

Fashion forward: exploring Hong Kong youth perspectives towards traditional and non-traditional media

Abstract

Traditional publications, not only fashion, are gradually disappearing. To adapt to the evolution of technology, many publications have changed to online media or do not only retain traditional paper media but also create websites to publish articles simultaneously. For example, the well-known fashion magazines *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *COSMO*, etc., have already operated websites to take the lead.

However, some publications do not transform into online media, but instead, adopt other means to survive in this competitive industry. In recent years, Japan's fashion magazines have begun to re-emerge. To attract readers to buy physical magazines, the publishers have attached attractive gifts, and this action has apparently sparked readers' desire to buy.

This research aims to understand the current situation of traditional fashion publications, illuminate the affection of traditional fashion publications from people's perspectives of fashion in Hong Kong, and find out the ways that can preserve or retain traditional fashion publications.

Qualitative approaches were adopted in this study. The data were collected from observation and interviews of 15 Hong Kong people who were sensitive to fashion trend. The expected findings include the channels they obtained fashion information, their perceptions of traditional fashion publications, and whether or to what extent traditional fashion publications influence them.

Keywords: fashion magazine, young people, fashion publication, perspective on fashion magazine, Hong Kong

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Historical studies of traditional fashion publications

The name "magazine" was first used in 1732 when Edward Cave published *The Gentleman's Magazine* (Jefferies, 1829), the first publication to feature fashion pictures in addition to mere writing. From that time onward, this phrase was used to refer to periodicals that published essays and articles. According to William H. Sewell,¹ the role played by fashion gained its importance during the 17th and 18th centuries of French absolutism. The still-ruling aristocracy's inflated sense of self was the prevailing topic. Huge celebrations were held; people paraded in their most expensive and extravagant attire. The public display of affluence was a special subject. According to a book written by Djurdja Bartlett, Shaun Cole and Agnès Rocamora (2013), magazines started to include drawings of apparel as they took inspiration from the present. Not only members of the higher classes but also tailors read these works. They adapted their clothing to the aesthetic preferences of their consumers by using the most recent high society fashions.

Fashion magazines gained popularity in Britain for the following 100 years as they eventually transitioned to the mass media. The aristocracy began to lose influence during this period as the erstwhile artisans started their enterprises and became the middle class. As society on the whole advanced both economically and technologically, more and more individuals obtained the chance to learn to read.

At the beginning of industrialization, the middle class wore clothing with holes, but since the clothing in fashion magazines was attractive, people felt better after reading them. Although the beginning of industrialization was difficult for the general populace, it was fortunate that fashion publications could still grow. A middle class was created by the factory owners, and the old aristocratic society started to fall apart. More individuals could afford to buy clothes and periodicals as the employment market expanded. On the other hand, industrialization made it possible to publish magazines at a low cost (Erickson, 1996).

According to Lawson (1993), while industrialization was in full swing, the years 1870 to 1880 marked the beginning of fashion magazines' burgeoning popularity. Fashion publications gained their importance in the 19th and 20th centuries. During the process, one of the largest fashion periodicals released its first issue in 1867. In New York, *Harper's Bazaar* was printed. As women's financial weight shifted from the middle to the end of the 20th century, consumption has altered from the 20th century to the present (Goldin, 2006). Women had their own money and were growing more legally independent. As a result, the market is now explicitly oriented towards females rather than males.

Development of fashion publications

Traditional fashion publications have begun to move to the digital and online world after 2010. Here are three examples of conventional fashion magazines to demonstrate how most fashion publishers are

moving to digital publications. *Harper's Bazaar*, *Elle*, and *Vogue* are three venerable and enduring fashion publications. *Vogue* started out as a weekly publication in 1892 before switching to a monthly format a few years later. *Harper's Bazaar* has been published in New York since 1867. *Elle*, a French fashion magazine, was formed in 1945. All three have been established fashion magazines for many years, and since 2010, they have gradually expanded their web and digital editions (Table 1).

Table 1 Ranking of fashion magazines by different websites

	Vogue	Elle	Harper's bazaar
Stylecraze	1	2	3
Magazine Line	2	3	1
Muck Rack (U.S.)	8	3	7
FeedSopt	1	2	48
Ranker	1	2	3
A Listly List	1	8	4
Love happens magazine	1	2	3
The fashion frill	1	6	2
BW Businessworld	1	2	3
All you can read	4	2	3
AddALL	6	5	1
PR news	3	2	1
Liveabout	1	2	3
IMBB	4	6	2
Glamour Insight	1	3	2
Textile Merchandising	1	2	5

Vogue

Under the direction of Anna Wintour, *Vogue* has begun to transition into the digital era on numerous fronts since the 2010s. Condé Nast Digital introduced *Voguepedia* in 2011, a fashion encyclopedia that has also featured the back issues of each *Vogue USA* issue since 1892. Additionally, *Vogue* has developed a user-friendly website with six distinct content categories for people to browse. For individuals who subscribe to the site, an archive of issues dating back to 1892 is available. No content has been deleted in the online magazine from the version that was printed at the time.

