

# Exploring Fashion Consumption Trends—Taking Burberry as an Example

Zhou Zixuan<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Cultural Industry Management, Communication University of China, Chongqing, 404100, China*

**Abstract:** *In the era of internet, many fashion brands have begun their digital transformation, and the purpose of the transformation is to seize Gen Z consumers. Among them, Burberry achieved its revenue target and positive growth in the post-epidemic period. The article takes the century-old luxury brand Burberry as an example, combines the essence of fashion consumption, and discusses the opportunity and root cause of people's fashion consumption transformation.*

**Keywords:** *Burberry, fashion, consumer, social media*

## 1. Introduction

Fashion, as a social phenomenon, its changes not only reflect people's pursuit of beauty, but also reveal social psychological and cultural changes. The changing speed of fashion is closely related to the restlessness of age. With the increase of people's activities and fashion exposure, imitation behavior also accelerates.

The development of Burberry brand is a good example. In many ups and downs of Burberry, people's consumption habits are both common and different due to the external environment. Especially because Burberry's classic series, such as "windbreaker", "plaid series" and "wool scarf", remain unchanged in the long river of time, and people's consumption behavior depends more on the social effects that brands can bring.

In 2022, fashion luxury brand Burberry posted high-profile positive growth worldwide, achieving 51% profit growth in North America. Operating profit peaked in six years at £520 million, and profits reached £2.83 billion after the depression in 2021<sup>[1]</sup>. As a luxury brand that has not launched amazing products, Burberry understands the fashion consumption psychology of modern consumers and successfully realizes it. The article will analyze the change of people's cultural consumption psychology by analyzing the change of Burberry's digital age.

## 2. The Burberry story of the past

In 1856, at the age of 21, Thomas Burberry opened a shop in London, England, and once became a royal costume. Burberry's success started from the trench coat, and then, its product line expanded to clothing, accessories, home products and other fields, experienced more than 100 years, with classic plaid patterns, unique cloth, generous and elegant style.

### 2.1 Burberry has a deep connection with the royal family

As a luxury brand, Burberry has always established close ties with the royal family and the upper class. The story of Edward VII is a famous part of Burberry's history. It is said that he never used the word "windbreaker", but directly ordered his entourage to bring him "my Burberry". This reflects Burberry's reputation and position in the upper class. In addition, Queen Elizabeth II also highly praised Burberry's design style and product production, and awarded it the "Royal Guarantee" badge. This is the royal family's recognition of Burberry's quality and value, making it the royal brand of the British royal family. In the British Oxford Dictionary, "Burberry" has been listed as a synonym for windbreaker category. This shows that Burberry has become a symbol of windbreaker and occupies an important position in the fashion world with its traditional and elegant design style. These stories and recognition really linked Burberry with aristocratic consciousness, emphasizing its identity and brand value as a

luxury brand.

### ***2.2 Burberry is good at telling a gentleman's story***

As a luxury brand, Burberry has always been good at linking the brand with personal image. It is rumored that in Europe and Japan, every man has an average of three windbreakers, which are as essential as suits and shirts in men's closets. There used to be a fashion slogan: "If the money in your pocket is only enough to buy a coat, please leave a trench coat without hesitation." It seems that no matter how low your image is, as long as you put on the Burberry trench coat, you will immediately become the focus of attention. For more than 100 years, Burberry has been closely related to English gentlemanliness. Throughout the history of Burberry, the brand has neither a sensational effect similar to Dior's "new style" nor a widespread controversy about Chanel's men's and women's wear. It has more stable and traditional classical atmosphere. In other words, rather than seeking change and innovation, the brand is more in line with the times and has the characteristics of going against the trend.

### ***2.3 The first transformation of the Burberry brand***

Burberry has always been challenged by other brand cultures, and for a long time it has tried to convince consumers rather than pandering. It wasn't until the 21st century, with the rise of Italian and French men's wear brands, that Burberry's traditional, conservative image was greatly challenged, once nicknamed "an old brand only worn by old men"<sup>[2]</sup>.

