

**Podcasts are fashionable too:
the use of podcasting in fashion communication**

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Os *podcasts* também estão na moda: o uso do *podcasting* na comunicação de moda

Resumo (PT): Este artigo exploratório procura analisar a forma como a moda, enquanto temática com uma forte componente estética e artística, tem sido trabalhada pelo *podcasting*. Partimos da ideia de que os *media sociais* representam hoje um campo importante para a comunicação das marcas da indústria da moda, sobretudo devido à sua componente visual, mas também porque é nesses espaços que se encontram os *influencers*, atores fundamentais nas atuais estratégias de divulgação. Considerando estas novas formas de comunicação, mas sabendo também do crescimento que os *podcasts* têm registado, exploramos o potencial que este *medium* pode ter na ligação com os consumidores. Partindo de uma seleção de quinze *podcasts* sobre moda, analisamos em que medida o *podcasting* tem sido um território para a promoção da indústria da moda.

Palavras-chave: Podcasts, moda, media, comunicação.

Podcasts are fashionable too: an analysis of fashion on podcasts

Abstract (EN): This exploratory article seeks to analyse how fashion, as a theme with a strong aesthetic and artistic component, has been worked on by podcasting. We start from the idea that today social media represent an essential field for the communication of brands in the fashion industry, mainly due to its visual component and because it is in these spaces that influencers, key players in current dissemination strategies, are found. Considering these new forms of communication and knowing the growth that podcasts have registered, we explore the potential that this medium can have in connecting with consumers. Based on a selection of fifteen fashion podcasts, we analyse the extent to which podcasting has been a territory for promoting the fashion industry.

Keywords: Podcasts, fashion, media, communication.

Introduction

This article intends to explore the connection between podcasting and the fashion universe, considering, in particular, the fashion industry, and mainly brands. These fashion brands are using this creative medium to boost their presence in the digital environment, in a different logic from that which characterizes the sector, almost always privileging the visual dimension.

If it is true that the consumption of podcasts has been growing in most countries (Newman et al., 2020, 2021; The Infinite Dial, 2021; Voxnest, 2019, 2020; ABPod, 2020), we need to understand in which thematic areas this consumption has been registered, but also which themes can find a new opportunity in this medium.

Fashion is no stranger to podcasts, in fact, many luxury fashion brands have launched their podcasts over the past few years (Tashjian, 2021; Schiffer, 2019), and fashion design education has also explored podcasts as an educational tool for students and faculty (Winge & Embry, 2013). Nevertheless, although we know that luxury brands have used podcasts, we know little about what these podcasts are about, what content they present, whom they are aimed at, with what purpose they were created.

With this in mind, in this study, we try to understand and compare the content available on the market, assess the main content creators behind those fashion podcasts, and correlate if the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have affected the appearance of more fashion podcasts.

At the end of the article, we will review the collected data, in order to better understand the podcasts that already exist about fashion. Above all, we intend to know if this industry can also be a territory for podcasts and what this can represent in terms of possibilities for brands and consumers who can listen to and create content.

1. Podcasting continues to grow: the relevance of publishers and the power of suggestions

According to the Digital News Report 2021, consumption of podcasts continues to grow, despite a slight fluctuation in this growth during the pandemic. Data collected by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism highlight that “podcasts are particularly popular in Ireland (41%), Spain (38%), Sweden (37%), Norway (37%), and the United States (37 %)” (Newman

et al., 2021, pp. 27-28). In the tenth edition of the report, which this year collected data on 46 markets for the first time, the growth in the consumption of podcasts is highlighted, as well as the commitment and investment made in this medium “Spotify, Amazon, and Google have been investing in podcasts over the last few years as they seek to capitalize on emerging demand and break Apple’s dominance” (Newman et al., 2021, pp. 27-28).

In this context, the investment that Spotify has made in podcasting is highlighted, as we also find in other reports, such as the one carried out by Voxnest, a technology company that provides audio solutions.