The Vogue Video Channel, which is available on its website, was introduced by *Vogue* in 2013. Along with Condé Nast's multi-platform media effort, the channel was created. On September 10, 2015, *Vogue* unveiled the teaser for their podcast series. The podcast's first 21-minute episode, which featured Anna Wintour, was released on September 14, 2015, and the magazine said that actor André Leon Talley would be presenting it. *Vogue* app was introduced on April 26, 2016, with the goal of improving the magazine's responsiveness on mobile devices. The *Vogue* app allows users to access the magazine while on the go by displaying information on mobile devices. Every day, fresh material is added to the app, and users may opt to only get content recommendations that suit their preferences. The program also enables users to read articles offline or save them for later use.

Elle

Since the 2010s, *Elle* magazine has gone digital, and as with *Vogue*, since 2012 *Elle* has been accessible digitally, with a web-only digital version that includes unique features. Only accessible online, the digital edition of *Elle* is available with exclusive bonuses. People can buy the latest fashions and beauty items right from the pages of

Elle's digital edition; while reading, the team's recommended music list will be played as the background music.

The digital edition intends to meet the "increasing demand" for excellent content across many platforms from *Elle* readers and online users. The brand's website, elleuk.com, has more than 450,000 unique visitors every month, according to audited statistics. The publisher claims that the mobile site is intended to display *Elle's* content in a "clean and attractive" manner. It features rare behind-the-scenes footage in addition to highly optimized versions of some of *Elle's* finest fashion and beauty lesson films.

Customers may use their mobile devices to instantly buy online at elleuk.com. According to the Editor-in-chief of *Elle*, Lorraine Candy, and Director of Group Publishing at *Elle*, Meribeth Parker, their company optimized mobile site stands alongside online and print magazine, delivering to the readers a genuine 360-degree *Elle* experience while maintaining their position as the most digitally inventive luxury fashion magazine on the market.

Haper's Bazaar

Haper's Bazaar is undergoing change, and they are looking for incorporating some fresh ideas into their publication. The idea of economy is one of the most popular. The structure of the interaction between celebrities and their fans in terms of behavior that generates commercial money is often what is meant when the phrase "fan economy" is used. It is a commercial strategy that works by making users more tenacious. Word-of-mouth marketing results in economic and societal benefits. With the help of this arrangement, the wind turbine industry is characterized by strong customer retention rates, cheap operational costs, and a positive social impact. This feature is being used by *Harper's BAZAAR* (in Chinese) in a brand-new e-zine they have developed to look for fresh advancements.

Harper's Bazaar has had to make considerable revisions to adapt to the market as paper media have fallen out of favor and new, quick-moving electronic gadgets now account for a large portion of the market. To stay competitive, *Harper's Bazaar* had to undergo major modifications. They started to examine the available electronic literature.

By switching from traditional paper publications to generating e-zines, they defied the conventions of fashion business and increased their audience, content, and format, ushering in the mini-Bazaar period. By presenting and putting into practice the creative concept of the *Bazaar* Star e-zine, *Harper's Bazaar* (China) advanced to transform the format of the main magazine.

Perspectives of people reading online

With the change of time and the development of the Internet, there are many choices of reading methods and modes, and it is easier for modern people to read anytime and anywhere. Young people's choice of reading is also very different from that of the past. Pre-adolescents and adolescents utilize the media in conjunction with various ICTs, including the Internet, instant messaging, and email to interact with their classmates and families, stay up to date on what matters to them, buy, unwind, build personal web pages, finish schoolwork, and much more. The media and ICT become a part of daily life for these young people.

According to Ramirez (2003) and Liu (2005), people—especially young people—spend more time on reading electronic materials as the amount of digital information available grows. In a study to ascertain

how the Internet was replacing print media, Bjork & Turk (2001) came to the conclusion that responders utilized both print media and the Internet equally. In the research done in 2006 to ascertain the effect of computer technology on university students' reading habits, Li-Bi Shen came to the conclusion that these students now preferred reading online rather than on paper. According to this research, 83.9% of the students read online news every day, compared to only 31.4% who read newspapers and 33.1% who read periodicals. According to a study by the China Academy of Publishing Science, Internet publications are now read far more frequently than traditional books in China. According to Broddason (2006), the rise of the Internet has resulted in a decline in reading across the board for printed materials, not just books.

