

Audiovisual Narrative for Fashion Heritage: Communicating and Valorizing Archives through Fashion Film

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Abstract

The article investigates fashion film as a paratext to the materiality of fashion. It outlines methodology and creative practice in bridging traditional archives with contemporary digital storytelling as a means of knowledge transfer. These may include clothes, design practices, cultural narratives, and brand identities—all tangible and intangible assets that fashion heritage encompasses. Although previous scholarship has commented on the marketing and the aesthetic of fashion films, there is yet to be a comprehensive analysis of their potential as a viable mobility for documenting and communicating fashion's historical and cultural legacies. The research illustrates how documentary fashion films archive creative processes and brand histories by unpacking a series of case studies. It highlights the role of fashion film festivals as platforms that amplify heritage narratives while fostering discussions on sustainability, diversity, and innovation. The study further proposes the development of a dedicated online database for fashion films, offering a participatory and accessible resource to preserve and disseminate fashion heritage. The article aims to add to the discussion surrounding fashion archival and preservation by providing an argument for fashion films — as aesthetic devices in representing culture and as integral storytelling and archiving tools that can preserve identity from one generation to another.

Keywords: Fashion Film; Storytelling; Fashion Archive; Audiovisual Practices; Fashion Heritage Communication.

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Introduction

The relationship between film and fashion has long been recognised as mutually reinforcing, shaping both industries in distinct ways. With its visual storytelling power, the film has been a platform for showcasing fashion and a medium through which fashion trends are popularised and preserved. From early cinema to modern fashion films, the symbiosis between film and fashion has contributed to the cultural and commercial evolution. Despite this well-documented relationship, there exists a significant gap in the academic literature concerning the role of fashion films in preserving fashion heritage. Most studies focus on fashion films as marketing and aesthetic innovation tools, overlooking their potential to document and communicate fashion's historical and cultural significance.

Fashion heritage covers a brand's tangible and intangible assets, including archival garments, design processes, cultural narratives, and brand identities. With the increasing digitisation of the fashion industry, there is a growing need for new methods to preserve and present this heritage in a way that resonates with contemporary audiences. Fashion films, particularly those that take the form of documentaries or artistic explorations of fashion history, offer a unique medium for this purpose. However, while the promotional aspects of fashion films have been analysed, their potential as a tool for heritage preservation still needs to be investigated.

This article wants to address this gap by examining how fashion films can be used to preserve and enhance fashion heritage. The primary objective of this research is to analyse the role of fashion films in documenting and communicating the historical and cultural legacy of fashion brands and archives, with a particular focus on documentary fashion films, exhibitions, and fashion film festivals. Through an analysis of case studies, this article will investigate how these films contribute to understanding and preserving fashion history, brand identity, and creative processes. The study will also investigate the significance of fashion film festivals as platforms for disseminating fashion heritage and promoting emerging narratives around sustainability and diversity. Lastly, the article proposes a vision for a dedicated digital database of fashion films aimed at expanding access to fashion heritage and fostering a participatory and accessible approach to preserving this cultural legacy in the digital age.

The value of the study lies in its potential to shift the perception of fashion films as merely promotional tools to being recognised as vital mediums for cultural preservation. In an era where the fashion industry is increasingly conscious of its historical roots and the need to maintain its legacy, fashion film offers a compelling method for bridging the past with the present. It provides a way to make fashion heritage accessible to wider audiences, particularly in the digital era, where visual content shapes perceptions and narratives.

The thesis of this paper posits that fashion films, especially documentary films, are powerful storytelling tools and strategic instruments for the preservation and transmission of fashion heritage. By documenting the creative processes, the historical evolution of fashion brands, and the cultural contexts in which fashion operates, these films serve as archives in their own right. This essay aims to contribute to the broader discourse on fashion preservation by highlighting the strategic use of fashion films in safeguarding fashion heritage for future generations, thus positioning them as critical assets within the fashion archive and beyond.

Literature Review

Historical Development of Fashion Film

Film and the fashion system have always maintained a symbiotic relationship characterised by intertwined commercial and cultural influences. This symbiotic relationship — commercial and artistic — has proven beneficial for both film studies and fashion studies, leading over time to various types of fashion films. Although it is a digital culture that catalysed contemporary fashion film, various forms existed before the advent of the internet: we can consider the audiovisual presentations of fashion disseminated through newsreels in the early decades of the 21st century or the short fragments documenting the ser-

pentine dances of Loïe Fuller from the late 19th century, both identified as possible genealogical lines of the fashion film.¹ In this context, it is impossible to provide a comprehensive account of the historical evolution of the fashion film; therefore, we will restrict our discussion to the key milestones.

