

Macromedia
University of Applied Sciences

BACHELOR THESIS

Final paper for the obtainment of the
Bachelor of Arts Degree

The Transfer of Brand Values from a High Fashion Brand into the Online Marketing Environment

in the course of study Media Management
study focus Media and Communication Management

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Course of study: Media Management

Study focus: Media and Communication Management

Hamburg, 3th of February 2017

Abstract

This bachelor thesis elaborates on how a high fashion brand can transfer its brand values into the online marketing environment. After presenting foundational basics according to current scientific literature, own empirical research was conducted via two expert interviews. Through the expert interviews, essential knowledge of all relevant topic areas – advertising, branding, high fashion and online marketing – has been gained and in the end been clustered and summarised to form requirements for a successful brand value transfer concept. The traditional marketing mix of the four Ps has been the basis for the concept, resulting in providing insights and learnings in the fields of product policy, distribution policy, price policy and communication policy. The brand value transfer concept provides strategic background and ideas as well as practical, scientifically-based action approaches for high fashion brands entering the online environment. At the end of the thesis, the concept is evaluated critically and future assumptions on the discussed topics are presented.

Keywords

High Fashion, Online Marketing, Brand Values, Online Environment, Luxury Brands

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List of Abbreviations

CI.....	<i>Corporate Identity</i>
FMCG.....	<i>Fast Moving Consumer Goods</i>
POS.....	<i>Point of Sale</i>
SEA.....	<i>Search Engine Advertising</i>
SEM.....	<i>Search Engine Marketing</i>
SEO.....	<i>Search Engine Optimisation</i>

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Topic

“In the online marketing environment, I perceive and notice high fashion brands, but not yet as much as it would be possible. [...] I believe that there just has not been a good strategy yet on how to act in this area. And the most important thing for a high fashion brand *is* the brand, since this is how they can argue their high prices. I sense that there is a big fear, a big insecurity on the high fashion brand’s company’s sides of how to behave online, because online, there is a loss of control.” (Muntendorf, 2017, p. 3, *) With these words, Harald Muntendorf, founder and managing director of FASHIONHYPE.com and an expert in the field of online marketing, describes how he perceives high fashion brands in the online environment.

According to Munzinger and Musiol (2008), the general conditions for brand communication have changed over the last years. The digitalisation is leading to more and completely new interaction possibilities between people and brands (Munzinger & Musiol, 2008, p. 9). There are many reasons why it can be a challenge to successfully use these new interaction possibilities and to combine them successfully with a brand’s values. Especially for high fashion luxury brands, which are traditionally expected to have very narrow and exclusive target audiences and carefully defined brand values, the open, consumer-driven online marketing environment can be tough and demanding, resulting in the described insecurities and fears (Muntendorf, 2017, p. 3). Especially in the social media landscape, high fashion brands are experiencing struggles: social media has become an integrated part of everyday life, but its entry into the luxury goods industry has been far from easy (Bowen, 2014, p. 201). Nevertheless, deciding not to be part of the online marketing environment and to only focus a high fashion brand’s marketing actions on the analogue consumer environment can be very risky as well. Heßler and Mosbach (2013) state that the internet is more than just a “pretty new tool”. The internet is changing long established human habits, like purchasing processes and communication (Heßler & Mosebach, 2013, p. 1). The key to successfully act and be in the online marketing environment for a high fashion brand is to protect its brand values but never-

* Translated into English

theless face the challenge and enjoy the possibilities of the online market. Ritter (2016) states that a brand has an offline and an online brand experience, which come from the same brand essence. Therefore, each brand needs to know how their online experience can fit to the offline brand world (Ritter, 2016, p. 4).

This is exactly what this bachelor thesis aims at. It shall reduce the insecurities and prejudices that high fashion brands tend to have towards the online market, and will elaborate on how a high fashion brand can successfully transfer its offline brand world, its brand values, into the online marketing environment. The question “How can a high fashion brand transfer its brand values into the online marketing environment?” is aimed at being answered by the development of a scientifically sound brand value transfer concept with strategic and practical action approaches.

1.2 Goals of the Paper

The goal of this bachelor thesis is to provide a concept for high fashion brands to transfer their brand values into the online marketing environment. The transfer concept will be based on the marketing mix concept, firstly introduced in 1948 by Neil H. Borden (Borden, 1948). The marketing mix concept covers all elements of marketing which altogether contribute to what defines a brand. In order to determine which of the elements of the marketing mix are especially relevant for a brand to modify and adjust when entering the field of online marketing and which online marketing activities are advisable and not advisable to perform for a high fashion brand online, requirements for the brand value transfer concept will be derived. It shall be noted that the concept will not be a flawless and overall promptly applicable concept that each brand can apply with no further adjustments or thoughts. It rather will be general, strategic guideline with action approaches based on scientific research for all kinds of high fashion brands.

“Generally, I see that there is a huge run from the high fashion brands to the online market. In the last years, the awareness seems to have been realised: we need to be present online, we need to go this way.” (Muntendorf, 2017, p. 4) This, in other words, is exactly where this bachelor thesis is aiming at: the need for being present online has been acknowledged by the high fashion brands. It is the missing strategy that causes problems and insecurities, which this bachelor thesis is aiming at providing.

1.3 Methodological Structure

This bachelor thesis will, in chapter 2, define all definitions and methods that will later on be needed for the main parts of the thesis which will be the requirement analysis and the brand value transfer concept. This includes the introduction and definition of high fashion brands, the presentation of the traditional and extended marketing mix in relation to high fashion brands and an introduction to online marketing. Furthermore, the approach to making an expert interview will be described. In chapter 3, the requirement analysis will be conducted via knowledge and experiences gained through expert interviews; one marketing and brand expert and one expert in the field online marketing and high fashion brands. Chapter 4 will provide the brand value transmission concept, developed and presented by navigating through the elements of the marketing mix in relation to the online environment. At the end of the thesis, an evaluation on the provided concept will be given, all findings will be summarised and expected future developments will be made.

2 Foundational Basics

2.1 Introduction and Definition of Luxury and High Fashion Brands

In this bachelor thesis, the brands which will be in focus will be called “high fashion brands”. In order to characterise and define what a high fashion brand is, it is at first necessary to define in which ways a fashion brand relates to the term luxury, which adds the word “high” to the term. Also, it needs to be noted that a fashion brand considered to be defined as “high”, which can also be called “superior”, “luxurious” or else, can serve more than one spectrum of the “luxurious hierarchy”. The hierarchy shall be used as one tool to classify the kind of fashion brand this bachelor thesis will focus on.

Büttner, Huber, Regier and Vollhardt (2008) relate their hierarchical classification of fashion luxury brands to the findings of Kapferer (1992): brands like Gucci, Versace or Dolce and Gabbana are, speaking for a part of their brand, located in the field of “luxury unicums” (haute-couture fashion), for another part of their product portfolio considered

a “luxury brand” (pret-à-porter fashion) and for a third part of the luxurious hierarchy considered to be a “premium brand” (standardised and mass-produced premium products) (Büttner et al. 2008, p. 10). The following graphic by Büttner et al. has been based on the findings of Kapferer (1992) and translated into English. It describes the three stages of the luxurious hierarchy a high fashion brand can cover in relation to the product’s monetary worth and their aura:

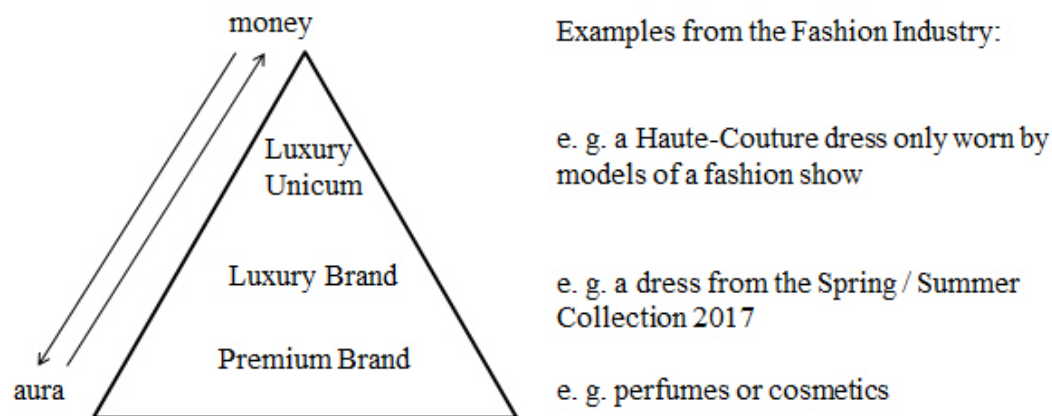


Figure 1: The Luxurious Hierarchy
 Quelle: Own Graphic – Sophia Christahl 2016, translated based on the illustration of Büttner et al.

The luxury unicum brand part is the most expensive and exclusive brand field, which is capable of transferring its desirable, exclusive aura onto the less expensive and exclusive brand areas. A luxury brand can expand its field of business with a multi-brand-strategy by having one luxury brand with a high profit margin but little sales volume, and a premium brand with low profit margin but high sales volume (Wöhe, Döring, Döring, & Brösel, 2016, p. 461). Many high fashion brands use this kind of aura transferring via a multi-brand strategy to optimise the brand’s market potential. One example is the brand Chloé: Chloé, the main brand, serves the spectrum of luxurious unicum and luxury brand in the luxurious hierarchy. The sub-brand See by Chloé has much lower prices and is less exclusive in regards to its availability (Chloé, 2016). The luxury brand part as well as the premium brand part of a fashion brand serves the purpose of addressing a selected mass target group. Pret-à-porter fashion as well as standardised premium products are available to an exclusive audience which has the money and interest to purchase high fashion products. The luxury unicum brand part, making the top of the luxurious hierarchy and can also be captured by a fashion brand, cannot be purchased by an average person anywhere and does, therefore, not count into the field of the high fashion mass market. For the purpose of this bachelor thesis, the mainstream high fashion

ion brands shall be in focus in regards to their luxury brand part and their premium brand part and shall at the end of the thesis be provided with a brand value transfer concept for successfully acting and being present in the online marketing environment. Therefore, the brand area of luxury unicums will not further be covered.

When it comes to defining what exactly characterises a fashion brand, contributing to making the brand a “high fashion brand”, it is hard to find one final definition. “Complexity and ambivalence [...] lie at the heart of consumer attitudes towards luxury” (Dubois, Laurent, & Czellar, 2001, p. 3). Relating luxury back to the term “brand”, the empirical study by Dubois et al. (2001) established six factors that in the mind of the consumer separate a luxury brand from a conventional brand, for this purpose, separating a high fashion brand from an average fashion brand.

As a first essential point that separates a luxury brand from a conventional brand, “excellent quality” was named by the study participants. Dubois et al. (2001, p. 8) claim that for some of their interviewees the mental association between luxury and quality was so strong that the two words can almost be seen as synonyms. It is, on p. 9, further explained that “excellent quality guarantees reliability durability” and that “the product or service can be trusted.” In relation to the high fashion industry, this finding concludes that it is relevant for a high fashion consumer how qualitative and long-lasting a, for example, designer handbag is.

Secondly, Dubois et al. stated a “very high price” as being a relevant factor for the study participants. This factor can be seen as the price of the luxury good in relation to other non-luxury products, or the price value standing for itself (Dubois et al., 2001, p. 9). “For many respondents, the very high price is considered as a logical consequence of the perceived excellent quality associated with luxury goods or services” (Dubois et al., 2001, p. 10). The high price becomes justifiable and also a kind of quality insurance and provides a feeling of security with the luxury product or service to be purchased. A fashion brand can therefore only be seen as high fashion brand if the price is superior. Another important finding that can be concluded from this factor is that the higher the price of a high fashion product, the more luxurious it is perceived. A Michael Kors bag, which is available at various Points of Sale (POS) and costs around 300 Euros (michaelkors.de, 2016), will, according to the findings of Dubois et al., in the field of

“price” not be regarded as luxurious as, for example, a classic Chanel bag, which costs around 5.000 Euro (chanel.com, 2016).

“Scarcity and uniqueness” is named as the third point within the study of Dubois et al. “[...] Respondents consider that truly luxury products cannot be mass-produced [...]” (p. 11), meaning that luxury experiences always need to be limited and exclusive, in the best case, custom-made. Relating this to the world of fashion, an example for this could be the Hermès Birkin Bag. According to Harper’s Bazaar (harpersbazaar.de, 2016), it is named the most expensive bag on earth, with the highest price of 270.000 Euro. Nevertheless, this kind of scarcity and uniqueness of high fashion brands does only peripherally affect the world of mainstream high fashion and does therefore count into the field of luxury unicums. Another essential aspect of the study findings on “scarcity and uniqueness” is the aspect of limited POS listings. “Many people do expect luxury products to have a restricted distribution. In contrast to mass stores which offer a large assortment at all quality levels, a luxury shop is perceived to offer a careful selection” (Dubois et al., 2001, p. 11). This described scarcity plays a very relevant role in the field of high fashion, in the offline as well as in the online environment: from this finding, it can be concluded that a product will be seen as more exclusive and more luxurious if it is only available in carefully selected POS locations, e. g. only in selected shops that have a product range made up only of fashion brands that are perceived to be high fashion brands. If it is available in all kinds of shops, online and offline, it will likely be that it is considered as less luxurious and desirable.

The fourth dimension describing a luxury brand is “aesthetics and polysensuality”. A product considered as being high end and luxurious shall always be visually appealing. Moreover: “Luxury products not only look beautiful but also are (and should be) pleasant to hear, smell, taste or touch. Luxury is a source of sensual pleasure” (Dubois et al, 2001, p. 13). This aesthetic, pleasuring aspect also again counts for the surrounding, the POS, where the luxury good can be purchased. Related to high fashion, it means that consumers expect a worthy, aesthetic surrounding for their aesthetic luxury good. A designer handbag should therefore not be available at a POS that does not serve the expected aesthetic demands of a consumer.

“Ancestral heritage and personal history” is the fifth mentioned aspect, meaning that a luxury product or service shall have “a long history [...] and respect tradition” (Dubois

et al., 2001, p. 14). In relation to high fashion, this can, but does not necessarily have to be the case: in regards to the classic Chanel 5.0 bag, the tradition and history and the story behind the product plays an important role. Nevertheless, there are luxurious high fashion labels on the market which have only been around for a relatively short amount of time and are still considered to be exclusive, expensive, desirable and special. An example for this is the newly emerged fashion label VETEMENTS (welt.de, 2015).

Lastly, “superfluousness” is relevant for people when it comes to characterising what a luxury brand defines. “Luxury products are not felt to be necessary for survival” (Dubois et al., 2001, p. 15). Rather than functional additions, they add a special sensual benefit to a product. Reflected onto high fashion, this aspect means that the desire for a luxury bag does not evolve from wanting to have a space to store one’s personal belongings conveniently. The added value which is not needed for functional reasons is relevant.

Summarising these findings, it shall be noted that a conventional high fashion brand can serve three stages of luxury, with, having the purpose of this thesis in mind, focusing on the fields of being a luxury fashion brand and a premium fashion brand. In the eyes of the consumer, a high fashion brand shall serve six described characteristics to be considered as a luxury, and therefore, a high fashion brand. For a fashion brand, it can be concluded that the higher the extent of fulfilment of the six characteristics by Dubois et al., the more it is considered to be a high fashion brand.

2.2 Introduction of the Marketing Mix in Relation to High Fashion Brands

Neil H. Borden, a former professor of marketing and advertising at the Harvard Business School, firstly came up with the term “marketing mix” (Borden, 1948). Within his thesis, Borden (1948, p. 7) refers to “mixing ingredients” in the right way in order to establish a successful marketing plan. One of the essential questions Borden repeatedly tried to answer for himself was the following: “[...] How can advertising, personal selling, pricing, packaging, channels, warehousing, and the other elements of a marketing program be manipulated and fitted together in a way that will give a profitable operation?” (Borden, 1948, p. 8) Moreover, Borden (1948, p. 8) states that all advertising

activities shall not be regarded independently from the other components of marketing, since advertising is “only one element whose form and extent depended on its careful adjustment to the other parts of the program”. Having stated that a mixture of elements is necessary for successful marketing activities, Borden (1948, p. 9) came up with four main elements of the marketing mix, being called “Product Planning”, “Pricing”, “Branding” and “Channels of Distribution”. Later on, having the basis of the findings and illustrations of Borden, it was E. Jerome McCarthy who redeveloped the concept of the marketing mix and introduced it being the concept of the “Four P’s”: “Price”, “Product”, “Place”, “Promotion” (McCarthy, 1960, p. n. a.). According to the concept of the marketing mix, all four p-components need to be individually mixed for a good marketing plan for a product or service.

2.2.1 Product

The element “Product” refers to the product or service that is introduced to a certain market environment and fulfils the need of the consumers, contributing to the brand’s product policy. Product policy defines all measures taken for the increase of the own competitive position through an attractive range of products or services (Wöhe, Döring, Döring, & Brösel, 2016, p. 391). Wöhe et al. (2016, p. 392, 393) further mention that the area of product has four sub-categories: “product quality”, “product differentiation”, “product image” and “customer service”. Referring Product and its named sub-categories back to a handbag of a high fashion brand, the element product refers to what materials the bag is made of (product quality), what shape and size it has (product differentiation), within what kind of package it can be bought (product image), its durability (customer service), and so on. Relating Product back to the consumer study of luxury by Dubois et al., mainly the areas of “excellent quality”, “scarcity and uniqueness” and “aesthetics and polysensuality” are touched. When defining the product policy, it needs to be made sure that the product is seen as qualitative and aesthetic which can be experienced via the consumer’s mutual senses. In terms of “scarcity and uniqueness”, it needs to be evaluated in which production scales the product is available. Taking the handbag example, an especially qualitative leather which is very soft and nice to touch and, moreover, only produced in very limited numbers, will donate the product a higher luxurious perceiving than a handbag that is made from less qualitative materials and is available in large amounts.

2.2.2 Place

“Place” is the element of the marketing mix that relates to the distribution policy of the product. Wöhe et al. (2016, p. 447) define the distribution policy of the product as the task of shaping the way of a good from the producer to the end consumer in a customer-friendly way. Distribution policy is a lot more than managing the transport of goods from A to B; rather, distribution policy aims at transforming a product into client-oriented need satisfaction (Wöhe et al., 2016, S. 447). According to Wöhe et al. (2016, p. 447), the transformation needs to be “spatial”, “temporal”, “quantitative” and “qualitative”. Spatial transformation is referring to be available at the place where the demand takes place. Further, Wöhe et al. define temporal transformation refers to always being available, regardless of production times – this field is especially interesting when looking at the online environment with non-limited “opening hours”, which will in 4.2.2 further be discussed. Quantitative transformation describes the numerical amounts in which a product can be bought that need to be suitable to consumer’s needs (Wöhe et al., 2016, p. 447). Qualitative transformation is, according to Wöhe et al. (2016), relevant when it comes to “performance bundles”, meaning that products are locally accompanied with products that relate to the product and are likely to be bought together (p.447).