So far in 2020, they've launched 78 original and/or exclusive podcasts, Acquired The Ringer, and gained exclusivity from The Joe Rogan Experience, which is (arguably) the most popular podcast on planet earth (Voxnest, 2020, p. 6).

Moreover, the Digital News Report 2021 also draws attention to the changes registered in the access and consumption of podcasts, especially considering the possibilities introduced by some digital platforms, particularly during the pandemic.

The growth of video podcasting, accentuated by the use of tools like Zoom during the pandemic, is opening an even wider range of options for distribution and leading to more problems of podcast definition for researchers. All this activity is also changing the platforms through which consumers access podcasts (Newman et al., 2021, pp. 27-28).

Despite the growing consumption, the report’s authors point out that this growth has not been felt simultaneously as new podcasts have appeared, which raises questions regarding excess of supply, especially considering the challenges that still lie on the side of demand. “Demand for podcasts is not growing at the same rate, so discovery and awareness remain the biggest problems” (Newman et al., 2021, pp. 28-29).

In this field, recommendations from friends and family, made mostly on social networks, are particularly relevant since this is how users often discover and listen to new podcasts (Newman et al., 2021, pp. 28-29). However, the suggestions made by public figures and influencers on social networks also stand out (Author et al., 2021, p. 399).

In the section dedicated to podcasting, the Digital News Report 2021 also highlights that podcasts represent a new trend in digital consumption, significant to capture younger listeners.

Podcasts remain a fast moving and dynamic part of digital consumption. They are of particular interest to publishers because they attract younger and more affluent users who are highly sought after by advertisers (Newman et al., 2021, pp. 28-29).

The data from the Infinite Dial 2021, the longest-running survey of digital media consumer behaviour in America, conducted by Edison Research and Triton Digital, also highlights these trends. In addition to the growth in consumption, a diversification in listeners' gender and geographic origin is highlighted, reflecting the very diversity of the country's population (p. 66). Furthermore, all studies emphasize that podcasting has been the medium that allows the audio ecosphere to conquer listeners, especially among the younger population groups (The Infinite Dial, 2021; Newman et al., 2020, 2021; Author, et al., 2021; ABPod, 2020).

Portugal has also followed the main trends in terms of consumption and discovery of new podcasts. According to the most recent data, in "2021, 41.5% of Portuguese who use the Internet say they have listened to a podcast in the previous month, 3.1 pp more than in 2020" (Cardoso, Paisana & Pinto-Martinho, 2021, p. 13). In this sense, the authors consider that "the format asserts itself more and more in the Portuguese media ecosystem, and in the informative, in particular" (Cardoso, Paisana & Pinto-Martinho, 2021, p. 13).

In terms of podcast categories, we have seen an increase in the variety of content, which makes it difficult to categorise them in many cases.

All over the world there are testimonies that the traditional categorizations used for other spheres of news consumption are insufficient to characterize a vibrant and dynamic market, in which genres overlap, complement and enrich (Cardoso, Paisana & Pinto-Martinho, 2020, p. 50).

The categorization is one of the aspects that sometimes alienates listeners since the abundance of content makes a choice difficult, reinforcing the importance of the suggestions by friends and family.

We close this first point, highlighting the growing trend of podcasts, despite the pandemic having introduced some changes in the process, as we will see below. We also reinforce that this medium has a very particular operating logic, allowing for "new and distinctive mode of audience engagement". This means we can position "podcasting as not merely dependent on social media, but integrated into it as a new form of social media in and of itself" (Spinelli & Dann, 2019, p. 2).

Moreover, as posed by Chan-Olmsted and Wang, it is "no longer appropriate to consider podcasting as a digital, mobile, and on-demand extension of radio" (2020, p. 16). The authors argue that podcasts are

consumed differently by the audience and are gradually diverging from radio in terms of audience base (e.g. the gain of non-radio listeners), platforms (e.g. the popularity of non-radio platforms), and producers (e.g. the burgeoning of non-expert, individual creators) (Chan-Olmsted and Wang, 2020, pp. 16-17).