The majority of information on the Internet, according to Loan (2011), is in major languages like English, Russian, French, Chinese, etc. There is very little information in other regional languages. This is the main justification for people to opt for reading online. Local books or magazines are also published online by authors and publishers in an effort to reach as many people as possible and increase sales.

Differences between fashion magazines and fashion blogs

More millennial consumers are turning to digital fashion media (fashion blogs and relevant social media) rather than conventional media (fashion magazines) for information due to rising worldwide digitalization. The greater agency of the audience in the news process is one of the most significant shifts in journalism as technology advances. According to Lasica (2003), today's viewers have the ability to break news themselves, for instance by blogging. Anyone who can build and manage a website may start a blog and anyone who chooses to publish news and information on their blogs, whether consciously or unconsciously, is regarded as doing journalism. Arriagada and Ibáñez (2020) claimed that by sharing their own material on social media, anyone today could start their own media company. Fashion bloggers, for instance, have swiftly embraced Instagram to chase fame and become online celebrities on the site when it comes to fashion and lifestyle content. This has resulted in studies on fashion content makers and their relationships to ideas like marketing and self-identification (Halvorsen et al., 2013), as well as a dynamic transformation in the fashion journalism sector (Rocamora, 2011). On the other side, a lot of conventional journalists are now increasingly using social media to market themselves, their organizations, and their work (Molyneux et al., 2018, 2019). Although there used to be a clear separation between conventional print media and online blogs, they are becoming more similar.

Since the late 1990s, when the Internet and for-profit blogging platforms first appeared, anybody with a phone or computer and an Internet connection may now become a blogger and work alongside journalists as content producers and distributors, fueling blogging's continuous expansion. Even if there are clear distinctions between today's Internet blogs and yesterday's print media, there are also growing similarities. According to Deuze (2005) and Carlson (2015), journalists have a theology of the journalistic profession that aims to set them apart from non-journalists by forging their own journalistic identity, preserving their independence, upholding their professionalism, and being adamant about keeping non-journalists out of their purview.

According to Deuze (2005), public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics are the five ideal-typical principles that

journalists have divided their philosophies. Journalists can identify who is a qualified participant in the area of journalism by using these five ideal-typical characteristics as indicators of their professional identity; those who do not adhere to these values do not, therefore, match the definition of journalism (Deuze, 2005). In this regard, the development of bloggers has sparked a heated discussion regarding their place in the journalism industry. Bloggers may supplement traditional media and promote "conversation and communication," which can enhance journalism (Fico et al., 2013; Lasica, 2003). Ji and Sheehy claimed that bloggers' status as journalists was still up for question, and some established journalists are still hesitant to accept blogs as credible forms of reporting.

Previously restricted to the realm of traditional fashion media, fashion blogs have now entered the mainstream (Rocamora, 2012). In addition, like reputable fashion editors and journalists, fashion bloggers now sit in the front row at important shows during fashion weeks (Titton, 2015). Thornley (2014) pointed out that brands were increasingly turning to bloggers to collaborate and market to bloggers' large audiences and bloggers in turn used their enormous audiences to market their products. The fashion sector increasingly includes bloggers, and some former journalists have even started working as full-time fashion bloggers (Titton, 2015). Fulton (2015) claimed that influencer marketing's increasing use of fashion bloggers and influencers to help promote products was another sign of the rising prestige of these individuals (Luvaas, 2017). Bloggers often do not take the place of fashion journalists, in their opinion. Instead, people start blogs to discuss their hobbies or express themselves (Duffy & Hund, 2015).

For readers, they appear to view fashion blogs as a "democratic zone" (Marwick, 2013) where genuine fashion worn by real people is depicted, as opposed to fashion magazines, which often provide relatively limited aesthetic standards (Marwick, 2013). Due to their accessibility and regular posting, readers of fashion blogs view them as their friends and create a close relationship with them (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011; Marwick, 2013). This is because readers view fashion bloggers as more authentic, accessible, honest, and relevant (Marwick, 2013). In contrast, magazines are viewed as distant from their readers and untouchable (Marwick, 2013).

Impact of fashion publications

Fashion magazines were an essential part of the fashion industry, which was created and sustained by fashion publishing, which used a variety of magical techniques to entice readers even if they did not purchase the various fashionable clothes, accessories (such as handbags, shoes, scarves, jewellery, and perfumes), and beauty products advertised in their pages (Malinowski, 1922: 403; Mauss, 1972: 18). The fashion magazines' editors, photographers, stylists, artists, make-up artists, and hair stylists, as well as the fashion and beauty businesses that advertised in them and the fashion designers, depicted as producing text and visual appeal, all engaged in these techniques. Fashion magazines play a crucial role in the business process, boosting readers' aspirations, firms' image and revenue, and the careers of famous models. The creation of beauty and style is the overarching purpose of the technical process that goes into fashion magazines (writing, editing, design, photography, styling, modeling, etc.). The fashion and beauty sectors work together to create a vast whole.