Place touches the areas of “scarcity and uniqueness”, aesthetics and polysensuality”, “ancestral heritage and personal history” by the findings of Dubois et al. In regards to the distribution policy, a marketer needs to evaluate at which POS locations a high fashion brand’s products shall be available. The chosen POS need to fit to the product, and shall transport the same values. The more unique the POS, the more aesthetic and the more history and heritage it brings with, the more likely a consumer will label it luxurious, which will be transported onto the high fashion products being available for purchase.

2.2.3 Price

The component “Price” refers to the pricing policy of the product or service to be marketed. The highest aim of the operative price policy is the determination of the optimal offer price (Wöhe et al., 2016, p. 409). Based on Wöhe et al., instruments of the practical price policy are, on one hand, the “price” itself, but additionally, “price reductions”, “payment conditions” and “delivery conditions”. Wöhe et al. (2016) state that with

these three additional parameters, companies aim at making the market more ambiguous and complex: “imperfect markets” are created on which higher profits can be achieved (p. 409).

As it was discovered in chapter 2.1 by the study of Dubois et al., it is relevant for a brand to be considered as a luxury brand to offer products or services of a higher price than the average product of the same product category. For a high fashion brand, this means that the higher the price, the more luxurious it will be regarded through the eyes of the consumer. Pricing policies need to be carefully thought out in order not to harm the desire for having a luxurious brand perception: it needs to be defined how luxurious a high fashion brand wants to be perceived, and accordingly be conjugated whether price reductions will harm the strived for luxurious image, which payment methods shall be possible for the purchase of the good with having which effects, and so on. In regards to avoiding a luxury brand to be harmed by prices that are too low, but nevertheless having the chance to reach a broader mass audience, a premium brand can extend its fields of business by launching a multiple-brand strategy (Wöhe et al., 2016, p. 461). This strategy has already been illuminated in 2.1, where the example of Chloé and See by Chloé has been discussed. This price split is a relevant thought a high fashion brand can have when it comes to how to achieve more sales and still not harming the exclusiveness of the high fashion brand’s essence.

2.2.4 Promotion

“Promotion” is the fourth element of the traditional marketing mix. The element Promotion, the communication policy, describes the transferral of messages to potential buyers in order to overcome sales resistances (Wöhe et al., 2016, p. 433). Wöhe et al. (2016, p. 433) further describe that the purchase decision process on the side of the consumer can either be based on rational consideration or on emotions. The promotion policy of a brand needs to serve two areas, resulting in “informing advertisement” and “activating advertisement” (Wöhe et al., 2016, p. 433). Since luxury products from superior price and, therefore, high fashion brands, are never purchased for rational “need” reasons (see 2.1, “superfluousness”), it is especially relevant to emotionally catch the consumer via the brand’s promotion strategy. The relevance of creating emotions for a high fashion brand is illuminated in detail in 3.2.2, according to the statements of Dennis Ritter. In addition, it needs to be made sure that the advertisement is able to transport all luxuri-

ous characteristics that are seen as relevant for supporting the fashion brand to be perceived as a high fashion brand.

2.2.5 The Extended Marketing Mix – Seven P’s

The marketing mix of the four P’s has been under different forms of criticism. “Despite the background and status of the mix as a major theoretical and practical parameter of contemporary marketing, several academics have at times expressed doubts and objections as to the value and the future of the mix, proposing alternatives that range from minor modifications to total rejection” (Constantinides, 2006, p. 409). One of the alternatives or extensions that is very popular, especially amongst not product, but service-providing companies, is the marketing mix of seven P’s, adding “People”, “Processes” and “Physical Evidence” to the original four P’s. The traditional systemisation of marketing instruments according to the four P’s can in relation to the current opinion in literature not be reflected congruently onto the sector of services (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007, p. 22). The three additional P’s take “the unique characteristics of services” into consideration which the traditional four P’s Marketing Mix has been accused of lacking and the seven P’s Marketing Mix is in some contexts also called the “services marketing mix” (Bickhoff, Hollensen, & Opresnik, 2014, p. 81). According to the presented findings, the extended marketing mix with the named three additional P’s is rather focusing on the service than the product environment, and will therefore for the purpose of this thesis be no longer taken into account.

2.3 Introduction and Definition of Online Marketing

The term „online marketing“ is defined differently by various sources (Lammenett, 2009, pp. 13, 14). Even in the established traditional marketing literature, Lammenett (2009, p. 12, 14) further states, there is no coherent consensus what online marketing defines and represents, but usually, the internet is seen as one brick component of the whole marketing conception and is discussed under the aspect of the four P’s of the marketing mix. According to Kollmann (2013), the importance of online media in comparison to offline media usage was growing steadily over the past 10 years (p. 12). Due to growing digital competitors, it is essential for companies to be present in the field of online marketing and, as it is further stated by Kollmann (2013, p. 12), the possibilities and opportunities of online marketing are multifaceted and cannot be managed and

planned “en passant”. With having this background, the term “online marketing” describes nothing more than the transfer of traditional marketing to a new medium: the internet (Kollmann, 2013, p. 12). The following numbers underline the importance of online marketing in regards to the statements of Kollmann:



Figure 2: Spending on Online Advertising Worldwide
Source: (eMarketer, 2016)

The graphic displays the expenses on online marketing worldwide displayed in billion US dollars from the year of 2013 until the expected growth in 2018. The graphic illustrates that the worldwide spending on online marketing grew from year to year, with an expected expense value of 250.00 billion US dollars in 2018, which nearly doubles the worldwide expenses of 121.47 billion US dollars in 2013. These numbers illustrate that online marketing is a rapidly growing field of business with a large number of market participants willing to invest money on their online presence, which furthermore describes how essential it is for all kinds of market players to be present in the online marketing environment.

There are many different aspects and areas present when speaking of marketing possibilities in the online environment. The field reaches from banners to Social Media, Af-

filiate Marketing, Viral Marketing, Search Engine Marketing (SEM), Email Marketing, and more. All relevant elements will be further discussed and described in relation to high fashion brands within the brand value transfer concept in chapter 4.

2.4 Conduction of an Expert Interview

The purpose of this thesis is to make a concept describing a successful transfer of brand values, represented by the traditional four Ps of the marketing mix, from a high fashion brand into the online marketing environment. In order to find out how this can be done in the most effective and successful way, two expert interviews have been conducted. Both experts will give their input in regards to the task to be managed, speaking of how a high fashion brand can be present in the best possible way in the digital market place.

In the methodological literature, the expert interview is described as one form of qualitative interviews. Averbek,-Lietz and Meyen (2016, p. 176) state that the method of expert interviews is interested in the practical experiences that players have due to their specific role. An expert, therefore, is someone who is a relevant player in an organisation or a leading person in a social subfield and, in the interview situation, is capable of reconstructing and analysing social or organisational structures and processes (Averbek-Lietz and Meyen, p. 176). In addition, it is mentioned that the expert interview is aiming at getting to know specific states of knowledge. These knowledge states are usually not aimed at gaining factual information, but rather concrete actions, interpretations and explanations (Averbek-Lietz & Meyen, 2016, S. 188). These findings are endorsed by the Albers, Klapper, Konradt, Walter and Wolf (2009, p. 38): In contrast to other variants of the qualitative interview, it is not the person which is in the focus of interest, but their experiences and interpretations in regards to a research theme. In order to structure an expert interview in its course, an interview guideline will be made beforehand by the interviewer (Albers et al., 2009, S. 39), which shall nevertheless leave enough flexibility for an open conversation.

The topic areas of advertising, but especially of online marketing and fashion, are very fast-paced and always influenced by new trends evolving and other subjects, which have been present for many years, disappearing. In this quickly developing and redeveloping environment, expert knowledge from people who have successfully acted in these

fields of business for many years is reliable, trustworthy and in-depth. This is the reason why it has been chosen to use the scientific method of an expert interview for the basis of the brand value transfer concept.

For the method of an expert interview, as stated by Meuser and Nagel (1991, p. 451, 452), it is usually strived for comparability between all consulted experts which in conclusion leads to the necessity of asking the more or less exact same questions. The goal is to find the non-individual similarities between the consulted experts, statements on representative information, shared states of knowledge and interpretations (Meuser & Nagel, 1991, pp. 451, 452). Nevertheless, in this bachelor thesis, the expert interviews are conducted for the main purpose of deriving expert knowledge on all four fields of business: advertising and brand management, online marketing and high fashion. Therefore, only partly similar questions have been used for both expert interviews to gain in-depth knowledge on all relevant operation fields. The exact comparability of the interviews is not in focus and does not match the purpose of this paper. Nevertheless, similar statements will be taken into account and discussed and will enjoy special relevance in the requirement derivation in the following chapter.

3 Requirement Analysis

3.1 Consultation of the Experts

3.1.1 Marketing and Brand Expert

Dennis Ritter is Director of Business Unit at the agency deepblue networks, located in Hamburg (Ritter, 2016, p. 1). Ritter is a marketing and brand expert and has been working in advertising agencies for 16 years until today (2016, p. 1). His everyday tasks include the field of client consultation, project management and strategy (Ritter, 2016, p. 1). deepblue networks is an agency that is generally specifying on online advertising, but the unit of Dennis Ritter is in charge of their clients in 360° advertising, meaning being responsible for all kinds of advertising channels, online and offline (Ritter, 2016, p. 1). The long-year expertise of Dennis Ritter and his strong specification in strategic

brand management and 360° advertising makes him a perfect interview candidate for sharing his knowledge and insight on a brand and advertising perspective.

3.1.2 Online Marketing and High Fashion Expert

Harald Muntendorf is the second expert that has been interviewed. He is founder and managing director of the high fashion affiliate portal FASHIONHYPE.com and is an expert on the fields of online marketing and high fashion. Muntendorf has been working in the online marketing sector for eleven years in total and has, before founding FASHIONHYPE.com, build various other affiliate-based websites (Muntendorf, 2017, p. 1).

“[Affiliate Marketing] involves a marketer placing links on his website on affiliated websites. These links can be in form of text, product pictures or other images that aim to promote a message to potential customers. Rather than paying for the links upfront, the marketer provides a commission to affiliates for every transaction that results from these links. When a user clicks on a link on an affiliate’s website, he is transferred to the marketer’s website, where he can take further action.” (Goldschmidt, Junghagen, & Harris, 2003, p. 43) Summarised, affiliate marketing can be shortly described the following: “Affiliate marketing is, in principle, the transfer of established distribution structures [...] to the online medium. The goal of affiliate marketing is to enlarge the client base and to exploit new distribution channels via a partnership.” (Olbrich, Schultz, & Holsing, 2015, p. 51) In the case of FASHIONHYPE.com, the affiliate links are the products of various high fashion shops like net-a-porter.com, stylebob.com or mytheresa.com.

The daily tasks of Muntendorf include the technical maintenance and steady redevelopment of FASHIONHYPE.com, the whole range of online marketing disciplines with a special focus on SEM as well as the administration and organisation of all online shop collaborations (Muntendorf, 2017, pp. 1, 2). This makes Harald Muntendorf an experienced and well-informed business expert on the field of online marketing and high fashion labels and online shops, making his input significantly relevant for the brand value transfer concept.

3.2 Derivation of Requirements

In the following section, requirements learned from the expert interviews will be presented, clustered together in topic areas and will later on be used for the making of the brand value transmission concept into the online environment. Furthermore, the information, facts and assumptions given by the two experts will partly be commented on and enriched with further sources in order to have a scientific and conclusive requirement gathering.

3.2.1 Brand World Experience

“Branding has emerged as a top management priority in the last decade due to the growing realisation that brands are one of the most valuable intangible assets that firms have. [...] Brands serve several valuable functions. At their most basic level, brands serve as markers for the offerings of a firm. For customers, brands can simplify choice, promise a particular quality level, reduce risk, and /or engender trust.“ (Keller & Lehmann, 2006, p. 740) This statement proves the relevance a brand has, for example in regards to the impact on the consumer, and in how many areas a brand’s image can be influencing. Dennis Ritter has the same opinion that brands are an extremely relevant good of a company, and states that the brand’s experience for a luxury or premium brand is extremely important to differentiate itself from non-superior brands (Ritter, 2016, p. 3). According to Ritter, it is especially relevant to have an offline “brand world” for making the consumer experience the brand, which mainly can be done via brand stores where one can “touch and feel” the brand: “Nespresso, a premium brand in the field of coffee, is a good example: When you enter a Nespresso store, it’s a brand world environment. The scent of coffee is omnipresent, everything looks fantastic and is presented perfectly. All this contributes to making it possible to sell Nespresso products online, too, because the brand image has been built offline. This store brand experience could never be created solely in the online environment. [...] A brand should define for itself how its online experience can be made suitable to its [offline] brand world experience [in order to be successful]” (Ritter, 2016, pp. 3, 4). Further, Ritter (2016, p. 3) states that, although digital and online markets are continuously growing, more and more brands do actually involve themselves in offline stores again since they realised the potential and importance lying there and being present, touchable and have an intensified brand world experience. This statement by Ritter is supported by the following finding from a study comparing online and offline brand loyalty: “In terms of brand loyalty, already-familiar

brands, with a strong offline presence, also do [good] in the internet environment [...]” (Danaher, Wilson, & Davis, 2003, p. 475).

This example and statement of Ritter leads to the first important requirement in regards to high fashion brands in the online marketing environment: an offline store experience is required in order for the target group to experience the “brand world environment”. The persuasion of the consumer that a fashion brand is a high fashion brand cannot be achieved using only online marketing.

3.2.2 Creating Emotions

When it comes to high fashion brands, it is an important challenge to convince the consumer from its luxury or premium brand status, emotionally separating it from non-luxury and non-premium brands. According to Ritter (2016, p. 3), a luxury or premium brand separates itself from a non-luxury or non-premium brand through the brand experience. Next to the brand world, which is strongly contributing to the brand’s experience and has been discussed in 3.2.1, it is the field of an emotional, persuasive benefit that is relevant. Ritter (2016, p. 6) further states that a tangible benefit separating the high fashion brand from non-high-end brands cannot be the product’s quality, since quality is only a hygiene factor. “The best example for this is the automotive industry: Audi, BMW, Mercedes. This is my premise as a consumer; I just know that to whichever seller from those three I will go, I will receive excellent quality. Nevertheless, the three brands are very different: Audi advertises with the progressive, innovative touch, BMW advertises with ‘Freude am Fahren’ (having fun while driving) and Mercedes is elevating the aspect of quality with traditional German quality attributes such as control and security. This way, all three brands have a totally different brand image with which I, as a consumer, am able to differentiate one brand from another. Premium brands only function over emotions, and quality isn’t.” (Ritter, 2016, pp. 6, 7) This statement of Ritter is underlined by the finding of Dubois et al in 2.1, having found out that, for the consumers, luxury and quality are so closely linked, they can nearly be seen as synonyms. This finding illustrates that quality is indeed taken for granted when it comes to the purchase of a luxury good, and cannot be a benefit that will make a consumer choose one brand over another. Next to the emotional benefit, it is especially in the online environment relevant that a brand has a story to tell “that the people want to hear” (Ritter, 2016, p. 6). Ritter (2016, p. 2) states that digital communication is making it possible to ex-

plore something new and to share something, and therefore, a brand needs to think of a story to tell online that functions exactly in that way and creates emotions as well.

Summarising these findings, two further requirements can be deducted: high fashion brands need to have a persuasive emotional benefit, and a high fashion brand needs to have a story to tell to be interesting in the online marketing environment. Both aspects are relevant in order to stay in the mind of the consumer and to separate itself from the non-high-end brands.

3.2.3 Brand Identity in the Online Environment

One particular thought that has been present throughout the writing of this thesis was whether the exclusive brand identity of a high fashion brand could be harmed through participating in the online marketing environment. Especially in the consumer-driven social media areas, potential problems were seen: the social web has many different facets, but its most important components are the humans, according to Heßler & Mosbach (2013, p. 281). The topics of interaction between them are good and bad products, interesting and boring pieces of information, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, wishes, improvement proposals and critic (Heßler & Mosebach, 2013, p. 281). This is the reason why both interviewed experts, Dennis Ritter and Harald Muntendorf, have been asked whether the exclusive brand essence of a high fashion brand could be harmed in the digital market place. Harald Muntendorf (2017, p. 3, 4) states that one reason why high fashion brands are not yet as succeeding in the internet environment as they could be is because there is a fear of control loss: “The brands are, when being active online – especially in the social media environment – ‘laying their brand in the hands of their target audience’, meaning that everyone can speak about the brand, can release their opinion about the brand, and that’s what needs to be controlled. A ‘controlled loss of control’ needs to take place.” Muntendorf (2017, p. 4) states that this controlled loss of control can be hard, but nevertheless did not stop the run of high fashion brands into the online environment. Muntendorf (2017, p. 4) further states that high fashion brands have understood that being present in the online marketing is relevant and necessary, despite the challenges being present. Dennis Ritter (2016, p. 8) states that the biggest fear of brands in the online marketing environment is the topic of shitstorms. When it comes to this fear, Ritter (2016, p. 8) has a strategy: “Our answer always is: It is talked about you [the brand] anyways. Now you can decide if you want to be part of this conversation or not.” Both experts have expressed their possible concerns when it comes to

entering the online environment as a high fashion brand, especially in regards to a loss of control in the field of social media. However, both have stated that it is only in the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) environment (Ritter, 2016, p. 1 and Muntendorf, 2017, p. 2) where the online presence of a brand can be very subsidiary, or when the brand has a very old target audience which nearly is not present in the online world at all (Muntendorf, 2017, p. 2). Further, Ritter (2016, p. 9) makes the following statement: “When I find the right way to do it [, online cannot do any harm to the exclusive brand essence of a luxury brand]. A good communication strategy tells me what my tonality is, in which ways I have to live it and at which places it shall take place. [...] It just needs to be planned the right way.”

These findings result in the next requirement that needs to be kept in mind for the brand value transfer concept: the internet, especially the social media environment, is consumer-driven and it can be a challenge to controllably let loose of one’s brand in this field of action. Nevertheless, high fashion brands do see the need to be present in the online world, and should (since they neither are a FMCG good, nor have an elderly target audience) enter the digital market place (Muntendorf, 2017, p. 4). The key to success is good planning and a good marketing strategy – if both is done the right way, online cannot be a danger for the brand identity of a high fashion brand.

3.2.4 Target Group and Concept Relevance

In 3.2.3, Harald Muntendorf and Dennis Ritter stated that if done the right way and planned correctly, online is not a danger for a high fashion brand. With having these declarations in mind, it was aimed at finding out which online advertising channels are overall favourable and always relevant when it comes to being present in the online marketing environment. Both experts have mentioned some recommending ideas which will further be discussed later on, but both refrained from making final advertising activity suggestions that are always working or even necessary for a high fashion brand to perform in the online market place. Muntendorf (2017, p. 3) mentioned SEM as one channel where every company that strives for making sales online should be present. Besides SEM, Muntendorf (2017, p. 11) makes the point that it is always necessary to take a look at a brand’s target audience: “When I know that my target group is mostly female, 40+ and is interested in vacations to the Maldives, or vacations in general, I could look for a travel blogger who flies to the Maldives, looks for the best hot spots there, and meanwhile is wearing my products. Or I could advertise via YouTube and

say that in front of videos of [high class travel bloggers], my ad shall play. This is exactly where I meet my target audience, which is on what it always depends.” Ritter’s (2016, p. 2) comment on the online advertising activities a high fashion brand should always perform was highly similar: he mentions that it is always relevant to see where a brand’s target group can be reached and where they are active, which exactly matches the statement of Muntendorf. In addition, he makes the point that the general marketing concept and the message that the brand wants to transport needs to be taken into account: “A conceptual starting point is most relevant. Afterwards, I can think of which channels are most suitable; over which channels my concept is functioning and implemented the best way” (Ritter, 2016, p. 2).