In 1911, the French designer Paul Poiret made a promotional film to present his creations, becoming a forerunner in fashion promotion through audiovisual format. During the 1920s and 1930s, the Beta shoe company started to make shoe commercials involving many filmmakers, e.g. Elmar Klos and Alexander Hackenschmied. The release of *Making Fashion* (1938) marks a turning point: made by Humphrey Jennings and dedicated to Queen's dressmaker Norman Hartnell, the film can be considered the first designer documentary. In the same period, many newsreels promoted fashion news before films at the cinema, and the most prolific producers were Pathé-Frères and Gaumont in France.² Alongside newsreels, more substantial documentary films about various aspects of the fashion industry emerged in the 1930s. Starting from the end of the 1950s, many beauty companies followed this promotional strategy, releasing TV advertising aimed at fashion and beauty trends. *Basic Black's* William Claxton (1967) is sometimes credited as the first fashion film:³ produced for the *avant-garde* designer Rudi Gernreich and starring model Peggy Moffitt, the film won several awards and is now part of the Museum of Modern Art collection (New York). Many fashion photographers — Richard Avedon, William Klein, Guy Bourdin, David Bailey, and Erwin Blumenfeld — made fashion commercials during the 1970s, as the four videos produced by Avedon for the Japanese brand Jun Ropé (1973) or the commercials made by Kazumi Kurigami for the Japanese label Parco (1979). These films starred Hollywood stars, such as Lauren Hutton, Angelica Huston and Faye Dunaway, and sometimes introduced a “stage behind-the-scenes (BTS) approach”.⁴ The use of more sophisticated audiovisual advertising increased during the last two decades of the 21st century, with the arrival of MTV channel on US (1981) and UK (1987) television and the influence of music video aesthetics on fashion films. Fashion brands started to demand well-known directors for their TV commercials (consider, for example, the collaboration between Giuseppe Tornatore and Dolce&Gabbana). They also began to produce documentaries about designers (such as Wim Wenders's *Notebook on Cities and Clothes* for Yohji Yamamoto, 1989).

Over the last two decades, with the expansion of digital media, “the fashion industry began to embrace the moving image much more readily than ever before”.⁵ Fashion film has emerged as a distinctive audiovisual object, developing eye-catching commercials with a strong emotional impact that would appeal to audiences. Alongside Nick Knigt's SHOWstudio⁶ — the pioneer website that in 2000 opened the way for the digital development of fashion moving image — collaborations between fashion brands and film directors exist and continue to thrive: Baz Luhrmann's *No.5 the Film* (for Chanel, 2004), David Lynch's *Lady Blue Shanghai* (for Dior, 2009), Roman Polanski's *A Therapy* (for Prada, 2012), Wes Anderson's *Castello Cavalcanti* (for Prada, 2013), Spike Jonze's *Kenzo World* (for Kenzo, 2016), and Matteo Garrone's *Le Mythe Dior* (for Dior, 2020). While some luxury labels turned into Hollywood's filmmakers, other brands and designers promoted new talents and, as Italian designer Miuccia Prada for her labels Prada (James Lima's *Trembled Blossom*, 2008) and Miu Miu (Lucrecia Martel's *Muta*, 2011). Alongside promotional fashion films, it is possible to identify a self-reflexive sub-genre that we can define as “non-commercial”, which investigates the fashion industry and its representation. In these cases, the fashion film is used as a communication tool by magazines, video-makers, independent or young designers, organisations and activists to build an emotional connection with existing and new customers or viewers, and it is an effective medium to raise interest in fashion in the digital age. These films are significant not only within the global economies of symbolic cultural productions but also — as a crit-

1. Marie-Aude Baronian, “The dress is the screen: Dancing fashion, dancing media,” *Nexus*, December 6, 2017, <https://nexus-ejms.org/the-dress-is-the-screen-dancing-fashion-dancing-media/>.

2. Marketa Uhlirova, “The Fashion-Film Effect,” *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 17 (2013): 143, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174113X13541091797562>.

3. Nilgin Yusuf, *The Fundamentals of Fashion Filmmaking* (London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2023), 18.