Fashion magazines are both commodities and cultural goods. They are identical to other mass media goods like art, movies, journalism,

radio and television programs, and fashion itself in this regard. Magazines may be considered as cultural products that circulate within a larger cultural economy. They include strategies, stories with illustrations, narratives, and examples of experiences and behaviors that represent the reader's ideal self in the worlds of style and beauty. Magazines are commoditized products of the publishing and printing sector and play a significant role in the promotion and sale of items, particularly those pertaining to clothing, cosmetics, fragrance, and personal care. Fashion magazines are therefore heavily implicated in capitalist production and consumption at the national, regional, and international levels (Beetham, 1996: 1-5).

Fashion magazines are both cultural and commercial goods, and as such, they cater to a wide range of readers, some of whom are interested in seeing garments worn, others in purchasing them, and still others in causing a sensation. The worldwide media, particularly fashion magazines, which evaluated and commented on each season's designs and introduced new trends to the public, were among these audiences, as well as fashion leaders, purchasers of fashion, mostly from the big department store chains, and fashion designers. Becker (1982) applies the concept of the art world as a "network of people working together" to the fashion industry and demonstrates how a long list of intermediaries, including designers, fashion editors, stylists, photographers, models, make-up artists, celebrities, connoisseurs, critics, and others, collectively prod the fashion world's sensibility, public taste, and aesthetic or stylistic discernment.

The interaction between the sectors of production is inexorably related to the field of cultural creation, which is the target of the sociology of fashion. It is important to carefully explore how this relationship is developed and preserved in the consumer world. Acceptance cannot occur without a specialized institution to support this reception, leading to a fruitful dialectic between producer and consumer. This organization is the fashion magazine in the world of fashion. Fashion magazines empower their social lives by creating an imaginary world about them, they make their participants aware of the fashion industry in which they work, and they provide a historical and aesthetic order to a world where seasonality and potentially chaotic amount of products can be overlooked. Fashion magazines also make meaningful connections between seemingly unrelated things (Blumer, 1969: 290). The definition of "fashion" as a whole was developed with the aid of fashion publications.

Comparing the frequency and length of time spent on reading traditional publications (printed fashion magazines) and non-traditional publications (E-fashion magazines, fashion blogs)

Between December 2022 and April 2023, 15 young people aged 18-30 in Hong Kong were interviewed, including seven women and eight men. 100% of them reported that they had read or come across both traditional and non-traditional fashion publications. Their responses continue to show the differences in frequency and duration of reading between traditional and non-traditional fashion publications among 18 to 30-year-old in Hong Kong (Figure 1).

The data from the interviews revealed that the largest proportion of respondents who read traditional fashion publications was 40% and they read fashion magazines once a season (about three months). The second highest percentage of respondents read fashion magazines once every six months, amounted to 20% of the respondents. This was followed by reading fashion magazines once a month and once a year,

both were each answered by 13% of the respondents. The frequency of reading fashion magazines once a week and once a year or more was both represented by 7% of the respondents (Figure 2).

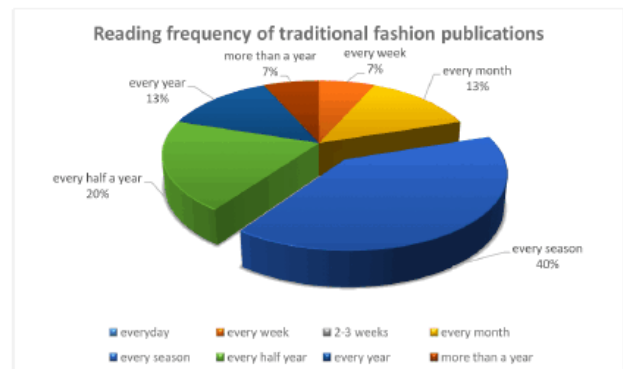


Figure 1 The percentage of reading frequency of traditional fashion publications.

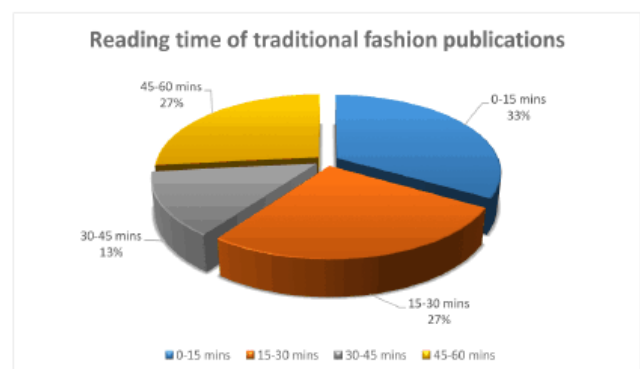


Figure 2 The percentage of reading time of traditional fashion publications.