Therefore, the derivation is the following: both experts say that just “picking a channel” that will always work in the online environment for a high fashion brand is not possible. It is relevant to first take a look where the brand’s target group is active and over which channels the intended message can be brought across the best possible way. Additionally, it is seen as relevant to perform at least a bit of SEM, since it is named to be necessary for any company that is aiming at purchasing goods in the online market.

3.2.5 Online Partners and their Advantages and Disadvantages

“Many labels [their own websites/online shops] aren’t good to be found within Google, but the shop aggregators [affiliate platforms] know online marketing well and have a good visibility on search engines.” (Muntendorf, 2017, p. 5) Within affiliate platforms as well as multi-brand online shops, various different brands are offered, which, if seen negatively, builds a strong and hard competitor situation. If seen positively, the presence of being on an affiliate platform or a multi-brand shop with a brand’s products can result in favourable advantages. The difference between multi-brand online shops and affiliate platforms is that, on a multi-brand shop, the online purchase takes place right there and the delivery of the ordered products also takes place via the shop itself. There is no redirection to another website, as it is the case with affiliate platforms (see 3.1.2).

Muntendorf (2017, p. 5, 6) explains the situation using the following example, contributing to the first advantage of having one’s products integrated on an affiliate platform: “Where does a website like gucci.com get its traffic from? First of all, it will be direct inputs of ‘gucci.com’ into the browser search line, and second, it will be at google.com where they enter ‘gucci’ as a search keyword and click on the first link. Maybe a brand

gets some additional traffic from social media, but that is about it. So, a brand needs to think of how to increase their page traffic, and one way is to work with affiliate platforms which have a good page ranking and get lots of traffic via Google, and that is an easy way to quickly increase a brand's own page traffic." This increased traffic through affiliate partner sites does automatically lead to an increased brand's visibility in the online environment. Synergy effects are a second advantage when it comes to the decision of whether to work with affiliate platforms: "When a client is on our website [FASHIONHYPE.com] and looks for a specific designer bag and does not find it, chances are high that the client will also be interested in other bags and designers being present on our side and can just as much afford them" (Muntendorf, 2017, p. 4). He further says that, if FASHIONHYPE.com would have also cheaper labels on its website, these synergy effects would not take place: "When someone searches on google.com for 'esprit' and visits our site and then sees products from gucci.com, he will right away disappear again since he is likely to not be able to afford them. This is exactly what we avoid with our focus on high fashion brands." Another advantages explained by Muntendorf (2017, p. 5) is the broad range of products an affiliate platform like FASHIONHYPE.com has. Since they integrate all products of a brand from all shops they are cooperating with, an affiliate partner will always have the biggest possible assortment of a brand's products, which is highly likely to increase the possibility that the consumer finds what he or she is looking for and which therefore increases the possibility of a sale. Lastly, Muntendorf (2017, p. 5) mentions the custom advertising possibilities a brand has on affiliate platforms like FASHIONHYPE.com. He explains that a brand shop can ask for a cooperation which will lead to an exclusive position on the affiliate partner website, leading to even more traffic, visibility and sales.

Concluding these findings, the requirement can be derived that a wide-spread brand presence in the online environment is favourable. This broad presence in the market can be reached by the cooperation with affiliate platforms: in regards to traffic increase and visibility, synergy effects, sale increases through assortment range and custom advertising possibilities, affiliate platforms can be highly attractive for brands. These named advantages also count for most multi-brand online shops, except for the assortment factor and the traffic increase on a brand's own site (since the whole purchase process will take place on the multi-brand shop's website, e. g. on mytheresa.com, and not via a redirect to the brand's own site, e. g. gucci.com). As a disadvantage, Muntendorf (2017, p. 6) mentions the exposure of all product data (e. g. product pictures, describing prod-

uct texts, all information on price and delivery charges): it can be that an affiliate partner will not always use this information in the way a brand wishes, since it might be used for the affiliate's own promotional activities which might not always be how the brand desires, or worse, the partner could give away product data to third parties.

3.2.6 Selection of Online Partners

As it was discussed in 3.2.5, the cooperation with affiliate platforms as well as multi-brand shops brings lots of advantages to a high fashion brand. Nevertheless, not all affiliate websites and multi-brand shops are trustworthy – taking the described possible disadvantages into account – or fitting to the high fashion label's brand image, which is why the selection of partners needs to be done carefully. A first relevant aspect a high fashion brand needs to take into account when choosing its cooperation partner is where the page gets its traffic from, taking into account whether and how the page advertises on Google and what other websites link onto the website, Muntendorf (2017, p. 7) mentions. Secondly, a brand needs to be aware of what other brands and products are available on the potential partner's website: it needs to be answered whether they fit to the own brand's image and target audience, and whether the brand is comfortable with being listed next to these brands and their product (Muntendorf, 2017, p. 7). As a third aspect, Muntendorf (2017, p. 7) states that the general Corporate Identity (CI) of the website plays an important role, since this place will be where the high fashion brand's logo will be seen, where its products will be displayed and which should therefore fit to the high fashion brand's brand world.

3.2.7 Single Brand Shops and their Advantages and Disadvantages

Next to enjoying the advantages of being present on multiple places within the online environment, for example via partners like affiliate partners and multi-brand shops, an own online shop for one's high fashion brand also needs to be discussed and evaluated. For the high fashion brand's online brand presence, an own brand shop can be highly favourable for multiple reasons: If the brand's products are sold through the own brand's online shop, the profit margins are higher than when sold over a partner website (Muntendorf, 2017, p. 8). And, moreover, an advantage that again contributes to the factor of being in control: via only selling over the own brand's online shop, the brand remains in full control over the whole product assortment (Muntendorf, 2017, p. 8). In addition, as another advantage of having an own online shop, the brand world experi-

ence and emotional consumer-brand-interaction will be a lot higher than on the website of an online partner (see 3.2.1, 3.2.2). Some disadvantages that need to be thought of when deciding whether or not to start a single brand online shop, an own shop only for one's high fashion label, are described by Muntendorf (2017, p. 8) as the following: "Having an own brand shop has lots of follow-up costs: if I want to cover the whole range of online marketing, the shop needs to be accordingly good. And also the initial shop set-up, apart from all follow-up and maintenance costs is not to be underestimated: the page needs to be technically good, needs to be fast, needs to be up to the current online standards [...]. And if there are only [a few] [...] products available on this shop, I wouldn't know whether I would make the effort."

Summarising these findings, it can be deducted that having an own online shop – regardless of whether this is the only online brand presence a high fashion label has online or whether it is combined with the presence on partner websites – can be good in regards to branding, control and profit margins, but is always related to high costs and efforts, initially and continuously.

3.2.8 The banner discrepancy

Banners are existing in various sizes and forms with various content and interaction possibilities (Olbrich, Schultz, & Holsing, 2015, p. 52). The easiest way of interaction, as Olbrich et al. (2015, p. 52) further describe, is to deposit a hyperlink on the banner which directs to the website of the advertiser. An overall goal of banners therefore is to attract the most possible prospects and to direct them to the advertiser's offers (Olbrich et al., 2015, p. 52). Banners are a fixed component of online marketing, but are nevertheless often criticised: Banner blindness, customer irritation or ad blockers used by internet users, all named by Olbrich et al. (2015, p. 58), are only a few reasons why banners are seen as double-edged. Both experts, Dennis Ritter and Harald Muntendorf, were consulted in regards to whether banners would be an attractive advertising possibility online for high fashion brands. The position of Ritter (2016, p. 4) was quite clear. He stated the following: "[A high fashion brand] should not do banners. I believe this time is over." Nevertheless, when asked how Harald Muntendorf (2017, p. 9, 10) sees high fashion brands using banners as an online advertising channel, he stated that banners aren't necessarily bad, they just need to be made the right way: "A typical example from a brand like Gucci will mostly show a model with a message, all from the current campaign. And this is nothing less than a transformation, a copy from the print area.

This means that old patterns that work in the offline environment are facily transferred into the online environment. That is not working. [...] That is what I experience with lots of our clients: there CIs are so strict that they cannot test anything. And not testing in the online environment is one of the biggest sins one can think of.” Muntendorf (2017, p. 10) further states that, what should be tried out by a high fashion brand that is likely to work better could be to show products rather than just a copy of the current print campaign, or show animated banners with a few products in the same colour. Relevant is how the banner performs, which banner is clicked the best, not which one fits best to the CI of the brand.

As it can be seen from the described viewpoints, both experts have very different opinions when it comes to the usage of banners by a high fashion brand. The advertising and brand expert, Dennis Ritter, is advising not to use banners at all, while Harald Muntendorf, expert in online marketing and in daily touch with high fashion brands in the online environment, says that the usage of banners can be very good for a high fashion brand, as long as it is done the right way.

3.2.9 Influencer Marketing

As mentioned in 3.2.4, it is hard to make general advising comments on which channel is suitable for a brand online, since which channel is best suitable always depends on which target group a brand wants to address and over which channels the intended message can be broad across best. Nevertheless, both experts mentioned influencer marketing as one usually suitable and currently trending advertising possibility when it comes to being present in the online environment for a high fashion brand. Ritter (2016, p. 4) named influencer marketing as a possible bridge able to transport the product- and brand world experience into the online environment. As an example, he illustrates that influencer marketing can tell about the brand world experience present in the offline stores of a high fashion brand, which, as already discussed, is necessary to somehow be transported into the digital market place, and that using influencer marketing is more authentic than the brand itself telling about their offline store experiences. When asking Muntendorf (2017, p. 10), he stated the following: “[Influencer marketing] currently is a very interesting method with which I can achieve a high reach in a short period of time.” Although both experts do say that influencer marketing is a current trend and can be a good possibility for high fashion brands to use in the online environment, the opinions differ when it comes to how exactly the influencer cooperation shall be executed.

Ritter (2016, p. 5) states that influencer marketing needs to be done with many influencers, resulting in the user having a feeling of “did I miss something?” when scrolling through his Instagram feed. Muntendorf (2017, p. 11), in contrast to the statement of Ritter, says that, since high fashion brands have a rather small, exquisite target group, the target audience of a million followers of an Instagram blogger is not likely to be interested in high fashion products, or, rather, is not able to afford them – “the bigger the audience of the influencer, the bigger the divergence losses that I also need to pay for.” To illuminate this discrepancy further with additional research, it was taken a look at Instagram. It can be seen that lots of big high fashion labels did choose the way of cooperating with the very big German influencers, like for example Chloé with Leonie Hanne from @ohhcouture (Hanne, 2016). Another example is Dolce and Gabbana, not only cooperating with Caro Daur from @carodaur on Instagram, but also letting her walk as a model in their runway show and letting her report it on Instagram (Daur, 201). These findings prove that high fashion labels in general do have interest in cooperating with big fashion bloggers and seem to accept the high divergence losses, possibly for the factors of branding, awareness and visibility. Since the trend of influencer marketing is omnipresent and used intensively, the question of whether the trustworthiness of the channel has already suffered arose during the interview with Harald Muntendorf. His statement (2017, p. 11) was that some influencers do already need to cope with the issue of lost trust, but that the main audience of fans currently does not yet have a problem with influencer marketing in general. However, he expects the situation to possibly change over the next years.

When summarising the vibrant topic of influencer marketing, it can be concluded that it is definitely a trending and relevant topic in the online environment, especially for high fashion brands. Still, it does with bring some discrepancy and different viewpoints, which will be discussed in the brand value transfer concept and accordingly interpreted in the most advisable, logical way.

3.2.10 Trend Watch

Next to asking the two experts on their expertise and knowledge in the areas of advertising, branding, fashion and online marketing, both Dennis Ritter and Harald Muntendorf were also consulted in regards to general upcoming trends in the online environment. The trend findings are expected to possibly be of use for the upcoming brand value transfer concept, at least partially. The trends that have been named were experience-

intensifying technologies (Ritter, p. 9), device diversity (Muntendorf, p. 12), oral search requests (Muntendorf, p. 12), virtual reality (Muntendorf, p. 12-13) and big data (Muntendorf, p. 13). These expected trends will for now just be mentioned and will later partly be used and further treated in the concept.

4 Brand Value Transfer Concept

4.1 Product Policy

As described in 2.2.1, the product policy contains all measures taken in order to develop an attractive range of products. The considerations which high fashion products will be produced by the brand do not take place in the online environment: in the digital field, it cannot be decided from which materials a designer handbag shall be made or in which sizes a blouse shall be produced in order to fit to the market's needs best. Therefore, for most sub-areas of Product Policy, it is relevant to be strong and well thought-out offline and transfer everything with care into the online market place.

4.1.1 Product Quality

In the centre of product policy is the quality competition (Wöhe et al., 2016, p. 393). Wöhe et al. (2016, p. 393) further state that technical progress results in good products being replaced with newer, better ones. Regarding quality improvements, product innovations and product variations are also relevant (Wöhe et al., 2016, S. 393). For a high fashion brand, it is not so much the technical progress that influences the competitor environment and that makes it essential to come up with ever new products, but rather the fast-paced fashion environment where trends are usually hyped intensively, but only for a short period of time. New styles are introduced in the market, gain popularity by being accepted by consumers, reach the stages of maturity, and go out of fashion acceptance (Kim, Fiore, & Kim, 2011, p. XIII). All these product innovations, in order to serve the newest trends or to create something that is trend-independently going to increase sales, is part of the offline product development and will therefore not be too deeply illuminated within this section. Nevertheless, it is relevant that the quality of the high fashion brand's products is not harmed through being purchasable in the online environment: when delivering a brand's products to a multi-brand online shop, for example, it needs to be made sure that the shop is trusted and has a good image, in this

case in regards to how the products are treated and delivered to the consumer. It needs to, in any case, be avoided that the physical quality of the products is harmed.

4.1.2 Product Differentiation

Product differentiation aims at saturating the needs of specific consumer wishes in order to serve different market segments (Wöhe et al., 2016). Individualised consumer treatments, serving specific consumer wishes, in the best case resulting in having bigger market shares, currently enjoy an important and promising role: on an economic level, the individualisation trend goes along with an increasing product differentiation, on which's end stands a personalised product for the target group One (Zukunftsinstitut, 2012). It can be seen that individualised products are indeed a significant dimension in the high fashion market. One example of a premium high fashion brand serving the individualisation trend is *initielle*: the brand is offering basic pieces of clothing from superior quality which can be individualised with the consumer's initials (*Initielle*, 2017). *IPHORIA*, a brand specialising on luxury, stylish technology accessories, has launched a collection called the "PERSONALIZE Kollektion": website visitors can shop iPhone cases and purchase patches, letter stickers and other small decorations in order to make their very own case that nobody else has (*IPHORIA*, 2016). The luxury unicum from the luxurious hierarchy, a product that is so exclusive and expensive that it is only produced once, usually counts to haute-couture fashion which is not relevant for this bachelor thesis (see 2.1). But brands like *initielle* and *IPHORIA*, bring production unicums to the mass market for a superior, but not invaluable price, and are therefore indeed relevant for the broad mass of high fashion brands entering the online market: since individualised products are currently an important trend regarding consumer satisfaction, it is an attractive way to saturate different consumer needs for various high fashion brands. Moreover, the individualisation possibility adds an emotional benefit to the brand's products, and it is an interesting story to tell which is highly recommendable to have in the online environment (see 3.2.2 and 3.2.3).

A high fashion brand's process for individualised consumer products will be illustrated by the example *IPHORIA*: the individualisation set up can be done online, preferably, even if the brand is usually cooperating with multi-brand shops or affiliate platforms as partners in the digital market, only on the own online shop *iphoria.com*. This will increase the traffic on their page, and will give a good reason for especially searching for the brand's online shop and not landing on any online partner's website where the

brand's standard products are available. This is very favourable since a brand always needs to make sure to increase its own page traffic, see 3.2.5. Moreover, since the individualisation of a luxury good is an emotional act and shall create a special brand-consumer-interaction, it needs to be made sure that the environment where the individualisation process takes place is totally CI-conform and contributes to the brand world experience, see 3.2.1. On a online partner's website, the brand experience through this relevant emotional bonding process could be reduced. It can rather be interesting for a brand to involve their online partners in another way: as it was discussed in 3.2.5, partner sites are often willing to offer special advertising possibilities for brands on their website. Therefore, an advertising space on a partner site – the more prominent, the better; depending on IPHORIA's budget – that redirects to the IPHORIA online shop can also bring additional relevant traffic. The story behind having the possibility to individualise the brand's products can ideally be spread over social media for adding value through visually attractive pictures and counting on people sharing and commenting on the posts, since it is an interesting story people are likely want to hear, see 3.2.2. Moreover, the involvement of a cooperation with one or more influencers is possible (see 3.2.9). In the case of IPHORIA, it can be suggested that their target group is not too narrow since the products are from superior price, but cannot seen as extremely luxurious and rare. Therefore, it is advised to cooperate with one or, even better, a few rather big influencers, since the divergence losses are expected to be rather small. The following graphic displays the described process and how each element is contributing:

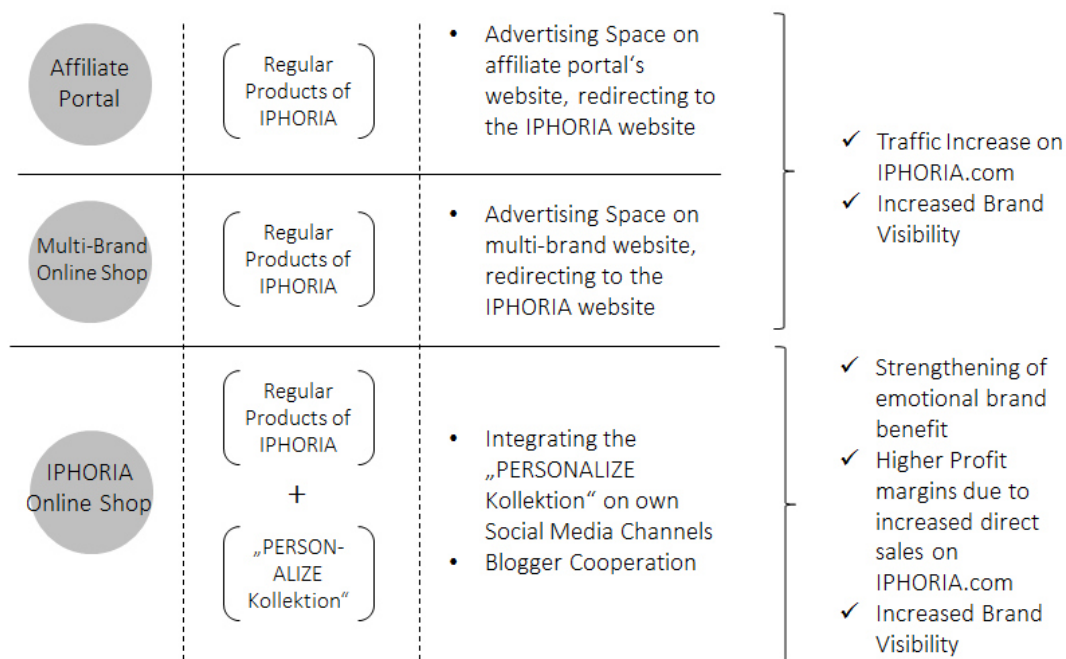


Figure 3: Product Differentiation Online / IPHORIA
Source: Own Graphic – Sophia Christahl 2017

On the right side of the graphic, all intended results are stated: the advertising spaces on online partner sites of IPHORIA will increase IPHORIA's brand visibility and will lead to more traffic on IPHORIA's own online shop. Through having the "PERSONALIZE Kollektion" only on their own online shop, the emotional brand benefit, essential for any luxury brand (see 3.2.2), is strengthened and, since purchases take place only on their own website, profit margins will be higher (see 3.2.7). Through blogger influence and promotion on IPHORIA's own social media channels, the brand once more increases their visibility.