At that time, from the United States chief executive Mary bravo determined to reverse the situation, she thinks that Burberry's biggest brand assets is its classic British grid. It can stand out from many luxury brands important weapon, to promote Burberry brand image, Mary bravo hired young designer to redesign Burberry grid, Burberry designer removed the brand logo warrior image, directly with camel and black and red grid as a trademark. They also designed beige, navy, black and gray grids to enhance the fashion sense of plaid. After entering the Internet era, Burberry finally got rid of the cycle of passively catering to consumers. Through the use of technology and innovation, buying Burberry becomes a unique consumer experience.

## **3. The Burberry Practice in the digital age**

### ***3.1 Summary of Burberry's digital strategy***

Burberry has celebrated its 160th anniversary in the clothing trade, and now the company is known not only for its famous trench coat, but also for its fashion accessories including bags, shoes, watches and popular perfumes. In addition, Burberry also has a label that is good at using technology. By using digital media, Burberry can reach customers in time in the Internet era.

Under the guidance of Angela Arrenz (CEO of Burberry from 2006 to 2014) and Christopher Bailey (as creative director of Burberry at the end of 2017), Burberry created a reputation as a digital pioneer, creating new areas through innovation and business technology integration.

They present their "fashion fans" with a technology company in the fashion industry, creating a brand new social media experience: introducing live shows and providing channels for customers to buy show products from online platforms. Burberry has fully embraced social media as a means to reach customers and fans, and now spends up to 60% of its marketing budget on digital media.

### ***3.2 Burberry's foreign social media matrix***

In 2009, Burberry joined Facebook as one of the first luxury brands to enter Facebook. By 2016, Burberry had accumulated more than 18 million followers on Facebook, and its pages shared shows, events, and fashion content. Fan engagement peaked on Facebook to an average of 2,000 to 50,000 "likes" per push. The most watched events and photos were about Brooklyn Beckham, earning more than 10 0,000 likes and 1,300 shares. While Facebook constitutes its largest audience, the brand also uses Twitter, Google +, Instagram, and Pinterest to interact with its customers. Its online digital flagship store, "www.Burberry.com", serving more than 40 different countries in five languages. Burberry's themes on all platforms are basically the same, and while the content is similar, brand managers know how to deliver effective content.

The brand's success on social media owes largely much to a personal move by its creative director, Christopher Bailey. Burberry has decided from the start to make Bailey a spokesman for the company's Facebook website (Burberry). During the countdown to the show, fans can see Bailey talking to fans at the design studio and backstage at the show. He will interact directly with fans on Facebook, and when the brand reaches a milestone on Facebook, for example when they reach 15 million likes, Bailey will personally thank the fans on the platform. Chief Creative directors' handwritten notes frequently appear on Facebook, Twitter or social networking sites. Often the most effective event is offering rewards to fans, such as exclusive content. For example, Swedish furniture giant IKEA launched a campaign to let customers stay overnight in British stores; 100 Facebook fans on a bed of their choice with a cup of cocoa and watching a movie. The idea is a smart way to get busy fans to focus on what IKEA has to offer. Burberry has adopted a similar strategy, with designers writing down the offer and offering special offers to Facebook fans. The social team then continued to follow up on behind-the-scenes images of different shows and fashion collections. This is an effective way to ensure that the brand continues to have the maximum "exposure impact"<sup>[3]</sup>.

### ***3.3 Burberry's Chinese digital practice***

Today, Burberry, actively explored the Chinese market, at the same time in the WeChat public account, XiaoRed book, Taobao are living.

#### ***3.3.1 Burberry's wechat public account model***

The Burberry WeChat official account provides three sections, including Burberry world, online shopping, and premium experience.

With the Facebook and the "www.Burberry.com" mode is similar, Burberry's wechat public account belongs to the multi-functional integrated platform. In the Burberry world section, users will have direct access to the Burberry show. The vision in the show is presented in the form of "picture + number" of value view, and each set of modeling is equipped with multi-angle photos, short videos, and the interpretation of the current creative director Riccardo Tisci.

In the "show field Fenghua" section, 2022 Show Burberry invited models Kate Moss, Naomi Campbell and Nyasha Matonhodze, actor Jacob Elordi, singer Dixie D'Amelio, skateboarder Blondey McCoy, musician and model Carla Bruni, and actor Marina Ruy Barbosa, and rapper Headie One, And attached a "punch-in photo" of celebrities.