In terms of the length of time spent on reading traditional fashion publications, the largest proportion was 33% and people said they usually read for 0-15 minutes. This was followed by 27% of those who said they read for an average of 15-30 minutes and 45-60 minutes. The lowest percentage accounted for only 13%, who read for 30-45 minutes. It can be seen that over 60% of the respondents read for an average of 30 minutes or less (Figure 3).

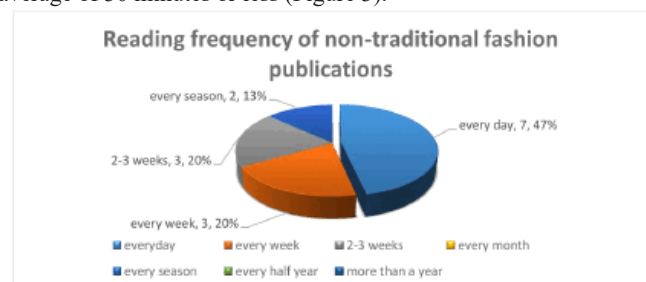


Figure 3 The percentage of reading frequency of non-traditional fashion publications.

Of the 15 respondents, 47% said that they read non-traditional fashion publications once a day or more. The next two highest percentages were both represented by 20% of the respondents, who read once a week and 2-3 weeks respectively. Finally, 13% of the respondents answered that they accessed it once a quarter (Figure 4).

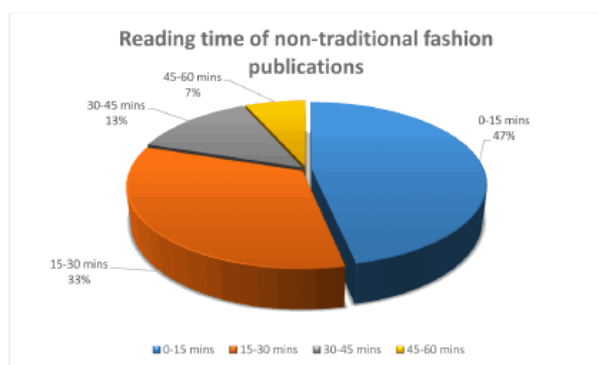


Figure 4 The percentage of reading time of non-traditional fashion publications.

Regarding the length of time spent on reading non-traditional fashion publications, the highest percentage of the respondents, i.e., 47%, spent between 0-15 minutes on reading. Next, 33% of the respondents responded that their reading time was generally around 15-30 minutes. Then, 30-45 minutes and 45-60 minutes were the time spent by 13% and 7% of the respondents respectively.

This shows that young people aged 18-30 in Hong Kong are generally more exposed to non-traditional fashion publications.

In terms of frequency, traditional fashion publications are mainly read quarterly and biannually by 60% of the respondents, with only 7% of the respondents reading traditional fashion publications once a week. The frequency of reading non-traditional fashion publications is even higher, with a maximum of 47% of the respondents saying they read them at least once a day. The lowest frequency was once a quarter, with 13% of the respondents responding this way. It is clear that young people aged 18-30 years old are accessing and reading non-traditional fashion publications more frequently and more intensively.

In terms of the reading habits, the majority of time spent on reading both traditional and non-traditional fashion publications is within 30 minutes, as reported by 60% and 80% of the respondents respectively. However, a higher proportion of people read traditional fashion publications for more than 30 minutes than those who read non-traditional fashion publications. While 40% of the respondents read traditional fashion publications for 30-60 minutes, only 20% of the respondents read non-traditional fashion publications for 30-60 minutes, half the proportion of those who read traditional fashion publications. However, even so, the prevailing reading time for both types of fashion publications is under 30 minutes.

Overall, in terms of the frequency and time spent on reading, young people aged 18-30 in Hong Kong are generally more exposed to non-traditional fashion publications, including electronic fashion magazines and fashion blogs on various platforms (Table 2).

Table 2 The response classification based on the respondents' description of their usage, perspectives, and opinions on traditional and non-traditional publications

Traditional publications (printed fashion magazines)

Young people aged 18-30 in Hong Kong have both positive and negative thoughts and perspectives on the use of traditional fashion publications. Starting with an analysis of the use of traditional fashion publications for young people in Hong Kong, there are three main types of responses to the interviews. Firstly, young people who read traditional fashion publications on a regular basis learn about fashion

trends, including clothes matching, color trends, and make-up, and gain information that is useful and practical for their work, study, and daily life.