4.1.3 Product Image

The product image aims at all emotional factors around a brand's products and is therefore relevant for various aspects, also in the offline environment. Wöhe et al (2016, p. 393) name "design", "packaging" and "brand image" as important ingredients that form a product's image, which all need to be anchored in the offline environment, but nevertheless are essential to be transported into the online environment: a brand needs to maintain and protect its thought-out brand world experience that usually is present offline through exclusive and well-thought out flagship stores, brand-suitable other POS locations like delicate department stores, great service and remarkable packaging of a brand's products, and many more factors. In the online environment, the same things are important: having only brand-suitable and qualitative POS locations (see 3.2.6), when delivering online purchases of a brand to consumers, making sure it comes in the same branded packaging as it would in a non-digital store and staying true to the brand's CI whenever possible.

4.1.4 Customer Service

Customer service is described by Wöhe et al (2016, p. 393) as "easy usability of the product" and "durability of the product". Just like product image, these points are anchored in the offline environment. Therefore, it just needs to be made sure that online, none of the factors that contribute to good customer service suffer when entering the digital market which could cause harm to the brand values of the brand and needs to be avoided in any case.

4.2 Distribution Policy

When choosing on which digital POS locations a high fashion brand shall be present, it is first essential to see what possibilities there are and, afterwards, evaluating all positive and negative aspects. This will be done in the following section and for each possible digital POS be concluded with a little summary whether the POS is favourable.

4.2.1 Single Brand Online Shop

A single brand online shop, meaning that a brand has not only a website, but an own online shop, can be very desirable. All positive and negative aspects of launching an own brand shop have been presented in 3.2.7 and are summarised within this table:

Own Brand Online Shop	
+ Full control (CI)	- Cost-intensive
+ Most intense brand experience	- Time-intensive
+ Higher profit margins	- Limited ways of generating traffic

Table 1: Advantages and Disadvantages / Single Brand Shop (based on 3.2.7)

When having an own online shop, a brand has full control over everything, which is especially relevant in regards to the brand's CI. Also, the strived for emotional benefit is strongest in an environment that is one hundred percent CI conform and not influenced by any possible factors like user comments, other brand's products or the CI of the online partner website. Moreover, profit margins are higher when the purchase takes place directly on the own brand shop. On the negative side, it can be said that the initial set-up as well as the maintenance of an online shop is very cost- and time intensive and the ways of generating traffic on the website are limited. Another aspect, named in 3.2.10, is the trend of increasing device diversity on the side of the consumers, making the initial set-up costs and time even more intense. Nevertheless, concluding these findings, it is strongly advisable for a high fashion brand to have an own online shop. Especially since the brand world experience, the emotional aspect and the brand identity is so important for a high fashion brand (see 3.2.1, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3), it is considered to be essential for successfully transporting a high fashion brand's values into the online marketing environment. Due to traffic generating limitations and the possibility of lower conversion rates due to a smaller product portfolio than on an affiliate platform, it needs

to be expected that the traffic as well as the conversion rates will not be as high as desired, which, in regards to the positive aspects, needs to be accepted.

In regards to the making of the own online shop for a high fashion brand, it needs to be made sure that all positive aspects mentioned do actually come into account entirely. It needs to be made sure that the shop does transport the CI of the brand to its fullest to create emotional bonding with the brand and to have a coherent and intense brand world experience (see 3.2.2, 3.2.1). In addition, the look of the web shop should be clear and user-friendly and free from any external influences like, for example, foreign banners, in order to not disturb the brand world (see 3.2.1) in any case. In order to remain competitive and user-friendly, the site should always serve the current standards of online marketing and therefore continuously should be tested, developed and redeveloped (see 3.2.7). Examples of high fashion brands having an own online shop are Gucci (gucci.com, 2017), Patrizia Pepe (patriziapepe.com, 2017) or Iris von Arnim (irisvonarnim.com, 2017).

4.2.2 Multi-Brand Online Shop

A multi-brand online shop is an online shop that directly sells the collection of various brands online. Different to the affiliate model, the purchase takes place on the multi-brand shop (see 3.2.5), which donates high importance to the decision whether and, if yes, on which multi-brand shops a high fashion brand wants to be present.

Multi-Brand Online Shop	
+ High visibility	- Disclosure of product data
+ Synergy effects	- Loss of control (CI)
+ Extra advertising possibilities	- Lower profit margins
+ Relatively little effort	

Table 2: Advantages and Disadvantages / Multi-Brand Shop (based on 3.2.5)

All advantages and disadvantages of being present in a multi-brand online shop have been discussed in 3.2.5, coming to four main advantages and three main disadvantages: high visibility, synergy effects, extra advertising possibilities (as already thought out in an action example with the brand IPHORIA in 4.1.2) and little effort, versus disclosure

of all product data, loss of control in regards to CI and lower profit margins than the brand would gain by selling over the brand's own online shop.

The concept advice that is given is to be present in a multi-brand online shop since the advantages are weighed with more value than the disadvantages. Especially the advantage of little effort comes into account in regards to cost and time: the POS location is given to the brand and the products solely need to be integrated, which also is not done by the brand itself, but by the multi-brand shop. Although some high fashion brands choose not to be available on multi-brand online shops (as well as affiliate platforms), for example Louis Vuitton, Chanel or Hermès, the broad mass of them chooses to do so. It is advised also for the named three brands which have so far been abstinent to open up to the variety of online POS possibilities, since distribution policy also means to be available at the place where the need is created (see 2.3 – the online market is increasing), means being available at any time (Wöhe et al., 2016, p. 447) and also being available in need-fulfilling “performance bundles” (Wöhe et al., 2016, p. 447), see also 2.2.2. These performance bundles could, in the high fashion market, be the purchase of a dress from Chloé for a special occasion, and having the possibility to right away to purchase the other outfit components at the same place and time, like a clutch by Balenciaga and high heels by Isabel Marant. The only thing that every high fashion brand thinking about offering its products via a multi-brand web shop needs to take into account are all decision parameters illustrated in 3.2.6. For example, in regards to the look of the online shop, it needs to be accepted that the brand experience of the own high fashion brand will be subsidiary since the multi-brand shop has a CI itself and since various other brands and their products will be present right next to the own brand's products. Still, the look of the shop is very relevant: it shall also serve all current technical online marketing standards in order to have satisfied consumers which will result in increased sales and, in addition, it should as well have a clearly-structured, visually appealing look. If only one of these aspects is not the case, it is likely to reflect badly onto the own high fashion brand's image, which shall be avoided in any case (see 3.2.6). Examples for multi-brand online shops in the high fashion industry are mytheresa.com (mytheresa.com, 2017), net-a-porter.com (net-a-porter.com, 2017) or Unger (unger.com, 2017).

4.2.3 Affiliate Platforms

As described in 3.1.2, a fashion affiliate platform offers the products of high fashion brands in cooperation with single brand shops as well as multi-brand shops. The pur-

chase of a product takes place via a redirection to an online shop and not on the affiliate platform itself. The advantages and disadvantages of affiliate portals for high fashion brands will be displayed according to 3.2.5 in the following table:

Affiliate Portal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + High visibility + Synergy effects + Extra advertising possibilities + Relatively little effort + Traffic increase on own brand's online shop through redirects + Increased sale possibilities through the greatest product assortment of the brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disclosure of product data - Loss of control (CI)

Table 3: Advantages and Disadvantages / Affiliate Portal (based on 2.3.5)

The advantages and disadvantages of affiliate platforms and multi-brand online shops are quite similar, which is why they have been discussed in one chapter (3.2.5). According to the findings in 3.2.5, affiliate portals with bring two additional advantages for high fashion brands: first, through the redirects, the high fashion brand increases its own page traffic via the presence on the affiliate platform and, second, since affiliate platforms usually cooperate with many multi-brand shops and single brand online shops, the affiliate portal has the broadest product assortment of one brand, which increases the chance of generating sales.

The concept advice is to be present on affiliate partner website, also after the detailed checking of all measures named in 3.2.6, for the same reasons why it was argued that it is important and favourable for a high fashion brand to be present on a multi-brand online shop. Moreover, since the affiliate platform brings along even more advantages from which especially the traffic increase is from importance (see 3.2.5), it is advisable for a high fashion brand to be present on an affiliate platform. The look as well as the technical measures of the site are equally important as when choosing a multi-brand-shop to cooperate with, see 3.2.6. Examples for affiliate platforms focusing on high fashion are FASHIONHYPE.com (FASHIONHYPE.com, 2017) or mybestbrands.com (mybestbrands.com, 2017).

4.3 Price Policy

As described in 2.2.3, the price policy of a brand includes four sub-components that will all be illuminated in this field of the brand value transfer concept. Although the sub-component “price” can be seen as only being relevant in the offline environment, all other factors contributing to the field of price policy actually are relevant when it comes to transforming a high fashion brand’s values into the digital environment.

4.3.1 Price

General price policies, meaning to determine what the optimal offer price is, are independent from the brand’s online activities and will therefore not further be discussed.

4.3.2 Price Reductions

Generally, all price reductions – or whether a brand wants to do price reductions at all – are also part of the offline world. Nevertheless, price reductions need to be given consideration for the online environment, for example in regards to whether multi-brand shops that cooperate with the high fashion brand are allowed to give out general promotion codes for their website which can also be used for the purchase of the high fashion brand’s products. This relates to the study of Dubois et al. (see 2.1) and the finding that a “very high price” strongly contributes to whether the clothing brand is perceived as high fashion brand or not (see 2.1). If online partners do make price reductions that are too high, the brand values could be harmed, therefore, it is essential to keep control over the topic of pricing.

As a high fashion brand that successfully wants to transfer its brand values to the online environment, it can be advisable to make price reductions only online and only on their own brand online shop. This example shall be illustrated as an action approach of the brand value transfer concept by the high fashion brand Patrizia Pepe:

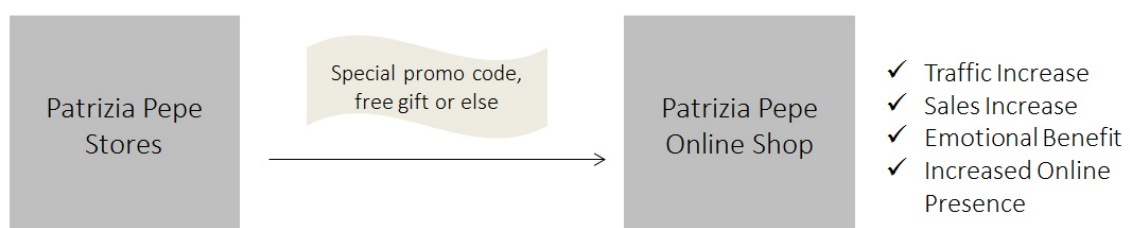


Figure 4: Price Reductions online / Patrizia Pepe
Source: Own Graphic – Sophia Christahl 2017

When a consumer is entering a physical store of Patrizia Pepe, he or she could be informed via visually attractive and qualitative POS stand-up displays, via a promotional sales assistant, or even via the cashier that there is a special promotion available that can only be enjoyed online. This can be a special discount code that is given out or can be taken away as a flyer and can be used for the first purchase in the Patrizia Pepe online shop, or a gift like a small leather etui or a Patrizia Pepe bracelet that is given additionally to the Patrizia Pepe online shopping basket of the consumer. Having this information, the chances are high that the consumer will visit the Patrizia Pepe online shop to enjoy the exclusive promotional offer. This results in various factors that are favourable for a high fashion brand when being present in the online environment: the traffic on the Patrizia Pepe online shop is likely to increase, which is favourable according to 3.2.7, leading to an expected rise of online sales. The emotional benefit (see 3.2.2) is also strengthened since the customer will feel special through the individual offer and the offline brand world experience is transported into the online environment (see 3.2.1, 3.2.3). Moreover, the overall online presence of Patrizia Pepe will be increased through higher traffic numbers that could result in more interactions on social media and more people talking about Patrizia Pepe online, to only name a few examples.

4.3.3 Payment Conditions

The emotional brand experience is very relevant in the online environment (see 3.2.1) and the payment process is not really contributing to this, but still, it takes place whenever a purchase is made online. To emotionally charge the payment process is not really possible, since it usually includes the entering of payment information, the address of the consumer, sometimes a registration. It should nevertheless be made sure that the payment conditions and possibilities online do not harm the positive emotional experience with the brand, for example through technical flaws, limited payment possibilities – taking into account that it is relevant to bring the offline brand world experience to the online world and that, in the shop, there are many possibilities to pay –, or else. It shall always be aimed at making the payment process as convenient as possible for the consumer. How the payment is done is also relevant when choosing which online partners to work with. A multi-brand shop that has limited and flawed payment options should not be a partner of a high fashion brand. To make the payment process as easy as possible, a high fashion brand should integrate the option on their own online shop to let all data entered be saved, resulting in, for the next purchase, the payment process being

especially convenient to fulfil, again contributing to the emotional bonding with the brand.

4.3.4 Delivery Conditions

When a purchase takes place online, regardless whether it is directly on a brand's online shop or a multi-brand shop or through the redirection on one of them via an affiliate website, it needs to be made sure everything is as convenient as possible for the consumer, just the same as in regards to the payment conditions. This means that the online delivery times should be reasonable and can possibly be updated via free express delivery when the online shopping basket reaches a specific value. This again would enhance the emotional bonding with the brand, see 3.2.2. It could in cases even be thought of not having delivery fees at all, to differentiate the high fashion brand even more from less exclusive competitors and strengthen the emotional loading of service and brand values online (see 3.2.2, 3.2.3). Therefore, when choosing a multi-brand shop which is selling a high fashion brand's products, their delivery conditions should also be faced to find out whether they fit to the high fashion brand's policies and brand standards.

4.4 Communication Policy

In this chapter, the communication policy will focus on all online advertising possibilities that are seen as relevant for a high fashion brand to perform and will be described and enriched with examples. All in all, the online communication policy shall add up to an advertising concept that fits to the offline brand world experience and all possible offline activities of the brand (see 3.2.1 and 3.2.3), but shall not keep the high fashion brand from testing and experimenting on what works best in the digital market place (see 3.2.8).

4.4.1 Search Engine Marketing

4.4.1.1 Search Engine Optimisation

Although it is hard to achieve traffic via other possibilities than direct search requests on the brand ("Gucci" or "Gucci Dionysus Handbag" or "Gucci Online Shop"), it needs to be made sure that the brand's online shop is good to be found on Google (see the challenge explained in 3.2.5). This can be achieved via optimising the high fashion

brand's website and online shop not only in regards to the brand's CI and a good and emotionally loaded user experience, but also in optimising the page in regards to Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). SEO is treating the manner of how a website can, for a specific term – usually a keyword on Google – be prominently placed in the search results without paying money to the search engine (Bindl, 2007, p. 351).

It would burst the extent and purpose of this paper to illuminate and discuss in detail all factors that are relevant for a good search engine optimisation. But it is advised for each high fashion brand in order to increase page traffic and generate more sales to deal with SEO. If necessary and the knowledge internally is not present, it can be very helpful to have an agency that is offering SEO services. “Every company that wants to make sales online should be found within the different search engines” (Muntendorf, 2017, p. 3). The relevance of visibility on search engines also comes into account when choosing the online partners, see 3.2.6

4.4.1.2 Search Engine Advertising

Next to the optimisation of the own website relating to being found better on Google and other search engines, the use of advertising on search engines can be taken. Search Engine Advertising (SEA) is a payment program to be shown on the top search results when booking a specific keyword, for example on the market leader Google AdWords (Fischer, 2009, pp. 229-231). An example would be the high fashion brand Ted Baker booking on the keyword “Ted Baker beauty case online”, to make sure the brand does not only appear in the organic search results, but also in the paid search results being displayed above the organic ones. Just like SEO, the topic of SEA is very detailed and complex and could fill a whole bachelor thesis itself. Therefore, special usage techniques of SEA will not be taken into account. The concept advice for each high fashion brand is to use SEA, but to not use it excessively, since, as it was learned in 3.2.7, traffic possibilities are limited and generic search keyword (like “handbag”) do not make sense: The search intention of the consumer is not sure – when looking for “handbag” on Google, the intention could be to purchase a handbag or to sell a handbag, to look for an expensive or a cheap handbag, it is not sure what kind of handbag, maybe it is only searched for general information on handbags – and unnecessary traffic can be generated, leading to divergence losses which nevertheless need to be paid for via AdWords. Therefore, for a high fashion brand, it is best to participate in AdWords in the best way possible by using keywords that support the brand's page traffic and make sense, and

besides, to look for online partners (affiliate platforms and multi-brand shops) who have very good SEA practices and bring qualitative traffic on their website (see 3.2.6). Again, an agency offering the service of SEA could be advisable.

4.4.2 Influencer Marketing

As it was discussed in 3.2.9, influencer marketing can be a good way for high fashion brands to advertise online, which is why influencer marketing will be advised to conduct in the brand value transfer concept. Still, when it comes to exactly how a high fashion brand can indulge in influencer marketing, there was a discrepancy between the two expert viewpoints that needs to be kept in mind, see 3.2.9: Harald Muntendorf stated the opinion that many smaller influencers are best for a high fashion brand to avoid divergence losses. Dennis Ritter, the other consulted expert, named that many and bigger influencers are the best influencer cooperation choice for a high fashion brand in order to have a broad audience and to create the feeling of “missing out on something”. On the basis of these two expert findings on influencer marketing, three possible options have been derived and will be presented in the following figure, according to the brand’s advertising budget and their will to experiment. “Small” and “big” influencer is an ambiguous description, but in this concept, an influencer labelled as small has follower numbers of up to 10.000. An influencer labelled big is suggested to have followers around 500.000.