Although podcast is a medium in its own right, and cannot be compared to the radio (Spinelli & Dann, 2019), as podcasts allow for a high range of themes and highly diverse content, it is also important to highlight that “more active home listeners (are) seeking for information and entertainment, and the more ritualized out of home listeners value mobility and control” (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2020, p. 17).

Podcasts also allow for more than one format option for content creators: “Mini-series podcasts grew from four in 2010 to more than 52,000 in 10 years. From “Serial” in 2014 to top shows including “The Dream” and “Chernobyl,” listeners are tuning in to learn about history, legends and behind-the-curtain truths” (Stitcher, 2020). This is relevant because, as we will observe later, many fashion podcasts, namely the ones created by luxury brands, opted for the limited or mini-series format.

Taking into account that, niche genres are also allowed with podcasts, creators can target very specific audiences and create especially for them, allowing them even to be part of the content creation bubbles, with recurrent themes such as “sports, comedy, society and culture” (Paisana & Martins, 2021). Finally, podcasts also have been a medium for an extreme production from both independent creators and already established media enterprises, where innovation has few limits (Paisana & Martins, 2021, p. 71), and where audiences are at the core of the content creation.

1.1. Podcasts and the pandemic: new routines and creative possibilities

The same report highlights that there have been other changes in sound consumption, namely, concerning podcasts, which are no longer listened only individually and on mobile devices, to be often listened to collectively and at home, mainly due to the growth of smart speakers.

The shift to audio is being driven by new devices such as smart speakers and by platform services such as short podcasts or other audio items that can be called up using voice interfaces. Amazon and Google are the key market makers here and both have a renewed focus in promoting innovative audio formats including podcasts. Smart speakers now reach more than a fifth of the UK adult population (22%) and 15% in the United States and Germany (Newman et al., 2021, pp. 28-29).

Smart speakers are one of the new trends in the audio ecosphere, which has intensified with the pandemic, but creation has also increased with the pandemic. The data presented by Newman and Gallo from Acast, “one of the largest European distributors of podcast content”, show that “listening to all podcast genres dipped at the very start of the crisis (late February/early March)” (2020, p. 20). Among the most listened-to podcasts, the focus is news and comedy. On the one hand, this is due to the fact that listeners are looking for more information about the virus; on the other hand, it is because they are looking for content that would allow them to get distracted from the reality of everyday life (VoxNest, 2020). In this context, the publishers took the most advantage, ending up launching new podcasts with information about the virus.

One reason for the strong interest in news content over this period has been the agile approach shown by publishers. Dozens of daily news podcasts were launched in March and April, focusing only on the pandemic and its implications (Newman & Gallo, 2020, p. 21).

In addition to consumption, as mentioned above, this was also a period for creation, managed by publishers and several users, who decided to create their podcast and share it on social networks.

(...) with people quarantined at home, there was also a new surge of creativity from people looking to take their minds off the problems at-hand. During the months of February and March, Spreaker, Voxnest-owned podcast hosting platform, saw an increase in new sign-ups by 75 percent for their most popular plans (VoxNest, 2020, p. 20).

In fact, this is one of the distinguishing features of podcasts, once they “can be produced and distributed without the approval of a commissioning editor, program controller, or gatekeeper” (Spinelli and Dann, 2019, p. 8).

The pandemic shifted the schedule of weekly consumption, with patterns shifting during the pandemic restrictions and the first lockdown. According to the 2020 Stitcher Podcasting Report: “While listening decreased during weekday commuting hours, the second half of April began to show a return to pre-pandemic levels of listening patterns” (Stitcher, 2020). The pandemic has not only been at the center of an increase in the consumption of podcasts, but contents around the pandemic were highly demanded and podcast rankings shifted (Stitcher, 2020). Yet, as observed by Nee and Santana :

Although the pandemic was a public health crisis, the podcasts analyzed here generally took more of a feature or soft-news approach to the sharing of information. Most of the episodes were repackaged news stories that had aired previously in broadcast or print,

therefore offering no immediate news or informational value that had not already been reported. (2021, p. 13).