Secondly, they read and buy traditional fashion publications to get information about their idols and as a way to support them. Many respondents said that they were obsessed with reading fashion publications because they were attracted to the iconic celebrities on the cover. They saw celebrities' pictures, observed what the celebrities were wearing and then possibly bought the same products as their favorite idols, mainly for their own personal interest.

Thirdly, they believe that reading traditional fashion publications has no real meaning or use to them and is just an act of reading. This group of respondents felt that traditional fashion publications were not meaningful and useful to them, including the fact that the fashion magazines they read were dated and therefore the information in them was very old and not useful. Some male respondents also said that most of the content in magazines was advertisements, women's clothing, and make-up, which they felt was more suitable for women.

Then, there is the analysis of the negative perceptions and opinions of young people in Hong Kong toward fashion magazines. By consolidating the responses from all respondents, their negative perceptions and views on traditional fashion publications are summarized as follows.

Firstly, the information in traditional fashion publications is not practical and has a low value-for-money ratio. Respondents said that paper magazines were not practical because they were only read once and that fashion information was time-sensitive and out-of-season. Some respondents also said that the information in traditional fashion publications was not practical and not useful to the general public and that the content contained many luxury items that were not affordable to the general young people of Hong Kong. There were also comments that fashion magazines did not reflect the local trends in Hong Kong and traditional fashion publications from Japan or Europe that were generally available on the market had a different style to that of Hong Kong and were therefore not suitable for Hong Kong.

Secondly, they said that the style and content of fashion magazines had become unified. The majority of the respondents responded that traditional fashion magazines had become monotonous because they had a fixed style, the content was similar and they all carried the same brands. At the same time, they also reported that they found more and more advertisements in some traditional fashion publications, and less and less practical information and coverage.

Thirdly, a small number of respondents said that physical fashion magazines were difficult to buy. There are two reasons for this: although some fashion magazines from well-known publishers are available at convenience stores and street-side newspaper stalls in Hong Kong, the number is small and the options available are limited. On another note, respondents said that traditional fashion publishing now tended to seek out highly popular celebrities for covers, so fans of the celebrities went around and bought a lot of magazines, leaving them out of stock and out of reach for people who want to read them. The respondents felt that these magazines had become part of the peripheral merchandise of iconic celebrities, widening the gap between traditional fashion publishing and real fashion.

Fourthly, a small number of the respondents said that the size of physical paper fashion magazines was larger than the normal A4 size, making them inconvenient to carry and store.

Apart from the negative views and opinions, the respondents also expressed positive views and opinions on traditional fashion publications, as summarised in three main points below.

Firstly, the covers of traditional fashion publications are attractive and a good form of entertainment. For people who are not fashion-conscious and whose work and studies are not fashion-related, reading traditional fashion publications is still a good way to relax and have fun.

Secondly, traditional fashion publications are a good entry point to fashion for people who are not fashion professionals. Many respondents felt that fashion magazines were a good entry point for the general public as they were available to anyone; anyone can buy fashion magazines of various styles and from different regions in Hong Kong, so readers can choose to buy them according to their personal preferences. Some respondents felt that fashion-related topics were an everyday part of their communication, so the information they got from reading fashion magazines could become part of their daily communication with others.

Thirdly, traditional fashion publications have a collector's value. Some respondents responded that if a physical fashion magazine was collected for a long enough period of time, it might have some value as a collector's item and someone might buy a traditional fashion publication for collection purposes.

Non-traditional publications (E-fashion magazines, fashion blogs)

In addition to traditional fashion publications, the respondents responded to some of the negative and positive uses of non-traditional fashion publications, starting with what respondents' thought were the uses of non-traditional fashion publications, including electronic fashion magazines and different fashion blogs.

The respondents felt that they could read and find out about fashionable clothing and cosmetics at a cheaper and more affordable price than traditional fashion magazines through electronic fashion magazines and blogs. Some respondents also felt that finding fashion articles and bloggers they were interested in through their mobile phones was more useful and relevant to their needs than reading traditional fashion publications, as most respondents had a direction, idea, or style they wanted to learn about and then searched for relevant fashion articles and bloggers through keywords. In addition, the respondents said that they could access the latest fashion information more quickly through electronic fashion magazines and fashion blogs.

Some respondents expressed negative thoughts and opinions about non-traditional fashion publications, three of which are summarised below.

Firstly, the style of some non-traditional fashion publications is overly exaggerated. One respondent said that he had observed through various social media platforms that some fashion bloggers had an exaggerated and strange style, displaying and presenting outfit information that was not suitable for everyday life and that he felt that these fashion bloggers were just attracting attention and creating a buzz.