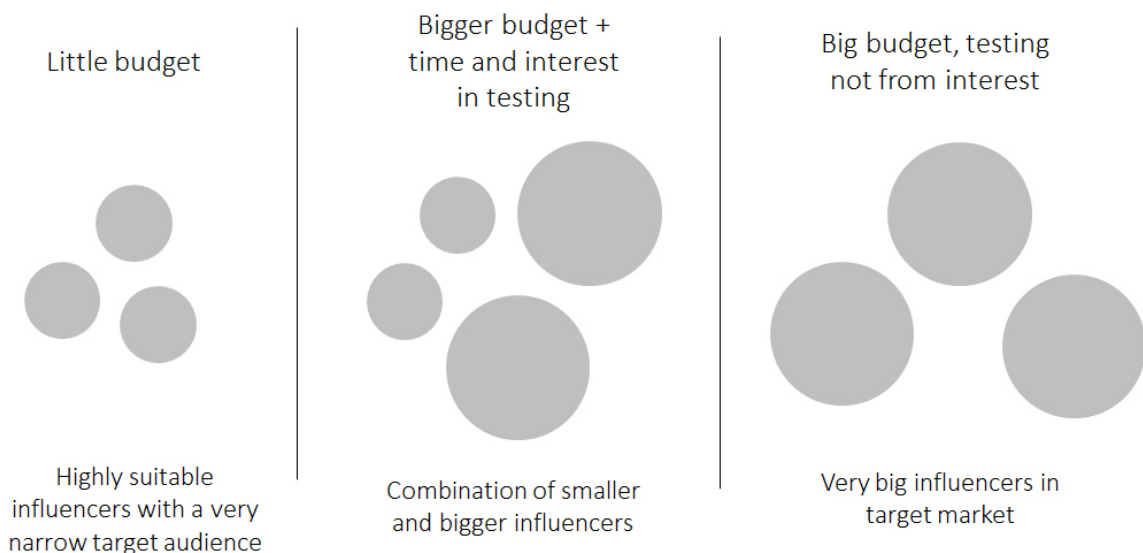


Figure 5: Influencer Cooperation Strategies
Source: Own Graphic – Sophia Christahl 2017

If the advertising budget of the high fashion brand is rather limited, option one can come into use: a few small influencers for exactly suitable target audiences and nearly

no divergence losses, creating high possibilities of sales. For a budget that is rather big and, moreover, not too much time can be spend on testing or exactly finding out which influencers would have the very best target audience (like it would need to be the case in option one), option three can be the best case. Divergence losses and lower sale rates need to be accepted in exchange for very high visibility and reach and therefore an intense branding effect. A combination of both, defined as option two, shown in the middle, is made up of working with smaller as well as bigger influencer and to test what works best. The use of special tracking possibilities would especially with this option be advisable, to see which influencer with what follower number (reach) works best and then intensify cooperations like this and continue on that path (see testing topic in 3.2.8). Since learned in 3.2.8 that testing is so important in the online marketing environment, the last described option is mostly favourable if the time is available and the budget is there.

Deepened research needs to be done in order to find out which influencer fits best to what brand: a sportive, edgy brand like Acne might choose another influencer to cooperate with like a highly elegant, luxurious brand like Valentino. In order to define who fits best, it is not only the target audience of the influencer that needs to be taken a look at, but also the picture world of the influencer, his/her wordings, etc. The relevance of the right environment that needs to be chosen online in order not to harm the exclusive brand essence of a high fashion brand has in detail been described in 3.2.3. Moreover, all actions need to be based on the target group and on where the target group is active online (see 3.2.4). Therefore, the concept advice for a high fashion brand is always to choose an influencer who is active where the brand's target group is active, which can be YouTube, Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram or other social media platforms. Since on Instagram qualitative and visually highly attractive pictures are the focus, this is usually the platform that would make most sense for a high fashion brand. But nevertheless, to have an influencer cooperation that is especially aimed at creating emotions and telling a story (see 3.2.3), the involving medium Snapchat might be the best choice. "I need to find a story that works, and afterwards, I choose the right channel to implement it. A conceptual starting point, followed by deciding on which channels the concept can function best" (Ritter, 2016, p. 2).

4.4.3 Banner

Although the opinions on banner usage through a high fashion brand differ, see 3.2.8, it was illuminated in that chapter that banners can work. Instead of showing a campaign picture that is a copy from the offline print environment which is expected to perform well online but usually does not, a high fashion brand should try out what was stated by Muntendorf, explained in 3.2.8: The usage of different banner formats and images that are not campaign- or CI-, but product-oriented. In the end, after testing different banner strategies, the different results shall be compared (click- and conversion-rates) and the best banner performance will be recognised. In regards to creating banners that are especially well in performance, retargeting is a topic that also needs to be examined before choosing which banners are visually working best. Retargeting is taking the website surfing behaviours of the consumer into account in order to, after leaving the website without the fulfilment of a conversion, address him as interest-specific as possible (Kaspers, 2014, pp. 27-29). In the online fashion market, a conversion can be seen as the purchase of the product of a high fashion brand's online shop, a sale, and in regards to "website surfing behaviour", it is interesting to see on which products the user has clicked, resulting in the conclusion that general interest in the product is given. Based on the findings of Muntendorf, combined with the learnings on retargeting according to Kaspers, the following three banners are advisable to be tried out for a high fashion brand in the online environment, illustrated by the example of J.W.Anderson:

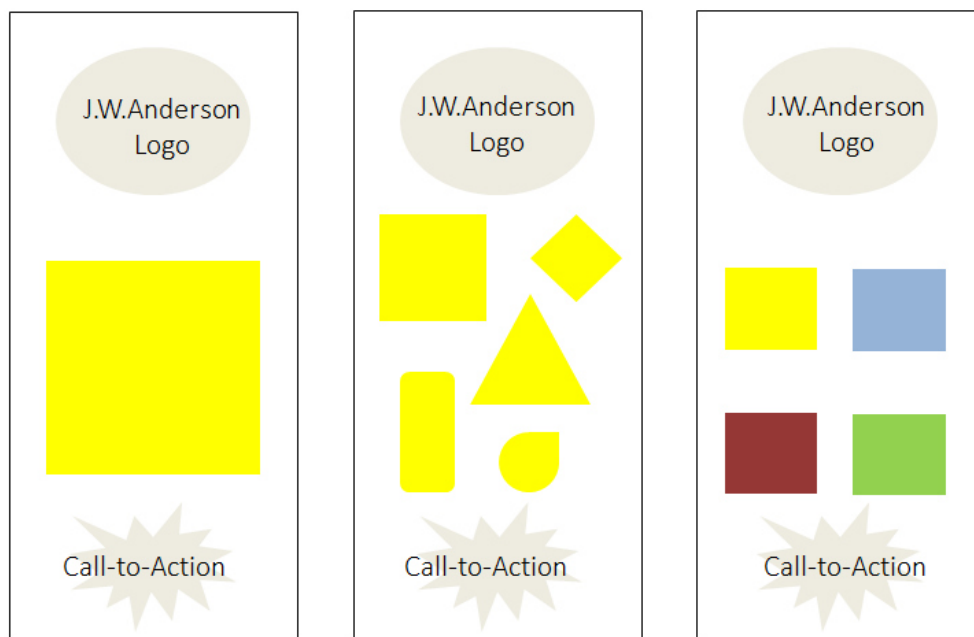


Figure 6: Banner Strategies / J.W.Anderson
Source: Own Graphic – Sophia Christahl 2017

First, it is essential that the brand's name is prominently displayed on the banner and that there is a clear call-to-action on it (Prussakov, 2011, p. 123). This is why every banner option has the brand's logo placed on top of the product(s) and a call-to-action below the products, which should be simple yet persuasive (examples could be "shop now" or "see now"). The first banner strategy is the following: a product of the brand, either a product the consumer is followed with via retargeting or a currently trending product of the brand, which for J.W.Anderson currently is the "Pierce Bag", is prominently placed in the middle of the banner. This way, the eye is not distracted and the focus is directly guided on the product of potential interest, which is likely to be seen as qualitative and clean and will trigger emotional desire ("I want to have that bag") (see 3.2.2). The second strategy is to show the retargeting product or the Pierce Bag surrounded by other outfit components like shoes, a jacket, a phone case, all of similar colour, all in all creating a homogenous and visually appealing outfit collage. Emotional desire will be provoked and, furthermore, the storytelling momentum could be activated ("I want to have that bag and it would look amazing in combination with the shoes shown next to it") (see 3.2.2). The option three of the presented banner strategies would be to show the retargeting product or the Pierce Bag in combination with visually and practically related products or the Pierce Bag in different colours and variations. Emotional desire is especially likely to be triggered (3.2.2), since the possibility of showing one option that will pursue the consumer to click on the banner is higher. The following graphic will illustrate the banner option three further with the help of the products of J.W.Anderson (J.W.Anderson, 2017):



Figure 7: Colours and Variations of the J.W.Anderson Pierce Bag
Source: (J.W.Anderson, 2017)

All three banner options are, as illustrated in 3.2.8, focusing on the products of a high fashion brand and experimenting with different colours and outfit elements in order to, after some time of testing, be able to see which banner is performing best. The concept advice is to try out all three banner options and to gain a learning in the end. After see-

ing which one has performed best, this banner can be further developed and slightly adjusted, to achieve the best performance possible. If possible, it is always advisable to use retargeting products, since “retargeting is promising a higher click- and conversion rate. [...] There is a remarkable difference between campaigns with and without retargeting” (Kaspers, 2014, p. 29). Nevertheless, if retargeting is for some reason technically not realisable for the brand, or if the aim is not to regain a former website visitor but to attract a new online consumer, the brand’s most trending products shall be integrated (like the Pierce Bag in the example of J.W.Anderson). This way, the possibility that the consumer’s attention and interest is generated, will be higher than with an unknown product of the brand. In regards to the place where the banner shall be situated online, the findings of 3.2.4 can be applied: wherever the target group of the high fashion brand is active and which websites it is visiting, the banner is placed right.

4.4.4 Social Media

As it was learned in 3.2.4, the target group – what interests them and where they are active online – is especially relevant in the online environment. This requirement of Ritter and Muntendorf is especially important in the field of social media: “The social media strategy starts with the client. [...] It needs to be found out where and to which extend they are active in the social web. [...] Which information is the user wishing for? On which platforms do the users interact and exchange views with each other?” (Grabs & Bannour, 2011, p. 60) Therefore, in order to find out which social media platform works best, it needs to be found out where the target group is active. Moreover, the message that is intended to be transported needs to be defined first and, afterwards, the most suiting channel needs to be chosen to transport the message the best possible way (see 3.2.4). In regards to what content a brand shall share on social media, telling a story that people are interested in hearing, commenting on and sharing (see 3.2.2) is especially relevant: social media marketing chases the aim of having a good consumer-brand-dialogue, a good brand image and an intense brand perception via an ongoing exchange over a brand’s product to increase revenue sustainably (Grabs & Bannour, 2011, p. 64). A possible short-term social media strategy will be outlined with the brand Gucci and illustrated using the following graphic:

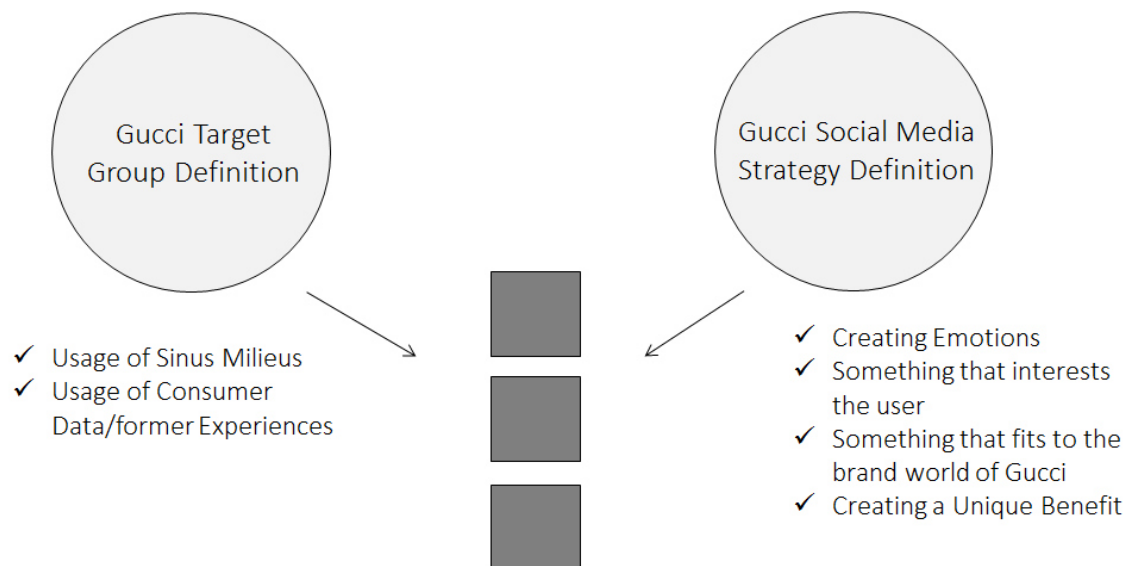


Figure 8: Creating a Social Media Strategy / Gucci
 Source: Sophia Christahl – Own Graphic 2017

The social media strategy for a high fashion brand, in this case with the example of Gucci, needs to be based on two main components: Gucci's target group and Gucci's intended social media strategy. An exact and narrowed-down target group definition for the brand is needed to be found out in order to know on which channels the target group is active and can be reached. Sinus Milieus can be used to narrow down a brand's target group (Grabs & Bannour, 2011, p. 64), but additionally, to gain exact insights, former experiences with consumers of Gucci and their data (see 3.2.10) can be taken. Concerning the strategy on social media, it needs to be thought of an intended message to be transported that is creating emotions and makes an interesting story for the user (see 3.2.2), that fits to the (offline) brand world of Gucci (see 3.2.1) and that creates a unique benefit other than the quality of Gucci's product (see 3.2.2). This can, in the case of Gucci, for example be an exclusive live stream from the presentation of the new collection during the Fashion Week in Paris that would serve all desired factors of good content. When these two aspects are taken into account and considered in detail, the right social networks can be determined, represented through the exemplary three squares within the graphic. The goal is to combine the live-video of the new Gucci collection with the right networks that are capable of showing a live-video, capable of qualitatively transporting the intended message and which are networks on which Gucci's target group is active. This will lead to a positive brand experience and sustainable revenue increases, like Grabs et al. (2011, p. 64) mentioned.

In 3.2.3, it is explained that high fashion brands often are in fear of a loss of control online and a possible shitstorm. Although these challenges do exist especially on social media platforms, it is advised for a high fashion brand to take this risk and enter the social environment after following the procedure described and shown in Figure 8. Besides, as stated in 3.2.8: it will be talked about the brand anyway. The brand can only decide whether it will take part in the talk or not.

4.4.5 Usage of Trends

In 3.2.10, upcoming trends in the online environment have been discussed via the two consulted experts Dennis Ritter and Harald Muntendorf. All of the named trends could be in detail researched and underlaid with additional studies and findings to determine how a high fashion brand can use them for their online presence. Although no specific action advise will be given at this point due to limitations of this thesis, it is advised for every high fashion brand to concern themselves with current and upcoming trends on a regular basis in order to stay competitive not only in the direct competitor environment of other high fashion brands, but also in regards to general practices and unfeasibility's in the online market environment.

5 Evaluation

The purpose of this bachelor thesis was to provide a generally applicable brand value transfer concept for high fashion brands in the online environment. The concept has been based on the findings of two experts in the field and has additionally been enriched with scientific literature to give valid ground for a practical concept. The concept does take most relevant aspects into account and can be used as a general guidance for each high fashion brand on how to behave in the digital market place and contains ideas for practical approaches. Nevertheless, most action advices needed to be kept short in order to fulfil the purpose of this paper and not to burst its expected extend. In reality, each of the fields of action represented by the marketing mix of the 4 P's would need to be illuminated in much more detail and, moreover, brand-specific. Although high fashion brands are usually similar to each other, they all bring along a different emotional benefit and not just "quality" (see 3.2.2) in order to be successfully differentiated by the con-

sumer. This results in each high fashion brand having slightly different target groups that all need to be addressed differently and which are interested in different content. Prices of high fashion brands also differ, which again leads to differences that need to be taken into account for a flawless brand value transfer concept from the offline to the online environment.

Besides the issue of generalisation where individualisation would also be needed, the weighting of the different Ps, resulting in the product, distribution, price and communication policy, has become slightly unequal within the concept. During the writing of the thesis, it was noted that it is hard to weigh all policies similar without going into too much detail, which resulted in a focus on the communication policy of high fashion brands online. For a gapless and encompassing concept, all Ps would need to be donated the same consideration.

Especially due to the named generalisation problematic, an overall exact and ideal concept that does naturally work online for each high fashion brand cannot be given in any scope or circumstance. The concept provided in this thesis is nevertheless giving advisable guidance and strategic practical approaches built on solid empirical and scientific research. It can therefore be used as a useful starting point as well as for general orientation for a high fashion brand aiming at being successfully present in the online environment.

6 Final Consideration

6.1 Conclusion

This bachelor thesis has answered the question “How can a high fashion brand transfer its brand values into the online marketing environment?” via providing a brand value transfer concept with advising action approaches for high fashion brands in the digital market place. The concept has been based on in-depth scientific research as well as on empirical research through the conduction of two expert interviews, providing the possibility to derive relevant requirements from the areas of advertising, branding, online

marketing and high fashion. The practical concept has given overall approaches and advises and can be used as a general guideline for high fashion brands to overcome possible fears and insecurities towards the online environment. In the end, a critical evaluation of the concept was made that marks the limitations of the concept and highlights its capabilities.

6.2 Future Assumptions

Having the findings of 2.3 in mind, proving that online marketing will become even more relevant than it is now in the next years, it can be concluded that it is essential for every brand to somehow take part in the online environment. It is expected that even FMCG brands that have been named of being active online only subsidiary will need to start involving themselves in the digital market place, since growing device diversity already is present (see 3.2.10) and it can be expected that POS locations as well as offline forms of advertising will be more and more linked to online promotional activities and experiences. Offline sales are likely to still be relevant in the future since a brand experience only built within a digital environment is not likely to work (see 3.2.1). It is expected that high fashion brands will intensify their offline store experiences in flagship stores, resulting in not being dependent on a multi-sensational brand experience online and still generating sales through an emotionally loaded and very present brand world. High fashion brands are already seeing the need to be present in the online environment in order to stay competitive (see 3.2.3) and it is expected that the current fear and insecurity mentioned at the very beginning of this paper are likely to become less present. High fashion brands will, especially when developing the courage of testing and experiencing online, gain important knowledge and insights that will burst their brand values as well as their sale numbers.

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Appendix

Appendix – Part I:

Expert Interview Transcript / Dennis Ritter

SC: Sehr gut, dann fangen wir an. Zuerst einmal zu Ihnen als Person: Wie hat Sie denn Ihre berufliche Laufbahn dahin geführt, bei deepblue networks zu arbeiten?

DR: Also, ich habe hier damals meine Diplomarbeit geschrieben im Sportbereich. Und habe dann eine Übernahme angeboten bekommen. Das ist jetzt zehn Jahre her. Von daher war und bin ich ein deepblue Kind.

