for a new locally published magazine to gain momentum.

Analysis of current trends

By now, it is no secret that print magazines are in decline. Nevertheless, this does not seem to apply to all fashion magazines as many who have had long successful histories, and many newer more niche magazines seem to be doing well despite the odds. Digital convergence is happening in all industries, however the general consensus seems to be that fashion is falling a bit behind on this adaption.

Albeit comparatively less than before, advertisers (who we've established magazines can't survive without) still seem to be paying large sums of money for their ads to be shown in magazines. Yes, even in print. But what has changed with the popularization and rapid growth of advertising on the internet is that now advertisers are much pickier when it comes to distributing ads. While once the magazines were the only way to reach an audience, now they're one of many. The big name monthly periodicals like Vogue, Elle, and Harper's Bazaar are still loaded with pages upon pages of advertisements.

Simultaneously, more niche magazines such as Fantastic Man, Beauty Papers, and The Gentlewoman are also gaining traction as magazines with a growing customer base and cult following. Reminiscent of a book in volume and content, these (mostly) biannual publications are setting a new standard. Unlike previously popular magazines, these ones are more high end editorial with more long-form journalism, personality pieces, and articles that merge the fashion

world with other spheres and currently relevant topics, without shying away from honest and opinionated journalism. This gives these magazines more than a moment of value as they feature pieces you'd want to keep on your shelf and can go back and read like you would a book.

Furthermore, these magazines are broadening the very limited idea of the type of person that can be involved in fashion. Celebrating differences and inclusivity is something smaller, more recently established magazines seem to have in common, and readers recognize that. For long, there has been one type of person you would see in fashion magazine advertisements (which make up most of the magazine), and that is not relatable in any sense or form to the average reader. The newer magazines that people are picking up are not aiming to fit in on the shelf. Taking the example of Beauty Papers, every issue of which has been sold out on their website, it claims to be “A place where the world’s leading beauty artists, photographers, writers, and cultural commentators play, provoke, create, confuse, and inspire” (Beauty Papers, 2020).

Furthermore, the reason why issues from magazines such as Beauty Papers still feel more organic is also their approach to advertising. Written in big, bold letters on their website, it says, “Our approach to advertising is one of collaboration, creating powerful bespoke communications” (Beauty Paper, 2020), shifting it from being more of a transaction to collaboration. More mindful collaboration in advertising gives not only room for more inclusivity, but also more creative freedom for the people involved, such as photographers, stylists, and directors, to work on projects for the magazines without advertising obligations. Many people who previously held high positions in fashion magazines, such as Eva Chen who was the Editor-in-Chief of Lucky Magazine, or Selby Drummond who was an editor at American Vogue have emigrated from their long-held positions to work at social media platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram under newly created titles (Alti, 2018). It can be argued that the

influence of advertising has hindered creativity to thrive independently in the pages of the magazines that sell ad-space less mindfully. Therefore, having a set image to deliver to the reader and not being able to shift that may be a part of the reason that explains these excessive migrations.

Another factor thriving magazines have in common is having their print and digital worlds complement each other. At the end of the day, it does not have to be one way or another. The emergence of something new has never meant you have to ditch everything that already existed before. The most successful strategy is combining print and online to have the reader be immersed in the culture of the magazine in more than one way. This is not only true for publications that started in print then transitioned online, but also for fashion blogs and magazines that started online and later decided to add print, such as Vogue Arabia. While print newspaper sales go down because there is a need to know what's happening in the world as it is happening, the same cannot be said about the fashion press. The future of fashion magazines seems to be at the hands of those who deliver the reader an immersive, accessible, and inclusive environment, with in-depth features, editorials, true journalism, and high-quality content that can't be found anywhere else.

Conclusion

People will continue talking about fashion as long as there are people who keep creating and realizing their visions. This capstone addresses the avenues cut and limitations enforced through the general lack of platforms that exist to encourage and support conversations about the different kinds of work people in the fashion industry create and share with the world. Although the print magazine industry is experiencing a major change that is pushing many previous

household names in the magazine industry to the sidelines, the fashion press is not dead. The case in Armenia is extreme, however even so, is not at a stage where we can consider it broken beyond repair.

Through talking to people who have had experience working in the magazine industry and still continue to create and expand the fashion world in Armenia, through the online survey filled out by the general public, and through analyzing the success stories coming out of the fashion magazine industry, we can conclude that the fashion press today has not disappeared but rather stepped out of the mould. People purchasing or following a fashion magazine today are not looking to invest in a single physical entity they can look through and then throw away. People today are more keen to prefer an experience made up of different components that can be tailored to their own interests. Those who listen to the public and think beyond the outdated standards have not only survived in the industry, but thrived as well.

More research can be done to further analyze the modern fashion press and how it juxtaposes with those magazines that have not survived the digital convergence. This will help further understand the future of the industry, where it is heading, and what directions publications should take. Armenia is not a solitary case of the researched phenomena. A more in-depth analysis of the situation worldwide would provide a more comprehensive image which will further establish where and how the fashion press has stayed behind. Hereafter, the resurgence of the fashion press can be planned effectively enough to reclaim the position it once occupied in people's lives.

The fashion industry is expanding everyday with vibrant and divergent creatives stepping in and advancing our understanding of what fashion is and who it is for. Out of all the examples and interviews analyzed, the key takeaway is that nothing resonates better with people than

authenticity. With the ever-evolving and inclusive route the fashion industry is on, the fashion press is also bound to keep up and let fashion and the conversations about it be led by the people and creators instead of the advertisers that pay the most amount of money.

References

Alti, A. Fashion magazines and social media: what does the future hold? (2018, December 12).