Secondly, information in non-traditional fashion publications is fragmented and there is too much duplication in the content provided by different non-traditional fashion publications. The respondents pointed out that many fashion blogs provided piecemeal information that was not coherent enough and that the content of fashion blogs was scattered, making it inconvenient for readers to read. There was

also feedback that the content of articles on different fashion blogs and e-fashion magazines was becoming more and more similar, as there were few restrictions on the Internet and more and more fashion blogs were popping up. Thus, the style was becoming more and more consistent and homogenized. The content was also becoming more and more similar. When a fashion blogger posts a new post or style, other bloggers will start copying the same type of clothing or content.

Thirdly, there is the inconvenience of not being good at using electronic products. Even among young people, some respondents reported that they were not good at using electronic devices and often forgot their accounts and passwords, making it impossible to read magazines purchased through their fashion magazine website accounts. As a result, one respondent spent more money on repeated purchases of electronic fashion magazines than on paper magazines.

The positive views on non-traditional fashion publishing as responded by interviewees are summarised in three points below.

Firstly, the information provided by non-traditional fashion publications is more useful and up-to-date. More than one respondent said that the information available on electronic media platforms was more useful because non-traditional fashion publications were more up-to-date, with many being updated on a daily or weekly basis, whereas many paper magazines were only published once a month. As a result, non-traditional fashion publications allow you to find the articles you want to read more quickly and the information is more up-to-date.

Secondly, non-traditional fashion publishing offers a more convenient experience for the reader. E-magazines and bloggers can be updated quickly and easily via the Internet, and are easily searchable by relevant keywords. Another convenience of going electronic is that there are no time and space restrictions, as readers can read on their mobile phones or computers at different times and places, eliminating the need to go to a bookstore to buy a physical fashion magazine. It is also more environmentally friendly and allows readers to save articles and content of interest for easy retrieval in the future.

Thirdly, the emergence of non-traditional fashion publishing has lowered the threshold of access to fashion for the general public, making it more accessible to them. Some respondents said they found the clothes and products recommended by non-traditional fashion publications more affordable and accessible, whereas in traditional fashion magazines, many of the advertisements and reports are for luxury brands which make them feel distant. In addition, fashion bloggers are more approachable and informative. They are close to young people in age and share outfits that come closer to young people's style; their opinions and recommendations give a more authentic feel whereas fashion magazines tend to be commercial (Figure 5).

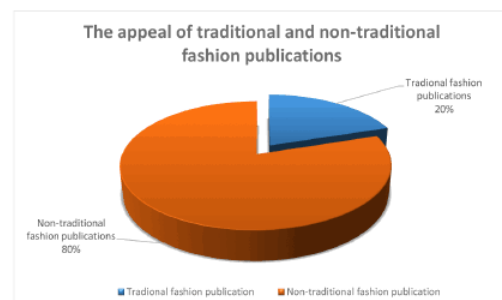


Figure 5 The percentage of the appeal of traditional and non-traditional fashion publications.

Traditional publications (printed fashion magazines)

Of the 15 respondents, only 20% said they preferred to read traditional fashion publications, and three reasons were cited from the interview.

Firstly, they preferred to own physical objects. The respondents said that they preferred the physical existence of fashion magazines because they could own a concrete object and display it beautifully, and that fashion magazines, although expensive, provided a greater sense of pleasure and satisfaction.

Secondly, printed fashion magazines were large and eye-catching, so they were more visible. The respondents responded to e-magazines or fashion bloggers mainly by reading them on their mobile phones.

Most people did not search for fashion information unless they cared about it or admired a particular fashion blogger. However, printed fashion magazines were large and eye-catching, so they were more visible and more likely to be read.

Thirdly, traditional fashion publishing had more value and artistry. The respondents pointed out that non-traditional fashion publications were available to everyone online, whereas fashion magazines needed to be purchased for reading and had a certain level of preciousness. The photographs in the magazines could also be used to create secondary artwork, which had a certain level of artistic quality.

Non-traditional publications (E-fashion magazines, fashion blogs)

Based on the responses of 15 young people interviewed in Hong Kong, it is clear that 80% of the respondents found non-traditional fashion publications more attractive to them.

Firstly, compared to traditional fashion publishing, non-traditional fashion publishing is more affordable and convenient. The respondents pointed out that the possession of mobile phones made it easier for people to search for articles and information on topics of interest, and most of these articles were free to read. But with traditional fashion publishing, you had to pay around HK\$60-70 on a magazine.

Secondly, non-traditional fashion publishing is more informative and readers have more choices. The speed of updating is faster than traditional fashion publishing, allowing readers to get accurate information in a timely manner, and it is easier for readers to find what they are interested in reading on the electronic platform.