The authors added that “the abundance of coronavirus podcasts nevertheless swelled, even becoming a weekly and daily feature of some popular sites” (Nee & Santana, 2021, p. 7). Although the pandemic has been the culprit for the demise of many industries, it “didn’t slow podcasting down much” (Stitcher, 2021a, p. 5). Besides podcasts about the virus, other content gained prominence in the first months of the pandemic. Podcasts listeners have also evolved, as according to Stitcher:

New listeners are younger, more diverse, and spread out across the entire nation. Celebrities turned to podcasting for connection when film production shut down: 22 of the top 200 podcasts in 2020 were hosted by celebrities, most notably Rob Lowe, Jason Bateman, and Zac Braff (2021b).

Moreover, the Stitcher Podcasting report states that “younger generations gravitated to comedy and talk content (age 13–34), while news and politics did better with older generations (age 35+)” (Stitcher, 2021b). Podcasts have become more *fashionable*, by transitioning to a new way for celebrities to connect with their audiences, however, topics are, different from one audience to another. This brings us to the question that we intend to explore in this work: get to know, in the first place, if fashion is a territory explored by podcasts and if so, what is the offer available for fashion podcasts. Secondly, we seek to understand if the pandemic has made podcasts grow under this industry, strongly affected by the impossibility of holding in-person events and increasingly dependent on dissemination strategies in social media.

2. Communicating fashion in the digital era: can we do it with podcasts?

In recent years we have seen a set of changes in the fashion industry. Technological development allowed transformation in the creative and productive processes, as well as in communication and distribution.

Fashion communication has been adapted to the digital world. In a highly competitive industry, brands have sought new ways to reinforce their positioning, assert their products, and, above all, establish a close relationship with consumers (Lee et al., 2018).

In this panorama, marked by the migration of fashion to the digital environment, many traditional communication products have gained new dimensions. From catalogues to

magazines, through editorials and photo sessions, everything started to be thought of considering the digital market. The launch of blogs, vlogs, and fashion films is now part of the communication strategy of many brands (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014), which quickly realized that a presence on social media is mandatory and that when it comes to communication, quality is more important than quantity.

In this transition to a new environment, the fashion industry is continually adapting focused on the aesthetic dimension, with communication depending on the visual component (Lee et al., 2018). On social media, and particularly on Facebook and Instagram, this dimension is precisely explored, with photos and videos being shared by brands and by many of the influencers who assume the role of brand ambassadors in these spaces (Smith et al., 2018).

In the case of podcasts created by luxury fashion brands, the adoption of podcasts was met with difficulty. Hiljding and Gárgoles argue that:

“When brands started to use digital communication, luxury brands were reluctant to change. Selling without consumers being able to touch the product and experience the customer journey they were used to, bewildered brands. The main reason for the skepticism of luxury brands in undertaking their digital strategies lies in the very attributes of luxury and the Internet: while luxury is synonymous with rarity, inaccessibility and exclusivity, the Internet is characterized by accessibility and democracy (2022, p. 345).

For luxury fashion brands, the current state of such content seems to have reached its peak. Although the format was adopted avidly and rapidly by many luxury fashion brands, the post-pandemic state of these initiatives is almost dead; for some luxury brands, the series have been limited to only one, for others, the programmes have completely ended (Nanda, 2021).

This is due to the ever-changing ways brands have to adapt to their target market, but also because brand engagement is difficult to actually quantify on a medium that does not provide reciprocity of communication (Bratcher, 2021), as opposed to social media platforms in which users can like, share, comment or send private messages to a brand’s account. This has motivated the creation of new platforms to monetize and retrieve more data from podcast listeners, such as their demographic (Ahmed, 2017).