In the "Craftsmanship" section, Burberry displayed 4 articles on the public account. In the "Craftsman log Open", Burberry showed its production level of all lines through minimalist artistic style and advertisements full of technology and rigor, and sublimated it into a craftsman spirit and the internal quality of pursuing excellence. In "who moved my wool", Burberry chose the circle of friends this Chinese private domain of social media, with the perspective of "wool" emphasized his birth in Mongolia, "study" Scotland, Scotland 200 years of wool processing history, finally came to the high precision factory, and cut into a "Vlog". This article has a high interaction rate, with 65,000 views, more than 30 selected comments and 299 likes.

In the "Premium Experience" section, Burberry inherits the experience accumulated from Twitter and Facebook, providing fans with "Thoma's Cafe reservation", "Songhua Lake Coffee reservation" and "VIP Customer service consultation". "Thoma's Cafe" belongs to Burberry's "Social Retail Boutique" and is part of the "Brand Experience" applet developed separately by Burberry. "Thoma's Cafe" is a cultural place where Chinese tea culture and British tea culture blend. It is also one of the offline private areas of Burberry, and will hold regular activities. Burberry "Brand experience" covers not only pop-up stores, but also a variety of art exhibition "Expo" series based on Burberry brand stories. Events held in various trends give Burberry a lot of attention and traffic.

#### ***3.3.2 Burberry's little red book model***

Burberry's little red book is similar to its Instagram promotion strategy, with a visual impact of graphics, short and powerful advertising videos. At the same time, Burberry also fully understood the characteristics of the little red book, separately published the "inspiration to wear", "wear four songs", "boys wear diary" and other fashion content. This similar promotion strategy is to make full use of the characteristics of social media platforms, attract the attention of target audiences and convey brand information. Through the visual impact of graphics and short and powerful advertising videos, Burberry can quickly attract users' attention when they browse social media. At the same time, understanding the characteristics of users' preferences in Little Red Books, Burberry launched a series of fashion-related

contents, such as "Inspiration for Wearing", "Four Songs for Wearing" and "Diary for Boys". These contents can meet the interests and needs of users of Little Red Books, and increase the brand's exposure and attention on the platform. Through this strategy, Burberry can effectively promote the brand image on social media platforms such as Little Red Book and Instagram, attract the attention of more target audiences, and subtly enhance the brand's awareness and influence in the fashion field.

### ***3.3.3 Burberry's Taobao model***

This similar promotion strategy is to make full use of the characteristics of social media platforms, attract the attention of target audiences and convey brand information. Through the visual impact of graphics and short and powerful advertising videos, Burberry can browse social media. Burberry adopts the official flagship store model on Taobao platform. The official flagship store is an official direct store established by the brand on Taobao platform, which is operated and managed by the brand itself. Through the official flagship store, the brand can communicate and sell directly with consumers, and provide genuine brand guarantee and after-sales service. Burberry's official Taobao flagship store will provide brand-new Burberry products, including handbags, shoes and accessories. At the same time, they will also launch some exclusive or limited-edition products in Taobao stores to meet the special needs and purchase desires of consumers. In addition to selling products, Burberry's official Taobao flagship store will also conduct promotional activities from time to time, such as discounts, full reductions, gifts, etc., to attract consumers to place orders. In addition, Burberry will also use the big data analysis and marketing tools of Taobao platform to accurately locate and personalize recommendations for consumers, so as to improve the sales effect and user experience. In a word, Burberry adopts the official flagship store model on Taobao platform, provides authentic guarantee and after-sales service through direct sales and management, and carries out promotional activities and personalized recommendations to increase sales and brand influence.