Retrieved April 28, 2020, from

<https://wersm.com/fashion-magazines-and-social-media-what-does-the-future-hold/>

A creative biannual about the culture of beauty. (2020, March 5). Retrieved April 28, 2020, from

<https://beutypapers.com/>

Hoskins, T. (2014). The Fashion Media. In *Stitched Up: The Anti-Capitalist Book of Fashion*

(pp. 33-49). London: Pluto Press. doi:10.2307/j.ctt183p0z0.5

Moeran, B. (2006). More than just a fashion magazine. *Current sociology*, 54(5), 725-744.

Ramanathan, L. (2019, January 1). Women's magazines are dying. Will we miss them when

they're gone? Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/womens-magazines-are-dying-will-we-miss-them-when-theyre-gone/2018/12/31/a3bbe3ac-f729-11e8-863c-9e2f864d47e7_story.html.

Ruane, C. (2008). Spreading the Word: The Development of the Russian Fashion Press. In

Blaszczyk R. (Ed.), *Producing Fashion: Commerce, Culture, and Consumers* (pp. 21-41).

Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press. Retrieved from

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fhbbd.4>

The Association of Magazine Media. Brooks, L. [President and Chief Executive Officer].

Magazine media tells and sells. (2018). New York, NY: MPA.

The Association of Magazine Media. MPA. *Likes/Followers Analysis And Social Media Engagement Factors*. (2018) (Vol. Q4).

Vogue Russia October 2015 - Stella Maxwell by David Mushegain. (2015, October 4). Retrieved from <https://fashioneditorials.com/vogue-russia-october-2015-stella-maxwell-by-david-mushegain/>.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Consent form

CONSENT FORM

Consent to participate in a capstone project conducted at the American University of Armenia (AUA). This is to state that I agree to participate in the capstone project conducted by Rebecca Taghdweirnian. The capstone director is Dr. Hourig Attarian of the College of Humanities & Social Sciences at AUA (tel.: 060 612769, email: hourig.attarian@aua.am).

PURPOSE: I have been informed that the purpose of the project is to research the absence of a fashion press in Armenia and what that means for the local fashion industry. Within the bigger context of the project, the interview conducted by Rebecca Taghdweirnian is meant to focus on the interviewee's experience working in the fashion industry in Armenia and how their business is affected by the lack of platforms to promote and showcase their work on.

PROCEDURES: I understand that the interview will be conducted at ____, starting at ____, and might be recorded on video. As a participant, I will be asked to explore my experience _____. The interview will last from one to two hours, however, as a participant I am free to stop at any time, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the project at any given point. I understand that if I wish to extend the focus group for more than two hours, I will be provided that opportunity.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: I understand that the interview involves the sharing of my personal views and opinions, which will be treated with the utmost care and consideration. I have been informed that I am free to stop, take a break or discontinue at any time. There are no risks involved in partaking in this interview.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION: As a participant, I will have access to all the recorded material for verification purposes. Throughout the project, if and when the material produced is in Armenian, I will have the opportunity to review and verify the English translations.

__ I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.

__ I understand that the data from this project may be published in print or digital format for academic purposes.

In terms of **identification and reproduction** of my participation:

I agree to **disclose my identity**. I understand that my identity may be revealed in any publications or presentations that may result from this interview.

I agree to the reproduction of sound and images from this interview by any method and in any media for academic purposes (which may include webpages, documentary clips, etc..)

OR

I understand that my participation in this study is **confidential**. My identity will be concealed. I will be given a pseudonym in any publications or presentations that may result from this interview.

I agree that while data from my interview may be published, no sound or images from it may be reproduced.

When photographs, artifacts or documents are scanned or photographed

I agree to let the student researcher copy family photographs and documents for use in the student project only.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

INTERVIEWEE:

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

INTERVIEWER:

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a capstone project participant, please contact Dr. Hourig Attarian of the College of Humanities & Social Sciences at AUA (tel.: 060 612769, email: hourig.attarian@aua.am).

Appendix 2

Interview Questionnaires

Irina Vanyan (Art director at 5Concept Store)

- 1) Please briefly talk about your experience and background in the fashion industry.
- 2) What benefits (if any) would fashion magazines provide the industry with that no other medium can?
- 3) Why do you think fashion magazines are not being produced or published in Armenia?
- 4) Would you say that a reason why fashion magazines are currently nonexistent in Armenia is because there are better and more efficient media nowadays?
- 5) Why did the magazine you worked for decide to shut down?
- 6) Do you think this is more of an Armenian phenomenon or is it international?
- 7) If someone were to restart publishing a fashion focused magazine, what advice would you give them? Any precautions or mistakes previous magazines used to make that they should be wary of?
- 8) Do you see a future in the fashion industry with no fashion press?

Vahan Khachatryan (Womenswear and haute couture designer)

- 1) Please briefly talk about your experience and background in the fashion industry.
- 2) Has your work ever been showcased in a magazine? How did that exposure affect you?

- 3) What benefits would magazines, or other forms of dedicated platforms, provide the industry with that don't currently exist here?
- 4) Do you feel that the absence of a fashion press, or platforms in general have a negative effect on the fashion industry in Armenia?
- 5) If someone was looking to start something local here, would that be a good idea? What would you advise them?
- 6) Do you see a future for the fashion industry, locally or internationally, with no fashion press?

Nina Rasyuk (Founder of TES Models modeling agency)

- 1) Can you please provide a little background on how you got involved in the fashion industry? (where you are from, how did you decide to create TES Models)
- 2) What has been the biggest challenge you have faced since establishing TES Models?
- 3) What benefits would magazines, or other forms of platforms dedicated to fashion, provide the industry with that don't currently exist here?
- 4) Do you see a future for the fashion industry, locally or internationally, with no fashion press?