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How Does *Vogue* Influence the Fashion Industry?

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## I. Introduction

*Vogue* is a monthly fashion magazine for women. It is not only the most famous fashion magazine in the world, but also the bestselling one. *Vogue* is a magazine that has a long history. It has already lasted more than one hundred and twenty years. It has been a part of the fashion industry since World War I. Nowadays, people read *Vogue* to know what item is fashionable in the season and what is happening in the fashion world.

*Vogue* is known as the “Fashion Bible”, there is no doubt that it wields significant influence on the fashion industry. *Vogue* enjoys a high status in the fashion industry. The status is so high that it is hard for other fashion magazines to catch up with it. The present editor of British *Vogue*, Alexandra Shulman, once said, “***Vogue*’s power is universally acknowledged. It’s the place everybody wants to be if they want to be in the world of fashion.**” It has the power to define what is the trend of a season.

However, fewer people know how *Vogue* gradually becomes the fashion guru and how it influences the fashion industry. Thus, as a huge fan of the magazine and with a keen curiosity about the keys to its success, I launch this study with an aim to find out the methods that *Vogue* adopts to influence the fashion industry. This research paper was based on surveys into related books, research papers, news and websites. By analyzing the data found in these various sources, this study attempts to generalize the factors that has led *Vogue* to have such an dominant influence on the fashion industry.

## II. Thesis

### A. The History of *Vogue*

*Vogue* was originally created by Arthur Baldwin Turnure on December 17, 1892. Back then, *Vogue* was only a weekly gazette in the U.S.A. The first issues included fashion articles for men and women, book reviews, drama, music and art. Most of the articles were about etiquette, discussing how to behave at social gatherings. In 1905, Condé Montrose Nast, the founder of Condé Nast Publications, bought the magazine.

Nast breathed new life into *Vogue*. He transformed *Vogue* from a small magazine in New York into the most famous fashion magazine in America, and later, he even turned *Vogue* into the most popular fashion magazine around the world. Different versions of *Vogue* are published in twenty-three countries. The first British *Vogue* was published in 1916. It made *Vogue* the first magazine that had a foreign edition. Spanish, French and German *Vogue* was launched after British *Vogue*. As a result of its expansion in Europe, *Vogue* has become a publishing icon. *Vogue* has shown significant influence on art, design, journalism and photography.

In 1914, Edna Woolman Chase became the third editor in chief of *Vogue*. During the 37 years she was in control of the magazine, America was going through the World Wars and the Great Depression. Chase regarded it as the time for *Vogue* to expand. The readers of *Vogue* during the wars were not decreasing, but growing. Then, she was succeeded by Jessica Daves in 1952, Diana Vreeland in 1963, and Grace Mirabella in 1971.

Grace Mirabella was the sixth editor of *Vogue*. During the time when Mirabella took over *Vogue*, the lifestyle of women had changed. Women started to go out and work. Thus, she thought that *Vogue* had to change, too. She believed that they should change their focus. The clothes on *Vogue* should be affordable for most women. The clothes should be practical in real life. She also changed *Vogue* into a monthly publication in 1973. The change of *Vogue* was a success. The circulation of *Vogue* increased from 400 thousand copies to one million copies.

In 1988, Mirabella was replaced by Anna Wintour. Wintour's work was to make *Vogue* younger. First, she changed the style of the cover. She made the magazine more approachable for the public. Second, she invited people who did not know each other to join in the editing of an issue. Those people came from different fields of the world. That made the conversation and the magazine interesting. Wintour mixed cheap and expensive clothes together, and it helped to expand the audiences of *Vogue*. Due to Wintour's creative leadership, *Vogue*'s status in fashion became more stable and higher than before.

## B. Factors

### 1. Popularity

Readers are very important for a magazine. Without readers, magazines are unable to earn money, and then the magazine will have to stop publishing. No matter what the content is about, it has to attract a readership large enough to sustain itself. Thus, popularity is important.

According to Condé Nast's circulation demographics (Condé Nast, <http://www.condenast.com/brands/vogue/media-kit/print>), the number of *Vogue*'s gross international readership in 2015 is 12.5 million, and the number of its international monthly users is 31.1 million. There are so many readers of *Vogue* around the world. They learn what is fashionable for the latest season by reading *Vogue*. Thus, fashion trends that are mentioned in the magazine may have a significant effect on what people buy. As an item was displayed in the magazine, a reader may consciously or subconsciously build up a preference in the item since it is the fashion style that many other readers will follow.

### 2. Reformer Editor-in-chief: Anna Wintour

**“Anna Wintour, editor-in-chief of American *Vogue* and the artistic director of Condé Nast, is widely regarded as the most influential figure in fashion.”** (*Business of Fashion*, 2015). Anna Wintour's career in *Vogue* started in 1988. During the time, some of the staff thought that *Vogue* was a little old-fashioned. Additionally, they had some new competitors such as *Elle* and *In Style*. Wintour's mission was to make *Vogue* younger. She changed the style of the cover by putting celebrities on the cover of *Vogue*. It had never been done by others before. Wintour also mixed cheap and expensive clothes together, and it also helped expand the audiences of *Vogue*. Wintour returned

the focus of *Vogue* back to fashion. Due to Wintour's creative leadership, *Vogue*'s status in fashion has been raised and stabilized.

Besides being an editor, Anna Wintour also launched events. She created the Fashion's Night Out and established the CFDA/*Vogue* Fashion Fund. Wintour is also the chair of the Met Gala, which is also known as Oscars of the fashion field. She can oversee the benefit committee and the guest list. In order to mark the contribution of Anna Wintour for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Costume Institute of the museum was renamed into "Anna Wintour Costume Center." It shows how important Wintour is to the Met Gala, which is an annual fundraising ball.