SC: Ah, das klingt gut. Und was sind hier Ihre hauptsächlichen Verantwortungsbereiche?

DR: Also, ich mache Teamleitung und Beratung, das heißt bei uns, dass auch teilweise Strategie in meinen Aufgabenbereich fällt, ein Team von vier Beratern habe, und wir führen quasi mit meinem CD zusammen eine Unit. Das heißt, wir haben einen bestimmten Kundenstamm, der von uns aus als Team betreut wird.

SC: Und Ihr Fokus ist dabei der Onlinebereich?

DR: Naja, bei uns als Agentur haben wir grundsätzlich den Fokus Online. Bei mir in der Unit ist es tatsächlich mehr 360 Grad, also, die meisten Marken werden bei uns in fast allen Kanälen betreut.

SC: Die nächste Frage, wie lange sie denn bereits in diesem Bereich arbeiten, erübrigt sich ja dann auch damit. Das sind ja dann zehn Jahre.

DR: Tatsächlich sogar insgesamt etwas länger – ich habe eine Ausbildung gemacht, bevor ich studiert habe. Und während des Studiums war ich selbstständig. Also eigentlich sind es dann wahrscheinlich jetzt schon 16 Jahre.

SC: Okay, sehr gut! 16 Jahre sind ja wirklich bereits eine ganz schöne Zeit. Zur nächsten Frage: Sind Sie der Meinung, dass eine Marke überhaupt heute noch erfolgreich sein kann, ohne im Internet auf irgendeine Art und Weise Präsenz zu zeigen?

DR: Also, jein. Ich glaube, völlig ohne Präsenz geht es nicht. Aber manche Marken zeigen, dass die Präsenz im Netz eher untergeordnet ist. Gerade, wenn man sich den typischen FMCG-Bereich anguckt: Ferrero, Kinderschokolade, ist im Netz nicht wirklich vertreten. Die machen ein bisschen Social Media, deren Website ist unter aller Sau, daran sieht man einfach, dass der Großteil des Budgets z. B. eher in TV fließt. Von

daher würde ich sagen: Nein, eigentlich nicht, aber es gibt unterschiedliche Abstufungen, in denen Marken im Netz unterwegs sind.

SC: Okay, das heißt, wenn es zum Markenkern passt und die Zielgruppe es nicht stört, dann wäre es auch möglich, den Fokus weiterhin auf Offline zu setzen und nur minimale Onlinepräsenz zu zeigen.

DR: Ja. Ich glaube tatsächlich, dass es eher andersherum nicht funktioniert: Dass wenn man den Fokus nur digital machen würde, schafft man es nicht, eine vernünftige Marke aufzubauen. Ich finde, es kommt auch sehr stark darauf an, ob die Marke einen wirklichen Mehrwert bietet oder ob man eher durch Strategie und Werbung einen Benefit draufsetzt, der dann jedoch eher ein kommunikativer ist. Vor allem, wenn das Produkt wirklich Mehrwert mitbringt, dann kann man digital ganz gut dazuschalten. Ansonsten ist es auch nur ein Aufmerksamkeitskanal.

SC: Okay, verstehe. Man kann davon ausgehen, dass für jede Marke ein maßgeschneidertes Marketingkonzept stets das Beste ist. Gibt es dennoch Grundpfeiler, die im Bereich des Online Marketings für jede Marke essentiell sind und stets beachtet bzw. umgesetzt werden sollten?

DR: Bestimmt. Also, grundsätzlich muss man sich immer angucken, in welchen Kanälen man seine Zielgruppe erreicht und wo die unterwegs sind. Daher würde ich es eher so formulieren: Wenn wir hier digitale Kommunikation denken, dann denken wir immer in Erfahrungen und das spielerische Explorieren von Dingen. Ich persönlich basiere das mal auf eine Lerntheorie: Wenn ich nur etwas sehe oder höre, behalte ich nur 30% der Botschaft. Aber wenn ich etwas z. B. weitererzähle oder miterlebe, dann sind es mindestens 70%. Für mich funktioniert digital genau so: Ich kann z. B. etwas teilen, etwas Neues entdecken, etc. Und deshalb würde ich sagen, das ist eher der Grundpfeiler: Ich muss mir eine Geschichte suchen, die in der Art und Weise funktioniert. Und dann suche ich mir den richtigen Kanal dafür. Also eher konzeptionelles Starten und überlegen, über welche Kanäle das Konzept am besten funktioniert und implementiert werden kann.

SC: Okay. Luxusmarken werden für diese Arbeit definiert als Massenware mit gehobenem Preis und gehobener Qualität. Maßgeschneiderte Unikate oder Ähnliches werden dabei jedoch nicht beachtet. Was gilt es aus Ihrer Sicht für eine solche

Luxusmarke beim Aufsetzen des allumfassenden Werbekonzeptes (Promotion) zu beachten?

DR: Ich glaube, dass sich eine solche Premiummarke in Kontrast zu einer nicht Premiummarke in der Erfahrung unterscheidet. Also, wenn ich nur jemandem erzähle, dass es Qualität ist, dann glaubt er mir das vielleicht, aber er wird nicht den Mehrwert von 50% oder 100% Preisaufschlag erkennen. Das heißt, ich muss es irgendwie schaffen, dass der Konsument meine Marke „erfährt“. Daher glaube ich gerade bei solchen Marken nicht daran, dass es nur Online funktionieren kann. Denn, man muss für die Erfahrung in so einen Store gehen. Man muss das ganze mal atmen, anfassen. Man müsste sich also tatsächlich überlegen, wie kann ich die Markenerfahrung, also diesen Gap zwischen „ich sehe und höre etwas“ und ich habe dann letztendlich meine erste Erfahrung, wie kann ich das nahe zusammenbringen. Das schaffen eigentlich alle erfolgreichen Premiummarken sehr gut.

SC: Das heißt, abheben von den weniger Premium-orientierten Marken durch Erlebnis, durch Anfassbarkeit, durch Wertgefühl?

DR: Absolut. Ein gutes Beispiel ist zum Beispiel Nespresso, eine Premium-Marke im Bereich Kaffee: Wenn man bei denen in den Store geht, dann ist das einfach eine Markenwelt. Alles duftet nach Kaffee, alles sieht super aus und wird gut präsentiert, etc. Und die trägt dazu bei, dass ich dann zum Beispiel auch Online was davon verkaufen kann, da ich ein bestimmtes Bild von dieser Marke habe. Dieses Erlebnis von dem Store könnte man rein online nie erzeugen.

SC: Ja, Nespresso ist da im Bereich Premiummarke, auch wenn es um Kaffee geht, ein sehr gutes und spannendes Beispiel.

DR: Ja, und auch die Store-in-Store Konzepte in Supermärkten oder edlen Kaufhäusern funktionieren: Selbst auf kleinstem Raum kriegen die das durch ihre Markenwelt ziemlich gut hin. Diese Erlebniswelt ist einfach relevant, daher überlegt mittlerweile – das ist jetzt zwar keine Premiummarke, aber dennoch – Amazon eigene Stores aufzumachen abseits von Online. Auch wenn Online Shops und Digital immer weiter wächst: Die Großen Marken erkennen, dass so ein Concept Store in großen Städten etc. extrem relevant für die Markenwelt und das Markenerlebnis ist.

SC: Verstehe. Das ist auch eine Frage, die ich mir zum Beispiel in der Arbeit stelle: Wie dieses Erlebnis, dieses Luxusgefühl, in einen Online Shop oder auch auf eine Affiliate

Plattform oder so übertragen werden kann. Denn da kann ja nun mal viel von dieser Wertigkeit, von diesem Markengefühl, verloren gehen.

DR: Ja, also für mich, um da ein Positivbeispiel zu nennen, wo ich E-Commerce mit mehr Erlebnis verbinde, ist Mr. Spex. Wo ich wirklich das Gefühl eines Mehrwerts habe: Ich kann mir eine Brille aussuchen, ich kann mir die „aufsetzen“ – ich fühle sie zwar noch nicht, aber ich habe zumindest schon mal das Optische. Die haben das großartig gemacht, und ich bin hundertprozentig sicher, dass sie durch dieses innovative Konzept einen deutlich höheren Abverkauf im Vergleich zu anderen Stores des selben Bereiches haben. Ich glaube also, man muss einfach nach dem richtigen Insight suchen auf Konsumentenseite. Wonach suchen die eigentlich?

SC: Das heißt, herausgearbeiteter Extrapunkt war vor allem dieses Erlebbar und Anfassbar. Wenn man diesen Punkt jetzt nimmt, in Bezug auf Luxusmarken und Onlinemarketing, wie sieht es da aus in Bezug auf die gängigen Werbemöglichkeiten? Ich habe hier ein paar Stichpunkte: Social Media, Banner, Influencer Marketing, Suchmaschinenwerbung, jegliche weitere Werbemittel, ... was fällt Ihnen da konkret ein, was man beachten müsste?

DR: Als erstes fällt mir ein: Banner sollte man nicht machen. Ich glaube, die Zeit ist vorbei. Also, mir fallen eigentlich zwei Dinge ein: Das eine ist, dass ich persönlich daran glaube, dass ich Markenwerte so aufschlüsseln kann, dass ich sagen kann, das ist das Offline-Erlebnis und das ist das Online-Erlebnis. Das sollte jede Marke machen und für sich definieren.

SC: Also würden Sie sagen, dass man quasi zwei Welten aufbauen müsste – Online und Offline?

DR: Ja, aber die sind ja verbunden, da Sie aus dem gleichen Markenkern kommen. Eine Marke sollte also für sich definieren, wie so ein Online-Erlebnis passend zur Welt der Marke aussehen kann. Influencer Marketing zum Beispiel kann da eine tolle Brücke sein, die über das Produkt- und Markenerlebnis in z. B. den Stores erzählt. Das ist authentischer, als wenn wir darüber erzählen, wie es in unseren Stores aussieht.

SC: Also würden Sie sagen, dass zum Beispiel Influencer Marketing über z. B. eine Bloggerin auf Instagram eine sehr gute Brücke sein kann, um dieses Erlebnis und die Qualität auch online an die Zielgruppe heranzubringen?

DR: Ja, aber ich glaube, man muss es nicht mit einer machen, sondern mit 100. Es muss ein Gefühl erzeugen von „Habe ich da was verpasst?“, wenn ich durch meinen Feed scrolle.

SC: Das macht Sinn. Ich fasse also zusammen, Banner würden Sie aus Premiummarken-Sicht eher nicht empfehlen, Influencer Marketing wäre möglich. Generell Social Media – macht es Sinn für Sie, die gängigen Social Media Seiten zu bespielen – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. – oder macht es Sinn, zu selektieren, und zu sagen, wir bespielen nur das, was wirklich relevant für die Zielgruppe ist und was wir auch füllen können? Oder lieber Masse und „da sein“?

DR: Nein, ich würde niemals Masse machen. Das frisst einfach nur Ressourcen und Geld und ist ein Boomerang, der eher negativ wieder zurückkommt. Für mich wäre die Basis immer, zu definieren, was das Onlineerlebnis der Marke ist. Und dann muss ich schauen, auf welchen Kanälen ich das aktiviert bekomme, und auf welchen nicht. Unsere Empfehlung ist immer: lieber einen so richtig machen als drei oder vier so ein bisschen. Wenn man den einen erfolgreich aufgesetzt hat, kann man immer noch schauen, den nächsten dazuschalten und diesen erfolgreich mitlaufen zu lassen. Die Frage ist also – welche Kanäle passen? Bei Fashion ist das z. B. sowas wie Snapchat, was vielleicht wichtiger ist als Facebook. Das Format tut dem Thema eher gut, und Facebook funktioniert letztendlich auch nur noch durch Geld heutzutage.

SC: Das merken wir bei unserer Facebookseite auch immer wieder.

DR: Man muss sich darauf leider einfach einstellen – Online ist einfach nicht mehr der „günstige Kanal“, wo man Inhalte reinschmeißt und dann sehen das alle. Das funktioniert nicht mehr. Auch jeder Top Viral ist gepusht – und in dem Moment, wo das Geld weg ist, sind auch die Viewzahlen unten. Werbung im Netz ist Werbung, und das kostet einfach Geld. Man muss sich einfach überlegen: Wo ist mein Budget am besten platziert?

SC: Eine Frage, die mir spontan noch einfällt: Wie sehen Sie das denn beispielsweise bei einer Marke wie Tesla? Ich habe gehört, dass die sagen, dass sie gar nicht werben wollen, und alleine durch ihre Qualität und ihr beeindruckendes POS-Erlebnis überzeugen wollen, aber kein Werbespot, keine Plakate, keine Online-Werbung, nichts.

DR: Also, als erstes würde ich dazu sagen: Man kann nicht nicht kommunizieren. In dem Moment, wo ich sage, ich mache keine Werbung, mache ich Werbung. Und: Sie

hatten einfach eine absolut innovative Story, über die auch jeder schreiben wollte. Wenn man das mit einem wirklich guten Produkt verbindet, dann ist das sehr viel Wert. Dann brauche ich keine TV-Werbung. In zwei bis drei Jahren werden sie sicher nicht mehr drum herum kommen, Werbung zu machen, weil dann einfach die Mitbewerber nachgezogen sein werden.

SC: Es ist also letztendlich Werbung – nur anders verpackt.

DR: Genau. Man muss einfach eine Story finde, auf die die Leute auch „Bock“ haben. Das könnte bei Fashion schwierig werden. Das letzte, was mir da wirklich spannend aufgefallen ist, war adidas, die aus dem Ozean Plastikmüll gefischt haben und daraus Fußballtrikots gemacht haben. Sowas ist eine Geschichte, die übrigens auch nur digital gespielt wurde.

SC: Was bei Fashion auch immer wieder funktionieren kann, ist, wenn zum Beispiel ein Star die Kampagne bzw. die Kollektion mitgestaltet hat. Das gab es jetzt zum Beispiel bei Puma und Rihanna, bei Tommy Hilfiger und Gigi Hadid, dass Beyoncé ihre eigene Marke Ivi Park gelauncht hat, die dann exklusiv nur bei Zalando erhältlich war – das könnten Dinge sein, die aktuell im Bereich Mode gut funktionieren.

DR: Ja, das funktioniert immer, aber meist auch nur begrenzt bzw. mit richtig Geld dahinter für TV-Werbung oder ähnliches. Eine tolle Sache, die ich auch neulich mitbekommen habe, war, dass mir mein Online-Shop, bei dem ich immer meine Hemden maßgeschneidert bestelle, ein Video per Mail zugesendet hat, wo man sehen konnte, wie mein Hemd gerade gefertigt wurde. Sowas funktioniert vielleicht nicht unbedingt bei luxuriösen Premiummarken, wenn es dann in einem Land wie Indonesien geschieht – aber vielleicht auf andere Art und Weise.

SC: Auf jeden Fall! Man könnte das ja auch anders aufziehen, zum Beispiel eine Mail plus Video mit „hier siehst du gerade die Tasche, die du dir bestellt hast, wie sie gerade auf der Fashionweek in Mailand im Rahmen der aktuellen Kollektion präsentiert wird“.

DR: Ja, das ist eine Möglichkeit, um das Onlineerlebnis weiter zu definieren. Denn Qualität ist letztendlich nur ein Hygienefaktor. Man muss irgendwas finden, was dazu addiert wird, damit es auch am Ende eine Marke ist. Bestes Beispiel hierfür sind Autos: Audi, BMW, Mercedes. Die machen alle qualitativ gute Autos, das ist meine Voraussetzung, von der ich als Konsument einfach ausgehe und die ich weiß. Dennoch unterscheiden sich die drei sehr stark: Audi wirbt mit dem innovativen, progressiven

Touch, BMW mit Fahrspaß – Freude am Fahren, und Mercedes überhöht quasi diesen Qualitätsaspekt mit Attributen wie Qualität, Kontrolle, diese „deutschen Tugenden“. Und damit habe ich bei allen drei Marken ein komplett unterschiedliches Markenerlebnis und emotionales Bild, wobei ich sie dann wieder differenziert kriege. Premium-Marken funktionieren nur über Emotionen, und Qualität ist erst mal keine.

SC: Verstehe. Dann ist damit auch schon ein bisschen die nächste Frage beantwortet: Die sollte jetzt auf Online in Bezug auf die anderen drei P's abstimmen. Aber das hatten wir eigentlich schon angerissen: Zum Beispiel, dass man sich bei Place Gedanken machen muss, ob das Produkt in einem Online Shop richtig präsentiert werden kann. Und wir kommen auf jeden Fall immer wieder auf das Markenerlebnis zurück, das am Ende einfach stimmig sein muss.

DR: Ja, und ich glaube auch, dass weniger mehr ist. Da muss definitiv der Fokus ganz klar auf einer Motivation, auf einem Erlebnis sitzen, und dann muss ich das überhöhen.

SC: Also Fokus auf eine Story, einen Inhalt setzen, und dann genau schauen, wo kann ich das am besten platzieren – und das gilt dann online als auch offline?

DR: Ja, die Offline-Verlängerung sollte in jedem Fall da sein, denn online habe ich einfach nicht so viele Sinne zur Verfügung. Ich bin der Meinung, dass dieses Sale-Erlebnis in einem Shop – Stichwort Nespresso Shop, die Lichtverhältnisse stimmen, alles duftet nach Kaffee, die Produkte sind geil präsentiert, und so weiter ... also, ich trinke noch nicht mal Kaffee! Aber da könnte man zum Kaffeetrinker werden. Und das alle habe ich online einfach nicht zur Verfügung.

SC: Das heißt, man brauch bei den Luxusgütern einfach den unterstützenden Faktor von Offline, um die angestrebten Werte richtig zu transportieren.

DR: Ja. Die Marke wird offline gemacht, und sie wird dann online verlängert. Es kann halt funktionieren nur online, siehe meinen Hemdeshop, aber der bietet auch einen wirklich spitzen Benefit (maßgeschneiderte Hemden für wenig Geld) und ist auch einfach keine High Fashion Brand. Man muss den Spagat schaffen zwischen da sein für die Masse und gleichzeitig exklusiv sein.

SC: Da kann man ja zum Beispiel auch Gucci nehmen, als High Fashion Brand: Auf der einen Seite sollen sie natürlich nicht für jedermann ständig erhältlich sein, und trotzdem, wenn zum Beispiel ein Mann nach einer teuren Tasche als Geschenk für seine

Frau sucht, und dann gibt es dort die Gucci Tasche nicht, und dann guckt man vielleicht bei Prada, bei Dior.

DR: Ja, dann wird zur Konkurrenz gewechselt im schlechtesten Fall, und das will eine Marke natürlich auf keinen Fall.

SC: Ja, dann kommen wir hiermit zur letzten Frage: Generell gesprochen, was sind denn Herausforderungen oder Gefahren, die in der Welt des Online Marketings agieren?