## **4. The essence of fashion consumption**

### ***4.1 The fundamental motivation of fashion consumption***

The common consumption behavior of Burberry's Taobao model is that people's desire to achieve class unity through fashion has not changed. In different periods, as a luxury brand, Burberry has a class symbol significance. The nobility will express their desire to be close to the highest class by buying Burberry products, while the middle class will pursue a fashion and taste similar to the nobility by buying Burberry products. During the period of *The Gentleman's Story*, Burberry successfully established the fashion image of the middle class through the similar characteristics of middle class ladies and gentlemen. Middle-class consumers will regard Burberry as a status symbol and pursue an elegant and elegant lifestyle by buying Burberry products. With the development of the Internet, Burberry has gradually entered the online sales channel and promoted it with the help of social media and other platforms. In the Internet age, consumers buy Burberry products not only to pursue fashion and taste, but also to show their recognition and superiority to luxury brands. To sum up, the common consumption behavior of Burberry consumers can be attributed to the pursuit of class unity, the pursuit of fashion and status symbols of the middle class, and the display of superiority in the Internet age. These common consumption behaviors reflect consumers' motivation and psychological needs when choosing Burberry products.

### ***4.2 The representation of fashion consumption***

Because of differences, fashion has the hierarchy, social higher class fashion themselves and lower class, and when the lower class began to imitate the higher class fashion, higher class began to doubt their own uniqueness, so will abandon the fashion and intends to create a new fashion, so fashion flow and class flow trend. People who think that the "upper class" will unite with the same class to create a common feature characterized by their unique clothes, but on the other hand, the emergence of imitators is constantly breaking through the boundaries between different classes and groups, which is the flow trend of fashion.

Because fashion consumption was born in social motivation, personal will is not the decisive factor, it also leads to often fashion is not the time of aesthetics, such as the history of "waist", "fat for beauty" is not from pure aesthetic fashion characteristics of widely recognized, but also because the upper society as the embodiment of the uniqueness. In addition to the most fundamental social needs, the motivation of fashion consumption is also directly driven by some dark jealousy. The fashion seeker thinks he

accepts special and amazing things, while he is inherently supported by a group of people who are doing the same thing and fails to catch up with the fashion seeker. This mixed psychosocial environment of approval and jealousy stimulates him to produce great satisfaction. The jealous person imaginatively participates in the jealous object through the watching behavior, out of the desire for satisfaction, and may participate in the fashion consumption behavior in the future.

In the primitive society without the function of class stratification, the essence of fashion is the boundary function and imitation function, to form the so-called "small group" through wearing, to establish internal consistency and external difference at low cost. Foreign fashion is more strongly conducive to the uniqueness of the adopted group, because in the primitive group, "foreign" is often equated with money symbols, such as pearls, shells, spices, etc. In its original origin these objects do not have monetary function originally, just because of uniqueness and had higher fashion value.

The change in fashion reflects the degree of dullness to intense stimulation, and the more restless the age, the more rapid fashion changes. As people increase their activity, fashion exposure increases, and imitation behavior accelerates.

With the increase of people's activities, the exposure of fashion increases and the imitation behavior accelerates. This change not only reflects people's pursuit of beauty, but also reveals the changes of social psychology and culture.

In addition, the success of Burberry brand is closely related to its ability to adapt to people's consumption behavior. Burberry can adjust and innovate according to the social situation and consumer demand in different periods. For example, in the Internet era, Burberry aimed at the possibility of changes in the consumer class, and successfully attracted more fashion consumers with instant spending power through Internet marketing and fan effect. At the same time, Burberry also pays attention to maintaining the uniqueness and noble image of its brand. Although faced with some challenges and dilemmas at different stages of development, Burberry has always adhered to the core values and design concepts of its brand, and constantly introduced new products and marketing strategies with brand characteristics to attract more consumers.

## **5. Fashion consumption trends in the history of the Burberry brand**

In Burberry's many ups and downs period, people's consumption habits are both common and different due to the external environment. Especially because the classic series of Burberry brand, such as "Trench windbreaker", "plaid series" and "wool scarf", remain unchanged in the long river of time, people's consumption behavior depends more on the social effect that the brand can bring.

### ***5.1 The commonality of consumer consumption behaviors***

The common consumption behavior of Burberry consumers lies in that people's desire to achieve class unity through fashion has not changed. In its as the "royal representative" period, Burberry became the symbol of the highest class, aristocrats to approach the highest class, by forming fashion; in the purchase of the "gentleman story" period, Burberry by the similar characteristics of the middle class ladies, gentlemen, quickly formed the middle class fashion; In the Internet period, Burberry comes with a sense of superiority.