The early adoption of luxury fashion brands could signify a second-coming for other fashion brands that typically target other markets, since the early adoption of new media by luxury brands is mostly copied by other brands. Therefore, one could easily argue that non-luxury

fashion brands could be following what luxury fashion brands have achieved (Hiljding & Gárgoles, 2022). As posed by Bratcher: “It is important to note that though the fashion industry largely remains untapped into the practice of podcasting.” (2021, p. 13).

This path has led to a reduction in investment in traditional communication strategies and a bet on new modalities. However, what is the current podcast offer for the fashion industry and its stakeholders?

This is precisely what we seek to explore in this work, considering the possibilities of this creative medium, which is at the same time intimate and capable of approaching different subjects, establishing a logic of interaction and involvement with consumers.

Concluding this argument on the specificity of luxury brands dabbling in podcasting, it is undeniable that such brands “use podcasting as a tool to create branded content, provide value to their customers or potential customers and generate engagement with their audience” (Hiljding & Gárgoles, 2022, pp. 351-352). Furthermore, “it is a way to connect with their audience and transmit the brand’s values without the need to sell their product” (Hiljding & Gárgoles, 2022, p. 352).

As audio content is a relatively new avenue for fashion brands (Ahmed, 2017; Hiljding & Gárgoles, 2022), we will explore fashion as a medium, more than the representation of fashion brands in podcasting. As posed earlier, fashion is a system that is normally represented by still and moving images, and many different platforms have been used for its representation in the media. However, the intimacy procured by audio content is valuable to narrate and create a relation of proximity with the consumers (Hiljding & Gárgoles, 2022, p. 352). Podcasting is also a way for brands to reach new audiences, create user engagement and add a new medium to their communication portfolio (Bratcher, 2021, p.3).

3. Methodology and Research Design

Starting with a literature review on podcasts and fashion, it is evident that little has been written on this particular subject, other than general literature such as press pieces (Glossary, 2021; Parisi, 2021; Pidgeon, 2020; Simpson, 2020; Schiffer, 2019). Therefore, we focused our literature review on podcasts as a genre, as well as the influence of the current pandemic in

podcasts consumption. After that, we related the medium with the topic of fashion through the literature found, but especially, through an exploration of the offer. More specifically, we assessed podcast content that focuses on topics related to fashion. To best establish the variety of content proposed regarding fashion through podcasts, we started with a research on the recommended podcasts related to fashion.

Although we quickly found more than 100 podcasts related to fashion, many did not match our search. As many podcasts had little to no public traction, or were remotely related to the field in focus, we started by defining selection criteria that is explained in the next section (selection process). Using qualitative observation as a method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), we reunited all the information in a comparative table (see table 1) to proceed to a content analysis of such podcasts, taking into account the selection process and criteria exposed in our next part.

3.1. Selection process

As previously explained, we found a great number of podcasts related to fashion as part of our exploratory research. We therefore had to define a number of differentiating criteria. For example, we chose podcasts that assessed fashion as a medium, or as the industry itself. Selected podcasts had to have gotten some traction over time in terms of social media following, public response and media coverage. From the 112 podcasts observed at the beginning of our research, we were able to narrow down to 15 podcasts using the following selection five-point criteria:

- Podcasts were created in the last 5 years of the time of this research;
- Ratings needed to be equivalent to 4.0 or higher on Apple Podcasts or available platform (i.e. Fashion Fix with Charli Howard was only distributed by BBC sounds);
- Podcasts needed to address fashion as a medium/the industry of fashion (i.e. podcasts only addressing fashion sporadically as a theme, or in entertaining ways such as fashion critique or red carpet events commentary, were discarded);
- podcasts had to address relevant topics (i.e. environmental and social impact of fashion, employment, equity, ethical implications, etc.)
- Podcasts that had gotten media attention in the year following their creation (reported by media companies on the web, in articles, other podcasts or on social media);

It is important to note that those criteria did not discriminate between genre or origin, as this paper seeks an exploratory approach of fashion in podcasts, we did not look only at luxury brands, or fashion media companies.

