

Helen Taylor Lane

# Fashion industry

## Resources for online research

**M**ore post-secondary institutions than ever before are offering fashion degree programs, and, according to Sara Kozlowski, director of education and professional development at the Council of Fashion Designers of America, enrollment in such programs has nearly tripled over the past decade. Moreover, one of the issues facing fashion programs is whether design students are receiving proper support for the business, trade, and entrepreneurial aspects of fashion research.<sup>1</sup>

What follows is a list of free (some freemium) resources that support quality research in the fashion industries. The business of fashion combines an understanding of markets, aesthetic trends, international trade, and consumer behavior. I have organized the resources into the following categories: fashion industry news, starting a business, runway coverage, trend forecasting and retail analytics, and organizations and sourcing.

What you won't find on this list are general business resources, some top-notch fashion blogs that are too shopping-oriented, and resources dealing with garment construction or with the history of clothing and dress.

### Fashion industry news

- **Apparel Magazine.** *Apparel Magazine* covers business and technology insights regarding apparel retailers and manufacturers. To access some content

requires the reader to divulge professional and contact information. Unfortunately there seems to be increasingly more sponsored content than original journalism. Nonetheless, it is still a reliable news source. *Access:* <https://apparelmag.com/>.

- **Business of Fashion (BoF).** *BoF* has been giving fashion's own "Grey Lady" a run for its money nearly since its founding in 2007. *BoF* is known for its currency and in-depth analysis of events shaping the fashion, beauty, and retail industries. While it is no longer completely free, students with a college or university emails can register for comprehensive access. *Access:* <https://www.businessoffashion.com/>.

- **Footwear News (FN).** *FN* covers business and fashion trends as they relate to the footwear industry. This market is huge and follows business and trade patterns other than cut and sew apparel or knitwear. *FN* also provides access to articles from sister publication Sourcing Journal, beyond the five per month come with the free subscription. *Access:* <https://footwearnews.com/>.

- **Sourcing Journal.** *Sourcing Journal* may be one of the most important resources in the apparel industry, and is often overlooked by those approaching

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fashion from an art and design rather than a business perspective. *Sourcing Journal* is an excellent source of news and business intelligence concerning sourcing, international trade, and fashion retail. A free subscription to *Sourcing Journal* provides access to five articles a month. *Access:* <https://sourcingjournal.com/>.

- **Stores.** *Stores* is the magazine of the National Retail Federation and covers trends in the retail industry, including consumer trends, operations, technology, and ecommerce. Regular supplements include the Retail Industry Sourcebook, Retail Buying Guide, and the Retail Hot 100. *Access:* <https://stores.org/>.

## Starting a business

- **The Emerging Designer.** Melissa Hall's The Emerging Designer was created to showcase emerging talent, provide access to marketing know-how, and promote career development and networking opportunities. The site includes announcements of open calls, job openings, reviews of educational opportunities, articles on marketing and social media skills, and news from around the fashion industries. *Access:* <http://theemergingdesigner.com/>.

- **Scaling Retail.** This consulting company helps designers set up shop. Their services or white papers aren't free, but their blog, Two Seasons, is rich with advice and case studies on marketing, branding, buying and selling, e-commerce, manufacturing and more. *Access:* <https://scalingretail.com/>.

## Runway coverage

In the fashion industry, whether in design or manufacturing, it is important to keep abreast of trends and design developments. While trend forecasting companies can do some of this work for you, there's no substitute for immersing yourself in the visually rich and compelling world of runway documentation.

- **Made to Measure (M2M).** M2M is a fashion video network that provides

excellent coverage of major haute couture shows from around the world. Login with Facebook to save favorites and create playlists. It is an educator's dream because it delves into the cultural influence and influencers of fashion, the nature of the creative process, and the business of design through its feature-length films, shorts, and original documentaries. All M2M videos can be easily embedded in course shells or websites. *Access:* <https://m2m.tv/>.

- **NowFashion.** Founded in 2010, NowFashion was the first online magazine to present fashion shows in real time. These real-time streams are archived as stills in which full garments, garment details, show vibe, and people are recorded. NowFashion is also experimenting with VR/360 video of fashion shows, which often are stage in nonlinear form, with no runway or single point of focus. Free registration on the site allows users to curate their own collections of images from the site using the Boards feature. *Access:* <https://nowfashion.com/>.

- **Tag Walk.** Tag Walk styles itself a fashion search engine and is a wonderful place to track and document runway and street trends. Free registration permits users to create Moodboards of images from the site, which can be printed, saved as a PDF, or shared online. Registration also provides access to the Tag Trends section, in which Tag Walk editors have compile images of the most tagged trends of the season. *Access:* <https://www.tag-walk.com/>.

- **Vogue Runway.** *Vogue* magazine's runway coverage has the most up-to-date coverage and is well organized and easy to navigate. Each show featured is accompanied by a review written by a *Vogue* editor that provides context and trend information. Runaway images can be printed out individually or by designer collection. Student users should be encouraged to sign up for the *Vogue Runway* newsletter for up-to-the-minute coverage of the big

shows. *Access:* <https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows>.

## Trend forecasting and retail analytics

Trend forecasts are used by the fashion industry much the way other industries use market research. The two have much in common, but unlike regular market research, trend forecasting focuses less on numbers and more on aesthetic, cultural, and tech developments to help designers stay on trend and to assist retail buyers in having the right items on the rack.

Retail analytics is a newer field and has emerged as a big data answer to fast fashion's shortened supply chain. Retail analytics companies offer real-time information about what is selling and where, in what colors, silhouettes, garment types, and at what price points.