4. Yusuf, 19.

5. Nick Rees-Roberts, *Fashion Film: Art and Advertising in the Digital Age* (London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 76.

6. “Show Studio. The Home of Fashion Film,” <https://www.showstudio.com>.

ical vehicle — and have started to stimulate debate around current issues in the fashion industry (e.g., sustainability, social and environmental issues). This last trend becomes more evident, shifting the attention to the growth of fashion film festivals. These festivals are focused expressly on fashion film to foster creative exchange among image-makers, producers, and agencies working in the industry: among them, Diane Pernet’s Paris-based *A Shaded View on Fashion Film*, Costanza Cavalli Etro’s *Fashion Film Festival Milano*, Niccolò Montanari’s *Berlin Fashion Film Festival*, Ditte Marie Lund’s *Copenhagen Fashion Film*, and others.

Current Discussions on Fashion Film

Since around 2010, film and fashion scholars have begun to develop a growing interest in the fashion film genre, examining its characteristics, functions, and applications. Fashion academic Nathalie Khan explored the emergence of digital fashion film in depicting fashion, focusing on the advent of the web and identifying fashion film as a new media genre.⁷ According to Khan, “fashion film on the Internet has developed as an independent genre. Numerous fashion houses have appointed small production companies and well-known filmmakers to commission short films”.⁸ One of the critical elements of the fashion film that Khan recognised is the introduction of narrative, which brings a “shift from the viewer as consumers to the viewer as spectator”.⁹ Khan distinguished between large-scale budget films for well-known and established brands (e.g. David Lynch for Dior) and “experimental” films.

Gary Needham is among the pioneering scholars who have studied the phenomenon. In 2013, Needham analysed the advent of digital fashion film, linking the rise of this new audiovisual practice to the technological and communication advances seen by fashion culture during the first decade of the 21st century.¹⁰ Furthermore, he was at the forefront of a deeper analysis of different types of fashion films, expanding on the two categories established by Khan. Drawing on Needham’s arguments, there are several sub-genres, such as the “authored film” — created by a known film director —, and the “boutique film” — which “describes the digital fashion features that are created for e-stores and whose function is primarily to advertise the brands”.¹¹ As one evolution of the printed advertising campaign, nowadays, the fashion film seems to be the tool that fashion houses need in the digital era, forced “by the digital behaviour of the young consumers, and distinctive type of experiential marketing”.¹²

Fashion scholar Marketa Uhlírova, curator of the *Fashion in Film Festival* project (in London), raised important questions about the legitimacy of the fashion film as a genre — given its cultural intermediarity — and gave a proper analysis of the relationship between the fashion industry and the fashion film practice: “explored primarily by independent designers, stylists and photographers, fashion film began to be adopted more widely around 2010 by brands and fashion magazines who were waking up to an ever-growing appetite for time-based creative content online and, consequently, the possibilities of creative expression and promotion in this sphere”.¹³ Uhlírova also suggested that it had existed in different

7. See: Natalie Khan, “Cutting the Fashion Body: Why the Fashion Image Is No Longer Still,” *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 16 (May 2012): 235–49, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174112X13274987924177>, and “Stealing the Moment: The Non-narrative Fashion Films of Ruth Hogben and Gareth Pugh,” *Film, Fashion and Consumption*, Vol. 1 (December 2012): 251–62, https://doi.org/10.1386/ffc.1.3.251_1.

8. Natalie Khan, “Cutting the Fashion Body: Why the Fashion Image Is No Longer Still,” *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 16 (May 2012): 236.

9. Khan, 237.

10. Gary Needham, “The Digital Fashion Film,” in *Fashion Cultures Revisited: Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, eds. Stella Bruzzi et al. (London-New York: Routledge, 2013), 104.

11. Needham, 108.

12. Paloma Díaz-Soloaga and Leticia García Guerrero, “Fashion films as a new communication format to build fashion brands,” *Communication & Society*, Vol. 29 (June 2016): 49, <https://doi.org/10.15581/003.29.35923>.