The podcasts were then sorted in alphabetical order in a table (see table 1), and organized into categories for better observation. Those categories are related to the podcasts themselves:

- name of the series;
- date of creation;
- platform distribution;
- frequency;
- average length;
- number of episodes at the moment of this analysis;
- Ratings on Apple Podcasts/Number of ratings

Furthermore, two categories were related with the content provided, as well as the people or entities responsible for the creation of the selected podcasts:

- content & themes
- host/authorship/entity

Considering luxury and premium fashion brands' use of social media to interact with their consumers (Romão et al., 2019), we also contemplated tracking social media following those platforms. Since few of them had consistent if any social media accounts, we could not consider it as a characteristic in this specific study.

As for the data presented in the table, it is important to highlight that all podcasts were analysed in July 2021 and might therefore not be longer accurate after publication of this research.

Table 1. List of selected podcasts and criteria of analysis

PODCAST NAME	DoC	PLATFORM DISTRIBUTION	CONTENT & THEMES	FREQUENCY	AVERAGE LENGTH	TOTAL EPISODES SINCE CREATION	HOST/AUTHORSHIP/ ENTITY	APPLE PODCAST RATE (/5) NUMBER OF RATINGS
<u>Blamo!</u>	July 2016	Apple podcasts Google Podcasts Spotify	Talks on fashion and people behind it (creatives, designers, athletes, actors, etc.)	1/week	50 min	164	Hosted by founder and writer Jeremy Kirkland/ Media company	4.9 368 Ratings
<u>BoF podcast</u>	Oct 2017	Apple podcasts Google Podcasts Spotify Podyssey TuneIn		1/week	35 min	284	Hosted by BoF's CEO Imran Amed/ Media company	4.7 216 Ratings
[3.55 series] <u>Chanel connects</u>	Jan 2021 Other podcasts of 3.55 since Nov 2017	Apple podcasts Majelan Spotify	Conversations with music artists, writers, art curators, actors, designers and other personalities connected to the fashion luxury house.	8 episodes Av. 1/month	35 min	8 (Chanel connects) 135 (all 3.55 series included)	Fashion luxury house	4.6 58 Ratings (all 3.55 series comprised)
<u>Creative Conversations with Suzy Menkes</u>	April 2020	Anghami Apple podcasts Deezer Listen Notes Soundcloud Spotify	In-depth interviews with important players of the fashion industry	Av. 8 per season/	45 min	31	Fashion Journalist & critic	5.0 70 Ratings
<u>Dior Talks</u>	March 2020	Amazon Apple podcasts Castbox Castro Deezer Google Podcasts Overcast Pocket Casts Podcast Addict Spotify Stitcher TuneIn	Divided in themes such as [female gaze], [heritage], [female art], etc. Fashion movers and shakers of Dior, artists and other personalities are invited to discuss current issues in fashion, their work at Dior and their current practice.	1/week each season	30 min	54	Hosted by journalist Justine Picardie/ Fashion luxury house	4.8 22 Ratings