- **EDITED blog.** EDITED was one of the first companies to use data science and artificial intelligence to help fashion retailers make better decisions based on real-time information about purchases, discounts, and promotions with data gathered from the ecommerce sites. The EDITED blog is full of useful information about how to use data to make wise stocking, pricing, and promotions choices. *Access:* <https://edited.com/blog>.

- **Fashion Snoops (FS).** Fashion Snoops will deliver multiple newsletters to your inbox every week. The FS Newsletters include the T5T (Top five Tuesday), Beauty Bulletin, and FS Reports, the later being a teaser for FS full-service trend forecast predictions. Subscribe to the newsletters here. *Access:* <http://www.fs-admin.com/flash/fsdemo54.aspx>. The Fashion Snoops Vimeo channel hosts archived webinars and season overviews. *Access:* <https://vimeo.com/fashionsnoops>.

- **StyleSage blog.** StyleSage came on the retail analytics scene in 2013 and offers similar services and technology as EDITED, plus it has a new visual search that works across its data array of international store

stock. Its blog is also contains insights on data driven decisions in fashion retail. Readers who are just learning about data science in retail will appreciate the clear subject categories in the navigation menu. *Access:* <https://stylesage.co/blog/>.

- **TrendTablet.** One of the most sought after trend forecasters in the world is Lidewij Edelkoort, whose Trend Union consulting and trend forecasting business is used by many top names in the fashion design industry. Fortunately for all of us, she is willing to share some of her insights for free through her TrendTablet website, which she describes as a tool that “explains how trends grow, and flow.” *Access:* <http://www.trendtablet.com/>.

- **WGSN Insider.** Based in London, Worth Global Style Network (WGSN) is a giant in the trend forecasting world. WGSN Insider reflects the diversity of their work. Here you will find information on future fashion trends, cultural influencers, as well as current retail developments. *Access:* <https://www.wgsn.com/blogs/>. The WGSN Official Vimeo site is also of note and hosts archived webinars. *Access:* <https://vimeo.com/user15821008>.

## Organizations and sourcing

The following is a bit of a mixed category, but only because professional connections and B2B opportunities are so closely linked.

- **American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA).** The American Apparel and Footwear Association was formed in 2000 by the union of two of the oldest professional organizations in the United States, the American Apparel and Manufacturers Association and Footwear Industries of America. Useful information for students and faculty who register for free includes access to AAFA news, open-industry webinars, and limited access to research tools, including the Made in America directory and the Restricted Substances List. *Access:* <https://www.aafaglobal.org/>.

• **American Apparel Producers Network (AAPN).** AAPN began in 1981 as an association of U.S. apparel factories, spread to the Americas in 2001, and now has membership worldwide from all sectors of the apparel supply chain, “from dirt to shirt.” Everything on the AAPN website is freely available to nonmembers, with best bets being the AAPN member directory for sourcing, the AAPN blog, and the events calendar. *Access:* <https://www.aapnetwork.net/>.

• **The Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA).** CFDA is definitely the most glamorous of the organizations on this list. The CFDA website provides access to biographical information on its many famous members, a directory of New York- and Los Angeles-based garment and jewelry manufacturers, and access to industry news and events information. Students, alumni, and faculty will also definitely be interested in the awards and scholarships sections. *Access:* <https://cfda.com/>.

• **Fashionindex.com.** Fashionindex is a comprehensive and well-organized listing (not searchable) of suppliers, business services, contractors, and manufacturers for the fashion industry. Fashionindex also publishes and sells books on getting started with a fashion business. *Access:* <http://www.fashionindex.com/>.

• **Fibre2Fashion.** As the name implies, this Indian B2B site provides a searchable supplier and buyers directory of everything from raw cotton to finished garments. The sources and suppliers are mainly from Asia and the Indian subcontinent, but not exclusively. Fibre2Fashion offers a fair number of original news articles covering the fashion, textile, and fibre industries. *Access:* <http://www.fibre2fashion.com/>.

• **International Textile and Apparel Association (ITAA).** The most scholarly of the professional organizations on this list, ITAA serves as an accrediting agency for colleges and universities with textile

and apparel programs through its TAPAC programs. Free content from the ITAA site includes the ITAA newsletter, selected monographs, and conference proceedings from the ITAA Annual conference. The conference covers a wide range of business and culture aspects of the fashion and textiles world. *Access:* <https://itaaonline.org/>.

• **Le Souk.** Le Souk allows buyers to search, sample, and source directly from textile mills and tanneries around the world. Samples and swatches, even if from different parts of the globe, are sent in a single shipment. High-quality visuals and useful search filters create a online trade show environment. The website has a stated commitment to sustainable practices. Registration is required. *Access:* <https://www.lesouk.co/>.

• **National Retail Foundation.** Free registration as a nonmember provides access to nearly everything offered on the site under Resources and News, including research reports and summaries. When registering, check to see if your school is already a university member. University membership might have been arranged through your fashion studies department and provides even greater access than free registration does. *Access:* <https://nrf.com/>.

• **SEAMS: The Association and Voice of the Sewn Products Industry.** The SEAMS organization has been around for more than 50 years and represents American fashion brands, retailers, manufacturers, and textile producers. The most important resource on this site is the SEAMS Power Search of suppliers and manufacturers in the United States. *Access:* <https://seams.org/>.

## Note

1. “Is Fashion Education Selling a False Dream? The Business of Fashion,” September 28, 2017, <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/education/global-fashion-school-rankings-2015>, accessed August 6, 2018. ❧