13. Marketa Uhlírova, “Fashion in cinema: reframing the field,” in *The Routledge Companion to Fashion Studies*, eds. Eugenia Paulicelli et al. (London-New York: Routledge, 2021), 354.

guises throughout the twentieth century, “but it achieved a ‘cultural fit’ and widespread adoption by the fashion industry in the 2000s”.¹⁴

Fashion films often blur the lines between commercial advertising and artistic expression, making them a powerful tool for designers, brands, and filmmakers to tell stories and convey brand identity. Features of fashion films have been described in the special issue *Fashionating Images* (2017), edited by Adriano D’Aloia, Marie-Aude Baronian, and Marco Pedroni.¹⁵ Within the issue, Massimo Scaglioni and Giuseppe Suma considered fashion-branded entertainment projects conducted by Italian luxury brands to underline the link between advertising and audiovisual formats.¹⁶ Lucio Spaziante highlighted four ‘textual’ dimensions — displaying, narrative, rhythmic and aesthetic — that fashion films borrow from pre-existing audiovisual formats such as TV commercials, music video clips and art films.¹⁷ Emphasising the transformative effects of film on fashion, the research project *Archaeology of Fashion Film* (funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council - AHRC) — which investigated the epistemologies and contexts of contemporary digital fashion cinema and its precursors — provided a new understanding of film as a “fashion medium” and as a “fashion object”.¹⁸ In the Italian context, attention is also drawn to the volume *Fashion Film. Nuove visioni della moda*¹⁹ edited by Eleonora Manca and Alessandro Amaducci, which analyses the fashion film and its relationship with contemporary dance practices.

In 2018, Nick Rees-Roberts, currently one of the most authoritative scholars on the phenomenon alongside Uhlirva, undertook a first theoretical inquiry into the multiple forms of contemporary fashion film in his volume *Fashion Film. Art and Advertising in the Digital Age*. The book traces the emergence of fashion film in the 21st century through its historical roots in pre-digital forms of photography, experimental cinema, mass-media advertising and documentary filmmaking. According to Rees-Roberts, fashion film shows several elements from pre-existing audiovisual forms: by encapsulating a spectrum of film genres from traditional audiovisual formats, the fashion film’s ecosystem “crosses the creative industries of fashion, design, and image with the media industries of promotion, communications, and film”.²⁰ Furthermore, the author identified a series of practices to uncover the history of fashion and narrate the brand’s story. This aspect is particularly significant for this analysis.

The definition and boundaries of fashion film are still evolving, and the potential for artistic and commercial expression has yet to be fully realised. While the promotional and commercial aspects of fashion film have been extensively analysed in the last ten years,²¹ few studies have focused on the use of this audiovisual practice in the enhancement of an archive, whether private, corporate, or public. The practice of fashion film has also been overlooked in digital technology studies applied to cultural heritage in fashion.²² Some recent studies, such as the research conducted by Paloma Díaz-Soloaga, Gemma Muñoz

14. Marketa Uhlirva, “The Fashion-Film Effect,” in *Fashion Media: Past and Present*, eds. Djurdja Bartlett et al. (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 134.

15. Adriano D’Aloia, Marie-Aude Baronian and Marco Pedroni (eds.), “Fashionating Images. Audiovisual Media Studies Meet Fashion,” *Comunicazioni Sociali*, Vol. 1 (January-April 2017).

16. Massimo Scaglioni and Giuseppe Suma, “Fashion-Branded Entertainment. How Italian Fashion Brands Utilize Audiovisual Media to Tell Stories and Entertain Audiences,” *Comunicazioni Sociali*, Vol. 1 (January-April 2017): 13–26.

17. Lucio Spaziante, “Textual Innovation of the Audiovisual Language in Fashion Film,” *Comunicazioni Sociali*, Vol. 1 (January-April 2017): 27–36.

18. Caroline Evans and Jussi Parikka (eds.), *Archaeologies of Fashion Film. Journal of Visual Culture*, Vol. 19 (2020).

19. Alessandro Amaducci and Eleonora Manca, *Fashion Film. Nuove visioni della moda* (Torino: Kaplan, 2021).

20. Nick Rees-Roberts, *Fashion Film: Art and Advertising in the Digital Age* (London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 5.

21. See: Nikola Mijovic, “Narrative form and the rhetoric of fashion in the promotional fashion film,” *Film, Fashion and Consumption*, Vol. 2 (June 2013): 175–86, https://doi.org/10.1386/ffc.2.2.175_1; Jamid Ul Islam and Rahman Zillur, “Examining the effects of brand love and brand image on customer engagement: An empirical study of fashion apparel brands,” *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, Vol. 7 (January 2016): 45–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2015.1110041>; Nilgin Yusuf, *The Fundamentals of Fashion Filmmaking* (London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2023).