Anna Wintour is also known as the power broker of the fashion industry. **"Everywhere she goes, the waters part. The entire industry responds to Anna's taste, her likes, her dislikes"** (R. J. Cutler, 2009). Wintour was one of the ALL-TIME 100 Fashion Icons, which was selected by the TIME magazine. Her power in the fashion industry cannot be underestimated. She has helped Marc Jacobs and Alexander McQueen join the fashion world successfully. When designers were going to announce new clothes, they would first show it to Wintour and ask her for advice. Once, Wintour announced that she could only attend three days of the Milan Fashion Week in 2012. Thus, a lot of famous haute couture brands changed their shows to the days that Wintour could arrive. Due to this incident, it can be inferred that Wintour has significant influence on the fashion industry.

Because of such an important editor like Anna Wintour, *Vogue* became influential, too. *Vogue* is Wintour's magazine. She can decide what she wants to put into it. The industry also designs products that Wintour likes. Thus, *Vogue* can decide what is the latest fashion, and the fashion industry should value the fashion trend that was written in *Vogue*.

### 3. CFDA/*Vogue* Fashion Fund

This fashion fund was created by the Council of Fashion Designers of America and *Vogue* in 2006. This fund was set up to support young designers in America. Every year, the CFDA/*Vogue* Fashion Fund awards one winner and two runners up. The winner can win 4,000,000 US dollars as the prize, and runners up can win \$150,000. All of those winning designers can get the mentorship of experienced designers and executives in the fashion industry. The committee that selects the winner includes Anna Wintour and other experts from the Council of Fashion Designers of America and the fashion industry.

**"For a young designer, earning the CFDA/*Vogue* Fashion Fund's top prize can be a major career-booster — simply look to the trajectories of Alexander Wang, Proenza Schouler and Altuzarra as evidence."** (*Fashionista*, 2015). According to *Fashionista*, the CFDA/*Vogue* Fashion Fund is an award that can help young designers in America to expand their

career. Take Alexander Wang for example. Alexander Wang won the CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund in 2008. Winning the award helped expand his career. The monetary prize that he got from the fund was used to launch his production line. Besides money, he also got a year's guidance of other famous designers in the fashion industry. Alexander Wang's fashion career was a huge success. In 2009, he was the winner of the Swarovski Womenswear Designer of the Year, and in October, he received the Swiss Textiles Award. Then, in 2011, he won the CFDA's Best Accessory Designer award.

The success of Alexander Wang can be seen as an evidence of the success of the CFDA/*Vogue* Fashion Fund. It shows the importance of the fund and how it helped a young designer to launch his or her own brand successfully. The fashion fund also can be seen as a way that *Vogue* influences the fashion industry. Holding the fashion fund made *Vogue* become an important part of the fashion industry. Furthermore, since its editor, Anna Wintour, was the person that founded the fund, and she is also one of the decision-making committee. *Vogue* had the power to decide the winner of the fashion fund, who may become a promising designer in the near future.

#### 4. *Vogue* Fashion's Night Out

*Vogue* Fashion's Night Out was created by *Vogue*'s editor in chief, Anna Wintour, in 2009. **“Wintour's "Fashion Night" initiative was launched in 2009 with the intention of kick starting the economy following the Financial collapse of 2007–2008, by drawing people back into the retail environment and donating proceeds to various charitable causes.”** (Wikipedia, 2015). The Fashion Night Out has been the biggest shopping event in the fashion world since 2009. It has successfully encouraged tens of thousands of customers to visit stores across the world every year. There are twenty-three cities in the world holding this event annually.

There is no doubt that *Vogue* Fashion's Night Out is a huge success. It has become an important event both for fashionistas and the fashion industry. As a result, it is possible that the Fashion's Night Out is also a way for *Vogue* to influence the fashion industry, since the Fashion's Night Out can help the fashion industry to increase their profits. The Fashion's Night Out has made *Vogue* an influential part of the fashion industry.

#### C. The Effect of These Factors

As a result of the reasons above, it can be inferred that popularity, editor, fund, and event are the ways in which *Vogue* influence the fashion industry. First, popularity. *Vogue* has a huge number of readers across the globe, and it may be an

important reason why *Vogue* exert a considerable influence on the global fashion industry. Second, the fund. The fund can help increase the power that *Vogue* has to the fashion industry. Third, event. Events can increase the magazine's popularity and make it more popular. Last but not the least, editor. Among these factors, the editor is the most important one. *Vogue*'s editor-in-chief Anna Wintour has saved *Vogue* from becoming too framed and limited to bore the readers. Instead, she has increased the readership of *Vogue* by mashing up cheap and expensive garments. She has invented the Fashion's Night Out to further promote the fashion world defined by her magazine. She has also created the CFDA/*Vogue* Fashion Fund to lead and sponsor the promising young fashion designers to enter the fashion world through her decision and guidance. Thus, the editor plays the most essential role among the four factors. It is the editor that made the others possible. The events and the fund have contributed to the constantly growing readership.

### III. Conclusion

The great popularity of *Vogue*, CFDA/*Vogue* Fashion Fund, Fashion's Night Out and the editor of *Vogue*, Anna Wintour, have enabled *Vogue* magazine to wield overwhelming influence on the fashion world. Wide readership, fund for future designers, and events holding can be attributed to an influential editor. An influential editor is the most important element of all. Thus, an editor plays a significant role for a fashion magazine. Anna Wintour is a great example. She thought that working in VOGUE is "working in fashion." And facts have proved that Anna Wintour has led VOGUE to exert significant influence in the fashion industry. VOGUE is not only a fashion magazine but also a crucial part of the fashion industry. Therefore, if a fashion magazine desires to be influential in the fashion industry, staffing itself with an influential person in the fashion world may lead to a prosperous future for itself.

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