		RSS feed						
<u>Fashion Fix with Charli Howard</u>	Sep 2019	BBC Sounds	Interviews with influencers, fashion professionals and celebrities on fashion trends and issues such as sustainability, body positivity, ethics and finances.	1/week	30 min	22	Model Charli Howard/ BBC	N/A
<u>Dressed: The History of Fashion</u>	Feb 2018	Apple Podcasts iHeartRadio Listen Notes Podbean Spotify Stitcher	Conversations on the history of dress, as a multimodal form of communication and expression, social and cultural histories.	2/week	50 min	277	Hosted by writers April Calahan & Cassidy Zachary	4.5 1.2K Ratings
<u>Fashion No Filter</u>	Dec 2016 To Sept 2020	Acast Apple Podcasts Google Podcasts Listen Notes	Fashion journalists Camille Charriere and Monica Ainley interview fashion designers, personalities and directors on all-things related to fashion, their careers, social topics and conversations on how the fashion industry works.	Not steady Around 12 ep. /year	1 hour	38	Hosted by Camille Charriere and Monica Ainley, fashion journalists	4.5 165 Ratings
<u>Fashion Revolution Podcast</u>	Aug 2017	Acast Apple Podcasts Google Podcasts Listen Notes	Fashion journalist Tamsin Blanchard interviews researchers, activists and agents of the fashion industry on sustainability, ethics and transparency	Limited series of 4 episodes	27 min	4	Hosted by journalist Tamsin Blanchard, created by not-for-profit social organisation	4.8 45 Ratings
<u>Gucci Podcast</u>	May 2018	Apple Podcasts Globalplayer Google Podcasts Listen Notes Podchaser Soundcloud Spotify	Talks with people who have been collaborating with the brand's current creative director, Alessandro Michele.	Not applicable. Once or twice a month on average.	High variations Av. 30 min	50	Hosted by creative director Alessnadro Michele/fashion luxury house.	4.5 79 Ratings
<u>So...What Do You Do Again?</u>	April 2019	Apple Podcasts Google Podcasts iHeartRadio Listen Notes Podbean Podcastone Soundcloud Spotify	Inspired by Women of Colour who are shaping the fashion industry and a resource for people who aspire to work in fashion.	Not applicable. 2/month on average.	55 min.	24	Hosted by Vogue Editor Naomi Elizée	5.0 63 Ratings
<u>The Cutting Room Floor</u>	May 2019	Apple Podcasts Google Podcasts iHeartRadio Podbay	Designer Recho Omondi invites peers and friends of the fashion industry to talk about business, sustainability, creation, etc.	1/month	High variations. 55 min average	36	Hosted by designer, Recho Omondi	4.3 143 Ratings

		Podchaser Podtail Spotify						
<u>The Fashion Slashie</u>	From May 2020 to Dec 2020	Apple Podcasts Google Podcasts Spotify	Talks on the fashion industry, networking and how to navigate a fashion career, juggling with multiple roles.	Limited series of 11 episodes	25 min	11	Hosted by writer Lara Johnson-Wheeler, from the fashion network platform ClickerMe	5.0 4 Ratings
<u>The Glossy Podcast</u>	Nov 2018	Apple Podcasts Google Podcasts Spotify Stitcher	Candid conversations with guests on how trends are shaping the future of the beauty and wellness industries.	1/week	30 min	137	From media platform Glossy	4.1 127 Ratings
<u>This Old Thing</u>	Sep 2020	Amazon Music Apple Podcasts Castbox Castro Deezer Google Podcasts Spotify Listen Notes Overcast Player FM Pocket Casts Podcast Addict Podchaser Podfriend RSS Feed Stitcher	A discussion with several guests on thrifting as a main topic, childhood memories, tips and tricks, in an attempt to show thrifting as a better fashion choice.	Not applicable. 1/week average	35 min	18	Hosted by Stylist Bay Garnett	4.9 50 Ratings
<u>Wardrobe Crisis</u>	June 2017	Amazon Music Apple Podcasts Google Podcasts Spotify	Case-studies, social, environmental and ethical matters in fashion	Not applicable. 1/week average	45 min	143	Hosted by journalist Clare Press	4.7 158 Ratings

Source: Authors¹

¹ Data presented in this table was last updated in July 2021.

4. Discussion

There is a vast offer for fashion related podcasts, consequently ones we selected are a small sample of the offer that has been around for the past few years and keeps on growing since the pandemic.

Luxury brands have entered the podcast industry to stay connected with their audience during the pandemic, and many have adopted this medium before the COVID-19 (Schiffer, 2019). Podcasts have been a great medium to keep an intimate bond with customers without giving the impression of forcing products and services, as it is often the case when a video or photograph is posted on a brand's social media account. To provide such quality content to customers is not definite token of appreciation for them, but a strategic move from brands, who could not expect much sales during the pandemic and had to find innovative ways to keep their communication active and thriving.