DR: Das größte Thema bei unseren Kunden sind immer Shitstorms und wie ich mich davor schützen kann. Unsere Antwort ist immer: Gesprochen wird eh über euch – jetzt könnt ihr euch einfach nur überlegen, ob ihr dabei seid, oder nicht. Und ansonsten ist es glaube ich einfach der Fokus – also die Herausforderung, dass man sich ganz genau überlegt, an welchen Stellen im Online Bereich ich das meiste erreichen kann. Wir machen manchmal Website Relaunches für 100.000 Euro, wo ich mir denke: Warum eigentlich? Du brauchst eigentlich nur eine gute Visitenkarte im Netz, und wenn du nicht einen Shop hast, dann passiert die eigentliche Kommunikation auf YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, ... und dann brauche ich nicht 100.000 Euro in eine Website zu pumpen, sondern vielleicht mal überlegen, ob es nicht klüger ist, mit dem Geld dort Präsenz aufzubauen. Manchmal reicht auch ein Wordpress Theme für 10.000 Euro. Also, ja – der Fokus ist es: Und damit kommen wir wieder aufs Ursprungsthema zurück. Ich muss meine Marke definieren und dann überlegen, wie mach ich was an welchen Stellen. Da müssen einige Marketers grundsätzlich ihr Denken ändern. Und, selbst wenn ich einen Shop habe: Selbst der kann mittlerweile, mal so in die Tüte gesprochen, bei Zalando, bei Ebay, bei Amazon integriert sein. Eigentlich brauche ich keine eigenen Kanäle mehr, um digital stattzufinden. Da ist wiederum die Frage, ist das nicht gefährlich, wenn ich mich so sehr von anderen abhängig mache. Und wieder der Gedanke des exklusiven Markenkerns, bezogen auf High Fashion Marken.

SC: Okay. Speziell für Luxusmarken haben Sie dies ja bereits auch hinsichtlich Ideen, Storytelling etc. abgedeckt. Das haben wir jetzt auch schon kurz angeschnitten, aber dennoch nochmal: Aktuelle Trends im Online Marketing sind beeinflusst durch Social Media, direkter Kommunikation zwischen Marke und Konsument, Influencer Marketing, etc. Denken Sie, dass beim Mitmachen im digitalen Markt der exklusive Markenkern einer Luxusmarke geschädigt werden könnte?

DR: Nein, wenn ich den richtigen Weg finde, nicht. Eine gute Kommunikationsstrategie sagt mir, wie meine Tonalität ist, und in welcher Art und Weise ich sie aufbereiten muss und an welchen Stellen sie stattfinden soll. Dann ist Digital ein Multiplikator, aber keine Gefahr. Klar, nicht „volle Pulle“ überall stattfinden – aber wenn ich gutes Marketing mache, dann habe ich gute Operationsmaterialien, die voll auf meinen Markenkern einzahlen, auch Online. Und dann kann man auch ausschließen, dass – ich sag jetzt mal – auf aldi.de mein Banner geschaltet wird. Von daher glaube ich nicht, dass es eine Gefahr ist, man muss es einfach nur vernünftig planen.

SC: Gut, das macht Sinn. Und dann, unabhängig von Luxusmarken und Markenwerten: Wie sieht denn für Sie die Zukunft des Online Marketings aus? Was sind nächste große Sachen oder Trends, auf die man achten müsste?

DR: Ich glaube, dass Technologie immer weiter im Fortschritt ist. Das heißt, ich schaffe es, das Erlebnis Online immer weiter zu intensivieren. Zum Beispiel so ein 360° Video, die mittlerweile wirklich total massentauglich sind, gibt mir einen anderen Einblick in Dinge. Für mich ist dieses Erlebnis und das Intensivieren dieses durch das Nutzen von Technologie ganz klar ein Trend.

SC: Okay, großartig! Dann bedanke ich mich ganz herzlich bei Ihnen. Haben Sie noch irgendwelche Schlussbemerkungen?

DR: Nein, ich bin gespannt auf das Ergebnis!

SC: Ich auch!

Appendix – Part II:

Expert Interview Transcript / Harald Muntendorf

SC: Wie hat Sie Ihre berufliche Laufbahn dahin geführt, Gründer und Geschäftsführer von FASHIONHYPE.com zu sein?

HM: Ja, also ich komme aus dem Computer-Bereich, bin also gelernter Fachinformatiker. Und ich habe früher schon in meiner ersten Firma, die ich gegründet habe, Websites programmiert, und da habe ich auch meine ersten Erfahrungen im Bereich Online gesammelt. Dann habe ich nochmal studiert, bin dann am Ende wieder in einer Agentur gelandet, und wir haben uns damals mit Suchmaschinenmarketing für große Marken beschäftigt. Das war unser Hauptthema. Ich habe mich dort um große Brands aus der Versicherungs- und Automobilbranche gekümmert und habe für die bei Google AdWords und Bing Suchmaschinenmarketing gemacht. Und über diesen Weg bin ich dann in den Bereich Affiliate Marketing gekommen, und habe mich in diesem Bereich selbstständig gemacht. Dort habe ich viele Branchen ausprobiert, und bin dann im Bereich Mode hängen geblieben: Ich habe gesehen, dass das der interessanteste Bereich für mich war, weil es so viele Marken gab, und Marken sind immer die Treiber im Online Marketing – die Leute geben also ein Label ein bei Google, wenn sie ihre Kaufentscheidung eigentlich schon getroffen haben. Marken sind somit eigentlich immer Conversion-Bringer. Und es gibt vier Kollektionen im Jahr, was bedeutet, dass es auch immer wieder neue Wahre gibt. Wenn ich also in diesem Bereich tätig bin, kann ich davon stark profitieren und partizipieren. Und im Bereich High Fashion bin ich am Ende gelandet, weil es da einfach die höchsten Warenkörbe gibt. Für mich sehr interessant, da ich pro Warenkorb vergütet werde – wenn ich zum Beispiel einem Esprit oder einem H&M einen Sale bringe, und der durchschnittliche Warenkorb liegt bei 20, 30 Euro, und ich bekomme zehn Prozent, dann rentiert sich das halt nicht so, als wenn ich einem großen Shop wie Stylebob oder mytheresa Sales bringe, wo der durchschnittliche Warenkorb bei 500 bis 1000 Euro liegt. Dann kam dazu, dass ich gesehen habe, dass es auch noch keinen Aggregator gibt in dem Bereich, und dann war die Entscheidung schnell gefallen.

SC: Und was sind tagtäglich ihre hauptsächlichen Aufgaben- und Verantwortungsbereiche?

HM: Also, die wichtigsten Bereiche sind auf jeden Fall die technische Administration der Seite – das bedeutet, die Seite lauffähig zu halten und weiterzuentwickeln. Außerdem natürlich alle Bereiche des Online Marketings, und da im speziellen die Suchmaschinenoptimierung, die Suchmaschinenwerbung – also SEA und SEO,

zusammen Search Engine Marketing, genannt SEM –, und sonst alle Bereiche, die notwendig sind, um so eine Seite zu betreiben, Kooperationen mit Online Shops zu schließen, und so weiter.

SC: Verstehe. Wie lange arbeiten Sie bereits insgesamt in diesem Bereich?

HM: Im Online Marketing Bereich bin ich ca. seit 2006, also jetzt im 11. Jahr.

SC: Dann können wir jetzt tiefer ins Thema einsteigen: Sind Sie der Meinung, dass eine Marke heute noch erfolgreich sein kann, ohne im Internet auf irgendeine Art und Weise Präsenz zu zeigen?

HM: Das ist eine sehr gute Frage. Mir fallen konkret keine Beispiele ein, wo eine Marke im Offline-Bereich besonders erfolgreich ist und Online überhaupt nicht stattfindet. Ich glaube, insgesamt dass im Bereich Fast Moving Consumer Goods die Online Präsenz nicht so von Relevanz ist, da die Kaufentscheidung für diese Produkte meistens noch im Laden spontan gefällt wird, und weil es auch schwer ist, für diese Brands Online die Aufmerksamkeit auf sich zu ziehen. Da kann ich mir vorstellen, dass Online Marketing nicht wirklich die Sales im Offline treibt. Aber ansonsten, gerade für neue Marken, ist es natürlich ganz wichtig, dass man online erreichbar ist und sich der Zielgruppe auch öffnet. Auf der anderen Seite kann ich mir schon vorstellen, dass es noch Bereiche und Labels und Marken gibt, die besonders in der Zielgruppe 60 plus angesagt sind, wo dann Online auch nicht wirklich von Relevanz ist – zumindest nicht im B2C Bereich. Insgesamt kann und muss man sagen: Die Durchdringung des Internets ist in allen Bereichen und allen soziodemografischen Schichten so weit vorangeschritten, dass man eigentlich heutzutage nicht darauf verzichten sollte.

SC: Verstehe, und wenn überhaupt, dann ist es also aus den zwei Gründen: Ältere Zielgruppe oder Fast Moving Consumer Good, wo die Kaufentscheidung so schnell gefällt wird, Stichwort: Impulskauf im Laden, dass es einfach nicht unbedingt nötig ist.

HM: Richtig.

SC: Man kann davon ausgehen, dass für jede Marke ein maßgeschneidertes Marketingkonzept stets das Beste ist. Gibt es dennoch Grundpfeiler, die im Bereich des Online Marketings für jede Marke essentiell sind und stets beachtet bzw. umgesetzt werden sollten?

HM: Wenn wir uns jetzt die klassischen Online Marketing Disziplinen anschauen, dann haben wir natürlich allen voran SEM – Search Engine Marketing, nennen wir es einfach „Google“, also die Suchmaschinen. Und das ist glaube ich der allerwichtigste Kanal, weil hier die Intention des Suchenden absolut deutlich ist, alle nutzen Suchmaschinen, und ich denke, jedes Unternehmen, das Online Sales generieren möchte, sollte auch in den Suchmaschinen auch auffindbar sein. Das ist ein ganz wichtiger Punkt. Ansonsten kommt es auch immer auf die Zielgruppe an: Wo hält sich meine Zielgruppe auf, und da muss ich sie abholen und präsent sein. Für ganz junge Leute wissen wir heute, dass die nicht mehr unbedingt einen Facebook Account haben – der ist dann eher auf Snapchat oder Instagram unterwegs. Das heißt also, in erster Linie sollte sich jede Marke darüber klar werden, wo die Zielgruppe sich aufhält und diese Kanäle sollte man dann auch professionell bespielen.

SC: Verstehe, das klingt sehr sinnvoll. Dann, zur nächsten Frage: Luxusmarken im Bereich Mode werden für diese Arbeit betitelt als „High Fashion Brands“ und definiert als Massenware mit gehobenem Preis und gehobener Qualität. Maßgeschneiderte Unikate oder Ähnliches werden dabei jedoch nicht beachtet. Wie nehmen Sie, ganz generell, in Ihrem täglichen Berufsalltag High Fashion Brands im Online Marketing wahr?

HM: Ich nehme sie natürlich wahr, allerdings noch nicht so, wie ich sie wahrnehmen könnte. Das ist schon die erste sehr wichtige generelle Feststellung: Was ich wahrnehme, ist, dass die High Fashion Brands – die Multi Brand Shops nehme ich mal raus, ich rede jetzt nur von den reinen Brands – hier sehe ich auf jeden Fall, dass diese Transformation vom Offline ins Online, diese Digitalisierung, dass die jetzt gerade im Moment stattfindet. Ich habe auch das Gefühl, dass die High Fashion Brands erst viel später als andere Marken diesen Schritt ins Digitale sich getraut haben.

SC: Denken Sie, dass das daran liegen könnte, dass der Markenkern so exklusiv ist, und dass da Ängste waren, in diesen User-getriebenen Online Bereich einzusteigen?

HM: Das auf jeden Fall, und dass man einfach noch nicht wirklich eine Strategie hatte, wie man in diesem Bereich agieren soll. Und das Wichtigste an diesen High Fashion Brands ist einfach die Marke, darüber werden die hohen Preise verargumentiert, und ich glaube, dass es einfach eine große Angst, eine große Unsicherheit in den Unternehmen herrscht, wie man Online sich zu geben hat, weil man da natürlich einen Kontrollverlust hat. Die Brands geben, wenn sie Online unterwegs sind – vor allem im Social Media

Bereich – geben ihre Marke auch ein bisschen in die Hände ihrer Fans, ihrer Zielgruppe. Und da muss also ein „kontrollierter Kontrollverlust“ stattfinden, das heißt, jeder kann plötzlich über meine Marke reden, kann auf meiner Facebookseite auch seine Meinung über meine Marke loslassen, und das muss ich handeln. Das muss ich irgendwie im Griff halten, und das kann sehr schwierig sein. Und da ist die Weisheit zum Teil auch noch nicht gefunden. Generell sehe ich einen absoluten Run der großen Brands auf den Online Bereich. In den letzten Jahren scheint da so ein bisschen die Erkenntnis gefallen zu sein: Wir müssen Online stattfinden, wir müssen diesen Weg gehen. Das kann man auf jeden Fall sehen.

SC: Okay, das ist ja schon mal eine sehr interessante Erkenntnis. Gut, dann kommen wir zu FASHIONHYPE.com: FASHIONHYPE.com ist eine Affiliate Plattform, das heißt, Produkte von Online Shops werden auf Ihrer Seite integriert sowie zum Teil visuell und redaktionell aufbereitet. Bei Klick auf ein Produkt erfolgt eine Weiterleitung zum jeweiligen Online Shop. Die Vergütung für FASHIONHYPE.com erfolgt dann pro Klick oder pro Sale. Was sind aus Ihrer Sicht die größten Vorteile für eine High Fashion Brand, auf einer Affiliate Plattform vertreten zu sein?

HM: Das kommt immer ein bisschen auf die Affiliate Plattform an. Gerade die Affiliate Plattform, die sich rein auf High Fashion Brands konzentriert, wie jetzt FASHIONHYPE.com, da wird ein ganz klarer Vorteil geboten, dass die Kunden, die sich bei uns aufhalten, dass die auch alle relevant für die einzelnen Brands sind. Anders gesagt, ein Beispiel: Wenn ein Kunde eine Tasche von einem bestimmten Label sucht, und diese Tasche bei uns nicht findet, dann kann es gut sein, dass er sich auch für andere Taschen von anderen Labels interessiert. Und es ist auch sehr wahrscheinlich, dass er sich die anderen Designertaschen ebenso gut leisten kann. Hätten wir viele günstige Labels auch bei uns auf der Seite, hätten wir diese Synergie Effekte nicht. Das bedeutet, jemand sucht nach „Esprit“, kommt bei uns auf die Seite, und sieht Sachen von Gucci und verschwindet sofort wieder, weil er sich das wahrscheinlich nicht leisten kann – genau sowas vermeiden wir mit unserer Fokus-Strategie auf High Fashion Brands. Das große Vorteil sind also die Synergie Effekte, die wir bieten. Durch das große Sortiment, das wir auf unserer Seite bieten, haben wir natürlich auch eine Vielzahl von Kunden und Besuchern, und die interessieren sich dann auch für Labels, die sie vorher noch nicht kannten, oder wo sie nicht wussten, dass es die auch Online zu erwerben gibt.

SC: Könnte denn dieser Synergie Effekt, der sicherlich sehr positiv sein kann, auch negativ sein? Wenn jemand zum Beispiel auf die Seite kommt mit der Intention, eine Gucci Tasche zu kaufen, und dann sieht er aber von Prada eine ebenso tolle Tasche, die gerade auch noch im Angebot ist, gibt es nicht die Gefahr, dass er dann von seiner ursprünglichen Kaufintention abspringt und „wechselt“?

HM: Klar, dieses Risiko hat natürlich auch ein Label, wenn es in einem Multi Brand Store offline vertreten ist. Dieses Risiko ist somit auf jeden Fall immer da, aber ich meine, dass die Chancen größer sind als die Risiken, denn die meisten Brands – das hatten wir eben schon kurz angerissen – den Schritt ins Online wagen und dass da gerade etwas passiert. Sie sind aber noch nicht, nehmen wir mal beispielsweise den Bereich SEM, also alles, was mit Suchmaschinen zu tun hat – dort sind viele Labels noch nicht gut zu finden. Und die Aggregatoren verstehen ihr Handwerk im Online Marketing, das heißt, die sind zu finden auf den ersten Seiten. Das heißt, wenn ich nach den Brands suche, finde ich auf jeden Fall immer die Aggregatoren ganz vorne – inzwischen auch oft die Websites der einzelnen Brands – aber hier haben wir einfach viel mehr Traffic, als die einzelnen Brands. Und dadurch bieten wir einfach unheimlich viele Chancen, dass wir die Kunden effektiv auf die einzelnen Marken aufmerksam machen können, und das ist schon ein großer Vorteil. Und ein anderer Vorteil ist natürlich auch: Der Kunde findet bei uns das größte Sortiment von den jeweiligen Marken. Das steigert einfach den Absatz. Und die Brands haben natürlich, als einen weiteren Vorteil, die Möglichkeit, direkt bei uns draufzukommen und auch ausschließlich ihre Marke zu vertreten, das heißt, wir würden die anderen Shops dann auch runternehmen. Eine Exklusivstellung ist also möglich.

SC: Und es ist wahrscheinlich auch ein „Sichtbarkeitsding“, oder? Wenn man sagt, man ist nur im eigenen Online Shop oder in einem anderen Multi Brand Shop, dann ist die Sichtbarkeit ja kleiner, als wenn man sagt, ich trete auch noch an hochwertige Affiliate Partner heran, wo ich dann auch noch präsent bin mit meiner Marke.

HM: Ja, die Sichtbarkeit ist dann größer, absolut! Man muss sich halt auch vorstellen: Wenn die Brand selber einen eigenen Online Shop betreibt, dann hat die nur die Menschen, die nach dieser Brand suchen. Ein Gucci wird es schwer haben, in anderen Bereichen als bei reinen Brand Search gefunden zu werden. Anders gesagt: Woher bekommt eine Seite wie Gucci ihren Traffic? In erster Linie werden es Direkteingaben sein, das heißt, die Leute geben in die Browserzeile „gucci.com“ ein. Und sie suchen

danach bei Google: Sie suchen nach „Gucci“, und klicken dann auf den wahrscheinlich ersten Treffer. Und wo kriegt eine Seite noch Traffic her? Vielleicht aus dem Social Media Bereich, aber wenn man sich den Search Bereich anguckt, ist das eigentlich auch schon fast alles. Das heißt, eine Brand muss sich immer überlegen, wie sie mehr Traffic auf ihre Seite bekommt, und ein Weg ist natürlich, mit den Aggregatoren zusammenzuarbeiten, die meist ein sehr gutes Ranking haben und sehr viel Traffic über Google bekommen, und so können sie einfach ihre Besucherzahlen sehr gut nach oben schrauben. Ein Gucci kann nämlich nicht auf einen generischen Begriff bieten, das würde kein Sinn machen – „Handtasche“ würde nicht viel Sinn machen. Das heißt also, im Search ist nur die eigene Marke interessant. Ein Gucci kann nicht auf „Prada“ bieten, auf den Begriff, aber indirekt können sie das mit FASHIONHYPE.com erreichen, dass auch Prada Kunden auf Gucci Sachen aufmerksam werden, wenn sie bei FASHIONHYPE.com gelistet sind.