22. Puspita Ayu Permatasari and Nadzeya Kalbaska, “Digital technologies for communicating fashion heritage,” in *Handbook on heritage, sustainable tourism and digital media*, eds. Silvia De Ascaniis et al. (Cheltenham-Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2022), 60–75.

Domínguez, and Jing Zhou,²³ or the volume focusing on the media-fashion relationship edited by Adriano D'Aloia and Marco Pedroni,²⁴ have laid the groundwork for this investigation. These authors primarily focused on the types of storytelling employed by certain luxury brands, analysing how fashion houses transmit the spirit of the brands and convey the values that constitute their identity. There is still a lack of in-depth research that links the practice of fashion film with the need for knowledge and enhancement of the tangible and intangible heritage of an archive or a fashion company. A study that thoroughly examines fashion film as a practice for enhancing archival heritage and as a strategic tool — particularly in the future and for new generations — for curatorial and exhibition practices.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research design to analyse the potential role of fashion film in safeguarding a fashion brand's tangible and intangible historical legacy and heritage and enriching the fashion archive. The research employs a case study approach to analyse the evolving role and impact of documentary fashion films, exhibitions, and fashion film festivals in presenting and preserving fashion heritage.

The article is structured into four core components: analysis of documentary fashion films, evaluation of exhibitions and museum collaborations, investigation of distribution practices through fashion film festivals, and a proposal for a digital fashion film database. The boundaries of the fashion film are difficult to define, both in terms of the format of this audiovisual object and the various genre types identified. However, establishing these boundaries is not the objective of this article. The interest here lies in highlighting good practices of employing fashion film in promoting the work and heritage of the fashion archive. For this reason, the analysis will be based on Nick Rees-Roberts' classification of fashion films,²⁵ specifically focusing on examples of what he named — first and foremost — documentary fashion films, generally produced for and distributed through different channels, such as television and the web.

Data have been collected through a combination of case studies and film analysis. The study begins by selecting influential documentary fashion films that provide insight into the fashion industry's functioning and historical evolution. These films were chosen for their significant contribution to portraying fashion brands and their behind-the-scenes processes. The analysis involves examining each film's content, focusing on how they depict the creative processes, the historical context of fashion brands, and the personal stories of the designers. This analysis aims to understand how these films enhance public knowledge of fashion, reveal the inner workings of fashion houses, and contribute to the brands' digital archives.

The study further examines how documentary fashion films are integrated into museum exhibitions to enhance visitor engagement and reach a broader audience. The analysis considers how these films contribute to the overall exhibition experience, promote more profound engagement with the content, and help convey the historical and cultural significance of the fashion items on display.

The final aspect is the role of fashion film festivals in promoting and disseminating fashion films. The study investigates how these festivals provide platforms for emerging and established filmmakers, influence fashion trends, and engage with global audiences. The research also explores the role of these festivals in fostering discussions about the future of fashion films and their integration with other media forms. Furthermore, the study assesses how festivals contribute to the broader fashion ecosystem, emphasising themes such as sustainability and diversity and their partnerships with fashion houses and cultural institutions.

23. Paloma Díaz-Soloaga, Gemma Muñoz Domínguez and Jing Zhou, "Legacy transmission through fashion films: Visual and narrative brand heritage integration," *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, Vol. 14 (June 2023): 429–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2023.2214164>.

24. Adriano D'Aloia and Marco Pedroni (eds.), *I media e la moda. Dal cinema ai social network* (Roma: Carocci, 2022).

25. Nick Rees-Roberts, *Fashion Film: Art and Advertising in the Digital Age* (London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).

In addition, a fourth chapter is dedicated to envisioning a digital fashion film database, proposed as an innovative tool to broaden access to fashion heritage and engage audiences interactively, thereby supporting the preservation and dissemination of fashion's cultural legacy in a digital context.

Case Studies

Documentary Fashion Films

As Rees-Roberts argued in his study, with the expansion of digital media “alongside advertising films, other moving-image formats such as fashion documentary and reportage reemerged across a variety of platforms”.²⁶ A corpus of documentary fashion films is considered here, focusing on the history of brands, founders, and iconic products. The desire for backstage access to design studios, fashion archives and trade events drives the rise of the fashion documentary. It allows viewers to witness the process of assembling materials, transforming them through creative abstraction into culturally recognized fashion. More than feature films, fashion series, particularly in the context of documentaries and television, explore various aspects of the fashion industry and its culture. Targeted at viewers in developing markets, these series — frequently using narration and subtitles — typically offer an overview of a brand's history, signature products, and aesthetic principles, merging entertainment with informative content. This material also endures beyond a single season, enhancing a brand's digital archive.