### ***5.2 Burberry's judgment of consumer trends is different***

The difference lies in Burberry's ability to adapt to people's consumption behavior. Two reasons for its important downturn are the misjudgment of social conditions. The first downturn was the so-called "old-fashioned" period. The more restless performance of the society lies in the full bloom of other clothing brands. This sudden formation of The Times suggests that the speed of fashion change is very fast. Burberry cannot change itself with the unique needs of people's changing constantly, so it breaks away from the fashion team. At the same time, the label of "an old brand only for old men" also proved the transformation of the dominant group. The more important people changed from the middle class with capital to the young group. Naturally, the fashion formed by the young group abandoned Burberry.

The second downturn was the "savage fan" period. For some time, British working class fans and middle class fans broke into serious conflict due to team differences and class antagonism. These working-class fans, including many street gangsters, also want Burberry, a middle class symbol, but without matching economic status, they copy a lot of plaid products. For a result, Burberry's knight logo

and plaid were almost equated to football hooligans. This has led to the collapse of Burberry's middle-class image, symbolizing elegance, for its original target customer base. This Waterloo can be said to be an obvious class impact, the working class by imitating the dress of the upper class, through mass production overturned the flow direction of fashion, resulting in the depreciation of the brand logo.

### **5.3 The Internet era has produced new consumption patterns**

The reason why Burberry in the Internet period is different from the previous multiple stages and makes higher profits is that it targets the possibility of a changing consumer class. Used to be a low-income group has the possibility of the middle class, itself is the middle class people may get higher income may also bankruptcy, but Burberry targeting those who have immediate consumption ability of fashion consumers, the consumers only exist in the network world and payment moment, through numerous marketing and hint, shaped the perfect consumer, rather than as in the past, by setting the threshold to screen the middle class consumers.

Burberry produced such a change, also because of the Internet for the transformation of society. All people in the online world is a string of data, and rich, poor or poor, can have a place in the cyber world. Therefore, the Internet fashion was produced, on the Internet to create a unique and unified combination, is the fan effect. Let as many people as possible feel the unique and elegant of Burberry, increase popularity through stars, and let people with consumption potential become "fans", "constantly through" unique ", " close ", " exclusive ", " noble " fan service, let them have a sense of jealousy. The way to deepen this sense of satisfaction and belonging is to buy Burberry products.

For Burberry's Internet development strategy in China, it generally presents a trend from top to "earth", extending the dialogue space between brands and consumers from the counter to the Internet. However, it does not pursue the localization and popularization of ignorance, but appropriately has some "not harmony" for Chinese soil. For example, despite the Chinese translation "Burberry", Burberry uses the English name and embed an official page in its wechat official account that is consistent with the external network. This just right sense of disharmony can keep fashion fresh and emphasize exotic to ensure higher fashion value. Even in foreign markets, such foreign strategies are common, such as Dior and Chanel, which repeatedly emphasize their own French attributes.

With the increase of people's activities, fashion exposure rate increases and imitation behavior accelerates. The successful experience of Burberry provides a new development trend for fashion consumption, which is worth learning and popularizing by more enterprises. At the same time, we should also realize that the changes of fashion not only reflect people's pursuit of beauty, but also reveal the changes of social psychology and culture. We should understand and appreciate different fashion styles and cultural phenomena with an open mind.

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the change in fashion reflects the degree of dullness to strong stimulation, the more restless the age, the more rapid the fashion changes. As people increase in activity, fashion exposure increases and imitation behavior accelerates. Burberry's successful experience provides a new development trend for fashion consumption, referring to more enterprises to learn from and promote this consumption model.

## **References**

- [1] Susan Dillon. *The Fundamentals of Fashion Management*. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018. 11-13, 20-22
- [2] Chen Xingxing. *Reason for luxury: Every fashion brand has many legends*. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2014.71-84
- [3] Ziold Simer. *The philosophy of fashion*. Fei Yong, translation. Guangzhou: Huacheng Publishing House, 2017.94-113