Thirdly, online versions are more suitable for young people and the content resonates more easily. The respondents said that traditional fashion magazines gave people an upscale feel, with professional models on display and luxury products in recommendation, thus highlighting the style of the magazine. However, for average readers, they add a sense of distance and make people feel out of place. Fashion bloggers, on the other hand, have an image and identity closer to that of the average readers and are therefore more informative. In addition, the content of non-traditional fashion publications is a little more verbal, less cryptic, and more likely to resonate with young people.

Recommendations for traditional publications (printed fashion magazines)

Although there are still young people in Hong Kong who prefer to read traditional fashion publications, the prevailing trend is that most young people prefer to read non-traditional fashion publications, for the reasons detailed in the section above. The following are some suggestions, both content and non-content-related, for traditional

fashion publishers, based on the respondents' interviews to increase the appeal and sales of traditional fashion publications among the young people.

Suggestions for the content of the magazines

In terms of content advice for traditional fashion publishers, there are three suggestions from the interviews.

Firstly, they could reduce the amount of advertisements in their magazines. Many respondents commented that they had observed an increase in advertisements in traditional fashion publications and that readers bought magazines to read and get new fashion information, not to read advertisements page after page. Consideration could be given to reduce the coverage of advertisements in these magazines.

Secondly, they could add interesting articles that are not current. The price of a fashion magazine is not cheap - it costs HK\$60-70, and in some cases over a hundred, which is similar to the price of a novel or book. This is why it is possible to add feature articles with interesting information, such as the history of fashion, which is not time-sensitive and can be read in the future.

Thirdly, the content could be more grounded. Much of the content in traditional fashion publications is about luxury goods, and the white, tall, and thin models in the photos create a sense of distance. Traditional fashion publications could include more content that teaches everyday dressing and make-up, or use people who are not tall or skinny as models, to make the content more accessible to ordinary people. They could also introduce mid-priced or mass-market brands so that products aimed at the masses are truly informative and useful.

Suggestions beyond the content of the magazines

In addition to the advice on the content of traditional fashion publications, two suggestions have been put together to attract young people to buy.

The first is to feature more pictures of celebrities on the cover. Although one respondent suggested that the use of celebrities on the cover of fashion magazines had turned them into peripheral products for celebrities, leading to a growing distance between traditional fashion publishing and real fashion. The magazines also caused a rush by celebrity fans, making them unavailable to genuine readers of traditional fashion publications. There is no doubt that the use of celebrity photos on the cover has greatly increased the appeal to young people and has ensured a certain level of sales. Therefore, it is recommended that traditional fashion publications should use more pictures of young people's favourite celebrities on their covers to attract young people to buy.

Secondly, the publishers could increase giveaways to improve the value-for-money ratio. Traditional fashion publications is not cheap, and for many readers, the content of traditional fashion publications is time-sensitive and will only be read once, so the value ratio is not high. However, in recent years, more and more Japanese fashion magazines have been introduced to major bookstores in Hong Kong, reflecting the fact that Japanese fashion magazines have a certain audience and sufficient sales in Hong Kong and that all Japanese fashion magazines include gifts, such as practical eco-bags and storage boxes. Some respondents also responded that their family members did not read or buy fashion magazines immediately, but bought a Japanese fashion magazine at once simply for the free eco-bag. Therefore, it is suggested that traditional fashion publications could learn from this approach, not only from Japanese fashion magazines but also from publications in other regions, and include freebies to improve their value and increase sales.²⁻¹⁴

Conclusion

The study concluded that young people aged 18–30 in Hong Kong read more frequently and for longer periods than those who read non-traditional fashion publications. Although the length of time spent on reading was similar between traditional and non-traditional fashion publications, the overall time and frequency spent on reading was longer for non-traditional fashion publications.

The final figures further confirm that young people in Hong Kong prefer to read non-traditional fashion publications, with 80% of the respondents prefer electronic fashion magazines and fashion blogs. Only three respondents, 20%, expressed a preference for traditional fashion publishing, but their reasons were less relevant to the content of fashion publications.

This study confirms that the trend of traditional fashion publishing going electronic is a correct and inevitable direction, and provides analysis and recommendations on how to preserve traditional fashion publishing. It also fulfils and answers the initial questions and objectives of the study, namely to examine and analyse the perceptions and tendencies of young people in Hong Kong towards reading fashion publications, and to make corresponding recommendations on traditional fashion publishing.

Although the objectives of the study were achieved, there are limitations in this study. The methodological approach of the study was to use a one-to-one interview format to obtain more in-depth responses from the respondents, but the time constraint resulted in insufficient data and the limited number of respondents could not demonstrate that their responses were representative of the majority of young people in Hong Kong. Despite the fact that every effort was made to select respondents of different genders and ages, a fair test could not be fully achieved. Neither gender nor age was evenly distributed; therefore, the study should have limitations and shortcomings.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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