Out of our selection, 10 podcasts were created before the COVID-19 outbreak; we can therefore not correlate the pandemic as a factor for the recent interest of fashion in the medium. However, as many brands have adopted podcasts through ongoing or limited series to promote their brands, we can assume that podcasts are valued by brands as a way to socialize with their followers, beyond territories so far explored via social media (Romão et al., 2019).

We can also conclude that from our selection, fashion podcasts adopt the forms of either interviews with targeted guests, or, informal talks, also with changing guests who debate with the host on a given topic. Moreover, in terms of availability, all of these podcasts are distributed for free, and 14 of 15 can be accessed through the main podcast platforms (Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify), with the exception of Fashion Fix with Charli Howard, only available on BBC sounds.

Therefore, we chose Apple Podcast to collect each rating, but cannot consider Fashion Fix with Charli Howard in this particular topic. Considering such ratings, we can observe that not only are they very high, with some podcasts scoring 5.0/5 ("Creative conversations with Suzy Menkes", "The fashion slashie", "So what do you do again?"), but the public's response is also high, with a dominance of "Dressed: The History of Fashion" with 1.2K ratings on the platform. This can be explained by the fact that the podcast targets the history of fashion, with specific topics on fashion history and contemporary critics, topics that regroup more conversation and

attract more markets than luxury fashion brands, or niche markets. Podcasts are like fashion, a people's medium, to express themselves. Podcasts are a great medium to provoke conversations and themes that are still hard to be addressed in fashion, such as sustainability, ethics, equal pay, gender equality, waste, etc.

Moreover, the lower rated podcast, "The Glossy Podcast", scored 4.1 with 127 ratings since its beginning in November of 2018. A majority of podcasts are hosted by writers or journalists (9) and a third (5) have been created by media platforms. Globally, the range of the selected podcasts' duration vary highly, as many of the podcasts are talks, open discussions and interviews, it was consequently difficult to give a duration that reflects each episode, considering that some episodes, even though rare, could be under 5 minutes, and as long as 150 minutes in other cases.

Some series were limited, as in the case of "Fashion Revolution podcast". The organisation produced a limited series of 4 episodes in 2017 and never revisited. This was also observed with "The fashion slashie", with an 11 episode limited series. Others have very confusing seasons, the number of episodes vary highly from one season to another, and time between seasons or even episodes is very uncertain.

Nevertheless, considering the method used in this research, we were able to differentiate the content that is distributed on the market, and identify the key elements present in the selected fashion podcasts.

Preliminary conclusions

Fashion podcasts may have a long life ahead if the demand for podcasts keeps on growing, as the industry is full of different issues, topics of interest, value-chain agents, and is a transdisciplinary system that keeps on giving.

Podcasts allow brands to go deeper and further into their communication and promotion. Brands are represented by the people involved in these podcasts, such as the hosts and the guests. Moreover, podcasts can also be regarded as a less stressful content, more qualitative than quantitative, far from the overdose of images and short videos scrolled through by consumers on social media.

As for our main conclusions in this study, our content analysis showed that three main profiles are responsible for the creation of fashion podcasts: fashion brands (products, platforms, services), fashion agents (designers, journalists, creative directors, etc.) and fashion associations or organisations.

Moreover, we were also able to discern two main types of contents in our observation, although the former and the latter often overlap: talks, and interviews on given topics between hosts and guests. Also adding to this, informational podcasts, where listeners are invited to listen to one or two people discussing a specific topic of the fashion system, often socially, environmentally, or even politically charged.

As we were able to observe through our content analysis, the current COVID-19 pandemic cannot be considered as a proven factor for the appearance of fashion podcasts, nor their consumption. Nevertheless, we pose the possibility of an appetite for more content of the kind during lockdowns, a factor that is common to most podcast genres, not specific to fashion. Finally, many fashion brands, mainly luxury ones, have turned to other platforms since the ease of global restrictions, leaving behind podcasting, and adopting platforms such as TikTok to captivate genZ consumers. As the future of fashion podcasting is still unclear, what is certain is that fashion will always use trendy media to communicate and engage with consumers, even if it only lasts for a season.

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