SC: Verstehe, das sind ja schon sehr viele Vorteile. Was wäre denn zum Beispiel ein Risiko für eine High Fashion Brand, auf einer Affiliate Plattform vertreten zu sein? Also, wir hatten da schon kurz die Synergie-Effekte, die unter Umständen auch negativ sein können, angesprochen, aber da meinten Sie, dass die Chancen dennoch größer sind, als die Risiken. Gibt es noch andere Risiken, die Ihnen überhaupt einfallen – oder gibt es gar keine?

HM: Ja, also, wenn ich mit einer Affiliate Plattform als Brand zusammenarbeite, gebe ich natürlich meine gesamten Produktdaten preis. Nehmen wir mal an, ich habe eine Kooperation mit einem Aggregator, dann gebe ich für jedes Produkt Bild, Preis, Versandkosten Produkttext unter Umständen, und viele andere Informationen weiter. Und natürlich kann es auch mal sein, dass eine Seite mit diesen Produktinformationen Sachen macht, die die Brand nicht sehen möchte. Dass sie zum Beispiel selber über ihre verschiedenen Kanäle dies bewirbt, und das muss nicht unbedingt auf eine Art und Weise sein, wie es die Brand gerne möchte. Hiermit sind wir auch wieder bei dem Kontrollverlust. Daher ist es für die Brands unheimlich wichtig, dass sie sich ihre Partner ganz genau aussuchen. Vor allem, es gibt auch immer wieder Affiliate Plattformen, die ihre Daten auch an Dritte weitergeben, die diese dann wiederum für ihre Zwecke verwerten, und die sich dann dafür entlohnen lassen – und in so einem Moment hat die Marke selber dann überhaupt keine Möglichkeit mehr, das zu kontrollieren. Es ist also sehr wichtig, dass sie die Arbeitsweise des Affiliate Partners

absolut versteht und dass diese transparent gestaltet ist. So geschieht dann ein zwar ein Kontrollverlust, aber ein kontrollierter Kontrollverlust.

SC: Okay, dann sind wir hiermit auch bei der nächsten Frage angelangt: Was gilt es aus Sicht einer High Fashion Brand bei der Auswahl der Affiliates, mit denen sie zusammenarbeiten wollen, zu beachten?

HM: Wenn ich eine Brand leiten würde, würde ich mir immer anschauen, wo die Affiliate Plattform ihren Traffic herbekommt, also, über welche Kanäle der Seitentraffic akquiriert wird. Dafür gibt es heutzutage Tools, womit man sich das anschauen kann. Als Beispiel, XXX Web oder SEM Rush. Dort sehe ich dann die Trafficquellen, ich sehe, ob und wie die Seite bei Google wirbt, welche anderen Seite auf die Seite verlinken, und damit kann ich mir dann schon ein erstes wichtiges Bild machen. Im zweiten Schritt würde ich mir die Marken anschauen, die bereits auf der Plattform vertreten sind – dadurch weiß ich dann direkt, welche Kunden auf dieser Seite unterwegs sein wird. Dann muss sich die Brand ganz klar fragen: Möchte ich neben diesen Marken, die dort gelistet sind, auch meine Produkte haben. Bei mytheresa.com ist es zum Beispiel so, dass es ein manuelles Category Management gibt. Das bedeutet, dass dort einzelne Mitarbeiter ganz genau darauf achten, welche Marken in welchen Kategorien nebeneinander gezeigt werden, weil einige Marken da sehr viel Wert drauf legen. Beispiel: Ein Gucci möchte nicht neben einer GUM Handtasche gezeigt werden, weil sie sagen, das entspricht nicht unseren Qualitätsansprüchen. Das müsste also jede Brand für sich dann schauen: Passen die Marken, die dort angeboten werden, zu unserer Markenwelt und zu unserer Zielgruppe.

SC: Und gehört da auch der generelle Look der Affiliate Seite dazu?

HM: Absolut. Die CI der Plattform selbst ist natürlich wichtig, weil dort, in genau diesem Rahmen, wird mein Logo gezeigt, werden meine Produkte gezeigt, und da ist es natürlich sehr wichtig, dass das auch irgendwie zu meiner Markenwelt passt.

SC: Verstehe. Wo liegt für Sie der Größte Unterschied zwischen Multi Brand Shops (wir hatten es eben schon kurz angesprochen: mytheresa.com, net-a-porter.com, stylebob) und eigenen Brand Shops (zum Beispiel gucci.com)?

HM: Also, das ist erstmal, wie vorhin schon angeschnitten, dass gucci.com weitaus weniger Möglichkeiten hat, an Traffic zu kommen, als Multi Brand Shops. Die Multi Brand Shops – sagen wir, die haben 100 Marken, dann haben sie auch 100

Möglichkeiten, an Traffic zu kommen, nämlich diese 100 Marken, auf die sie [bei Google] bieten können. Das ist jetzt nur für den Bereich Search. Ja, und wenn ich eine eigene Brand habe, dann muss ich natürlich auch schauen, dass ich ein großes Sortiment habe. Das heißt, wenn ich als einzelne Brand einen eigenen Online Shop habe, und ich habe nur 200 Produkte, dann ist es natürlich nicht so leicht, die Conversion Rate weit oben zu halten. Das heißt, es gilt die Regel: Ich brauche alle möglichen Produkte, die die Leute interessieren – also, ich brauche nicht nur Hosen, nicht nur Jacken, sondern am besten alle möglichen Arten von Produkte, sodass ich auch hier wieder Synergie Effekte mitnehmen kann. Aus diesem Grund würde ich auch nicht jeder Brand empfehlen, einen eigenen Shop zu machen: Man muss sich ganz klar überlegen – ja, dann haben wir einen Shop für die Leute, die ganz klar nur unsere Sachen kaufen möchten. Aber natürlich können die meisten Brand Shops nicht mit einem Multi Brand Shop mithalten.

SC: Und was spricht für Sie konkret dagegen, einen eigenen Brand Shop zu haben als Marke? Ist das nicht auch ein relevanter Branding-Effekt – selbst, wenn darüber im Verhältnis nicht so viele Umsätze kommen?

HM: Ja, ein Shop per se ist nicht schlecht. Aber ein eigener Shop hat auch sehr viele Folgekosten: Wenn ich die gesamte Klaviatur des Online Marketings bedienen möchte, dann muss der Shop auch entsprechend gut sein. Und alleine das initiale Aufsetzen, ganz zu schweigen von allen Wartungs- und Folgekosten, ist nicht zu unterschätzen: Die Seite muss technisch gut sein, schnell sein, den neuesten Standards entsprechen, und das ist natürlich dann auch mit Kosten verbunden. Und wenn ich dann auf diesem Shop nur zehn Produkte habe, weiß ich nicht, ob ich mir diese Mühe machen würde. Von daher: Generell würde ich als Brand schon einen Shop haben wollen, um den Markenauftritt mitzutragen, würde mir aber, basierend auf der Sinnhaftigkeit hinsichtlich der Produktanzahlen überlegen, inwiefern es sich lohnt, diesen zu bewerben und Arbeit reinzustecken.

SC: Darauf auch basierend die nächste Frage: Was von beiden sehen Sie kurzfristig und langfristig als erfolgsversprechender an für eine High Fashion Brand?

HM: Als High Fashion Brand würde ich, wie eben gesagt, erstmal beides machen. Generell ist natürlich die Variante, dass ich alles selber verkaufe, attraktiver, weil meine Marge natürlich entsprechend höher ist und ich die gesamte Kontrolle über mein Sortiment behalte. Und das ist auch ein Trend, den wir gerade sehen: Die Labels wollen

immer mehr an den Endkunden ran und auf eigenen Beinen stehen und bestenfalls die gesamte Wertschöpfungskette unter ihrer Kontrolle haben wollen. Dass sie versuchen, die Multi Brand Stores auszulassen. Dass sehen wir zum Beispiel am Flughafen in Hamburg, um nur eines von vielen Beispielen zu nennen: Es gibt da mittlerweile viel mehr eigene Brand Shops als Multi Brand Shops, die alle möglichen Marken haben. Generell: Als Marke würde ich einfach versuchen, in alle relevanten performanten Kanäle reinzukommen, die meine Sales pushen und meine Brand bewahren. Ich würde da per se nichts ausschließen.

SC: Das heißt, aus Traffic Sicht und Synergie Effekte wäre dann der Multi Brand Shop beziehungsweise die Affiliate Plattform sinnvoller, aber was das Branding, die Marge und die Kontrolle angeht, da dann der eigene Shop. Das dann gut kombiniert, und das ist dann meistens das Beste?

HM: Das ist richtig, ja.

SC: Okay, dann kommen wir zu den verschiedenen Werbeformen und –Mitteln im Internet ... Banner haben in der Regel ein eher schlechtes Image, besonders, wenn es darum geht, hochwertige und qualitative Inhalte zu präsentieren. Dennoch sind Banner ein oft genutztes Werbemittel, auch im High Fashion Bereich. Wie beurteilen Sie die Nutzung von Bannern durch High Fashion Brands?

HM: Damit kommen wir wieder zu dem Punkt, den wir eingangs besprochen hatten: Nämlich, dass die Marken zwar online stattfinden wollen, dass ihnen aber meist noch ein bisschen das Know-How und das Fingerspitzengefühl fehlt. Und das sieht man ganz besonders bei den Bannern. Als Beispiel: Ein typischer Banner von einer Brand wie Gucci ist meistens ein Model und eine Botschaft, alles aktuelle Kampagne. Und eigentlich ist dies nur eine Transformation, eine Kopie, aus dem Printbereich. Das heißt, hier wird noch auf all die alten Muster gesetzt, die Offline funktionieren, und das wird versucht, einfach ins Online zu übertragen. Und das funktioniert nicht. Und das sehen wir auch ganz oft mit unseren Kunden, mit denen wir zusammenarbeiten – das zählt auch nicht nur für Brands, sondern auch für viele Multi Brand Shops: Dass die einfach so strenge CIs haben, dass hier einfach überhaupt nicht getestet werden kann. Und im Online Marketing nicht zu testen, ist eine der größten Sünden, die man sich vorstellen kann. Denn gerade die Online Welt bietet uns Tools und Möglichkeiten, zu testen und das Bestmögliche aus unseren Werbeaktionen rauszuholen; viel einfacher und viel mehr noch als in der Offline Welt. Und wenn man diese Möglichkeiten dann nicht nutzt, ist

das einfach fahrlässig. Das heißt also, für eine High Fashion Brand, die mit Bannern Werbung macht, dass sie sich überlegen sollte, präsentiere ich mal Produkte, mache ich mal einen animierten Banner, wo man zum Beispiel verschiedene Produkte in einer Farbe sehen kann, und so weiter. Zalando oder auch About You sind in diesem Gebiet Vorreiter: Sie testen ihre Bannermotive in vielfältiger Weise und nehmen nicht einfach das Bannermotiv, was am besten zur CI passt – sondern eben das, was am besten geklickt wird, wo die beste Performance hintersteht. Und genau das machen die Marken nicht: Sie nehmen ihr Motiv, dass sie vorher in der InStyle als Anzeige geschaltet hatten, packen das in einen Banner, und das spiegelt sich dann oft in den Klickraten wieder, die oftmals einfach miserabel sind. Das heißt, man kann vielleicht noch von einer Branding Wirkung sprechen, aber diese Branding Wirkung ist halt sehr schwer festzustellen. Es gibt Möglichkeiten, aber dafür ist dann auch wieder ein sehr fortgeschrittenes Know How, Zeit und Geld nötig.

SC: Das heißt also, man kann gar nicht sagen, dass Banner generell schlecht sind, sondern, dass man es einfach nur richtig angehen muss, und dann kann es auch für eine High Fashion Brand eine sehr interessante Möglichkeit sein.

HM: Genau.

SC: Und wie ist das mit weiteren Werbeformen im Online Bereich für High Fashion Brands? Was sind (weitere) beliebte Werbeformen und –mittel für High Fashion Brands in der Welt des Online Marketings?

HM: Es kommt natürlich immer auf die Brand selber an. Was momentan auf jeden Fall der letzte Schrei ist, ist das Influencer Marketing. Das heißt, als Marke könnte ich mir in einem der typischen Kanäle, bei High Fashion Brands oftmals Instagram, Influencer suchen, die eine große oder auch kleine, feine Zielgruppe haben, die auch meine Produkte mögen und zu meiner Marke passen. Denen könnte ich dann meine Produkte zur Verfügung stellen oder auch mit denen mal einen Workshop machen oder ein Event, um sie dann einzuladen, und dann deren Zielgruppen auf meine Marke aufmerksam zu machen. Das ist im Moment eine sehr interessante Methode, wie man eine hohe Reichweite in sehr kurzer Zeit erzielen kann. Und dann natürlich das Bespielen der typischen sozialen Kanäle, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, und so weiter. Aber auch da greift wieder: Wo auf diesen Kanälen hält sich meine Zielgruppe auf, was konsumiert sie für Medien, was konsumieren sie online, und wie kann ich da hin kommen.

SC: Es läuft also immer wieder darauf hinaus: Was habe ich für eine Zielgruppe und wo kann ich die am besten abfangen?

HM: Richtig, also, wenn ich zum Beispiel weiß, meine Zielgruppe ist weiblich und über 40 Jahre alt und interessiert sich für Reisen auf den Malediven oder auch Reise allgemein, dann könnte ich mir beispielsweise einen Reiseblogger suchen, der dann auf die Malediven fliegt, dort irgendwie die tollsten Hot Spots findet, und dabei dann auch noch meine Produkte vielleicht am Körper trägt. Oder ich könnte bei YouTube sagen, dass ich vor solchen Videos meine Werbung schalten will. Dort treffe ich dann genau meine Zielgruppe, auf die es immer wieder ankommt.

SC: Eine Frage noch zu Influencer Marketing: Es ist ein riesiger Trend und wird immer mehr – wie schätzen Sie da die Glaubwürdigkeit ein? Meinen Sie, die hat schon ordentlich eingebüßt oder ist es so, dass noch eine hohe Glaubwürdigkeit da ist?

HM: Generell denke ich, dass es im Moment noch ein sehr gutes Mittel ist, um Online Werbung zu machen. Das Glaubwürdigkeitsproblem sehe ich zwar ... Man kann jetzt schwer über die ganze Branche unabhängig von den einzelnen Influencern sprechen; es gibt sicherlich schon ein paar, bei denen dieses Problem schon stark da ist. Aber generell sehe ich es so, es ist ein Kanal wie jeder andere auch, der auch in Zukunft wieder weniger Bedeutung haben kann, genau aus diesen Gründen, nämlich, dass irgendwann die Glaubwürdigkeit weg sind und die Fans von dauernder Werbung genervt sind, aber im Moment scheint es, also ob die Mehrheit der Fans damit noch kein Problem hat. Wie das in fünf Jahren aussehen wird, lässt sich nur vermuten. Noch etwas, auch zugehörig zu dieser Thematik: Man muss sich seine Influencer natürlich ganz, ganz genau aussuchen. Sie müssen wirklich zur Brand passen, und dürfen jetzt nicht im nächsten Post Werbung für Klobürsten machen.

SC: Und würden Sie da sagen, es ist gut, lieber einen großen Influencer zu haben – ich sage jetzt mal, jemand wie Caro Daur, die wirklich eine der größten in Deutschland ist, oder macht es Sinn, es lieber auf ein paar etwas kleinere aufzuteilen?

HM: Da die High Fashion Brands ja schon eher eine etwas kleinere, exquisitere Zielgruppe haben, kann ich mir nicht vorstellen, dass ein Influencer, der ein Millionenpublikum hat, eine überwiegende Mehrheit sich dort für die Produkte interessiert, beziehungsweise sie sich leisten kann. Das heißt, ich würde da eher auf Influencer schauen, die wirklich alleine durch ihren Look und so weiter zeigen „ich

gehöre definitiv zur Zielgruppe“, ohne, dass ich mir erst die Fans anschauen muss, sondern ich einfach sehe, das passt einfach. Je größer die Zielgruppe des Influencers, desto größer auch die Streuverluste. Und alle, die nicht für mich relevant sind, muss ich ja trotzdem mitbezahlen.

SC: Was sind denn generell Online Werbeformen und –mittel, die für eine High Fashion Brand eher risikobehaftet und gar nicht zu empfehlen sind?

HM: Da muss ich überlegen ... Das ist wieder diese Sache: Wenn meine Zielgruppe bei Snapchat ist, würde ich Snapchat empfehlen. Da jetzt übergreifend zu sagen, das funktioniert und das nicht, ist sehr schwierig. Daher: Solange das Werbemedium zu meiner Zielgruppe passt und da auch angenommen wird, ist alles in Ordnung.

SC: Das spielt ja dann darauf ab, dass es einfach auf die Zielgruppe ankommt und dass es kein „No Go“ gibt, solange es passt und richtig gemacht ist.

HM: Da fällt mir gerade noch ein: Was ich vielleicht tatsächlich für eine High Fashion Brand auf keinen Fall empfehlen würde, wären Pop Ups. Und ich würde auch nicht mit Werbedienstleistern arbeiten oder mit Shops oder Affiliate Plattformen, die auf solche Möglichkeiten zurückgreifen. Und ich würde auch nicht mit Seiten und Publishern zusammenarbeiten, die ihre Websites mit Werbung vollknallen – das wirkt unseriös, unqualitativ und auch visuell einfach sehr abschreckend und nicht wertig und einladend.

SC: Okay, also Glaubwürdigkeit, Hochwertigkeit, keine „Ramsch-Seiten“.

HM: Genau. Keine Bannerwüsten.

SC: Ja. Dann kommen wir auch schon zur letzten Frage, die jetzt auch ganz unabhängig von Mode und von allem, was wir gerade besprochen haben, betrachtet werden soll: Wie sieht für Sie die Zukunft des Online Marketings aus? Was sind da Trends, auf die wir uns einstellen sollten?

HM: Also, ich weiß nicht, ob das jetzt relevant für die High Fashion Industrie ist, aber eine Sache, die immer mehr wird und immer mehr von Relevanz wird, ist der Einsatz von unterschiedlichen Endgeräten. Wenn ich also heutzutage eine Website baue, muss ich sicherstellen, dass sie auch mobil- und tabletfähig ist. Eine andere ganz wichtige Sache ist die Sprachsuche, das orale Eingeben von Suchbegriffen, Stichwort Alexa, Siri – auch da sollte man sich überlegen, wie man sich darauf vorbereiten kann. Gerade für High Fashion Brands ist vielleicht auch der Trend, der Bereich Virtual Reality

interessant: virtuelle Ankleideräume und so weiter könnten interessant werden, zum Beispiel, um Retourequoten zu senken. Und, im Zuge der Retouren, aber auch relevant für viele weitere Bereiche: Die Daten der Kunden, um einfach viel mehr Möglichkeiten zu haben, individuell auf sie einzugehen und perfekt passende Produkte anzubieten. Im Offline ist die Rückgabequote von Produkten 5%, im Online Bereich 50% - da kann man sicherlich noch was machen.

SC: Perfekt. Dann wären wir soweit durch – oder haben Sie noch irgendwelche Anmerkungen oder Fragen?

HM: Ja... also generell ist es so: Die Labels haben da noch einen schweren Weg vor sich.

SC: Dann herzlichen Dank für Ihre Zeit und das aufschlussreiche Interview!