Journalist, documentary filmmaker and youtuber Loïc Prigent is one of the most renowned and established names in the international fashion environment. Among his documentaries, Prigent is most celebrated for his series *Signed Chanel* (made in 2005 for Franco-German TV channel ARTE), *Marc Jacobs & Louis Vuitton* (2007), and *The Day Before* (a backstage of the catwalk shows released in 2009).

From Karl Lagerfeld's first sketches through to the selling of the clothes to wealthy customers, *Signed Chanel* follows the fashion house in the weeks leading up to the showing of its Autumn/Winter 2004/05 collection, taking the viewer behind the scenes of this legendary atelier on the Rue Cambon. As Rees-Roberts stated, “following the twenty-four hours leading up to the catwalk show, *Signé Chanel* traces the elaboration of a couture collection designed by Karl Lagerfeld from start to finish, from the initial sketches of the designs through the production process”.²⁷ The title of this documentary mini-series underscores the importance of the authorship of the founder. The five episodes (26 minutes for each episode) offer an exclusive look into the highs and lows of one of the most renowned fashion houses. Within the film “runs a materialist inquiry into patterns of work, and into the methodology of making fashion, drawing attention to the hours of intricate manual labour undertaken to produce the sumptuous suits and gowns”.²⁸ *Signed Chanel* is significant as it offers a unique insight into one of the world's most exclusive fashion houses and brings the public into a world normally only accessible to insiders.

The Day Before is a ten-part documentary series (with episodes running from 26 to 52 minutes), which cornicles the 36 hours before the seasonal runway shows of designers such as Chanel, Versace, Marc Jacobs, Jean Paul Gaultier, Lanvin and others: the backstage, the ateliers, the designer in the studio, and the fittings. *Jean-Paul Gaultier's* episode, which follows the creation of the house's “cinema” collection (Autumn/Winter 2009/10), “illustrates the documentarian's ambition to showcase the illustrious designer through the creative work of his house”.²⁹ The French designer Jean-Paul Gaultier — known for his label and his tenure at Hermès, where he served as the creative director for women's ready-to-wear from 2003 to 2010 — is famous for his avant-garde designs, his playful approach to fashion, and his ability to blend streetwear with haute couture. His works often challenged conventional gender norms and celebrated individuality and diversity.

26. Nick Rees-Roberts, *Fashion Film: Art and Advertising in the Digital Age* (London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 76.

27. Nick Rees-Roberts, “Backstage with Loïc Prigent: Documenting Process from Gaultier to Chanel,” *Film, Fashion & Consumption*, Vol. 5 (December 2016): 154. https://doi.org/10.1386/ffc.5.2.149_1.

28. Nick Rees-Roberts, *Fashion Film: Art and Advertising in the Digital Age* (London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 88.

29. Rees-Roberts, 103.

The case studies analysed up to this point have all been produced by the journalist and director Loïc Prigent and share a common distribution perspective: they are television production. The final example considered here is a series initially created for the web. This aspect is particularly significant, as the choice of distribution platform for a serial audiovisual product affects the number of episodes and the duration of each episode. An example is the fashion series *Inside Chanel*, a collection of 32 short films³⁰ (each episode ranges from 1.30 to 4 minutes) produced by the House of Chanel to explore the iconic fashion brand's rich history and heritage. Launched in 2012 and available on the official website and its YouTube channel, the series aims to educate and entertain audiences by providing insights into the brand's legacy, its founder, and the evolution of its most famous products and designs.

By combining archival footage with stop-motion animation and recorded interviews, the series offers a detailed look into the life and vision of Chanel, showing her revolutionary impact on fashion. The series covers significant moments in Chanel's history, including the life of founder Gabrielle Chanel and the brand's evolution; it shows the stories behind Chanel's signature products, such as the *Chanel No. 5* perfume, the little black dress and the quilted handbag. It covers significant milestones in the brand's history, from its founding to its modern-day status as a luxury powerhouse. These films explain these creations' inspiration and lasting influence on fashion. The series highlights how Chanel has permeated popular culture, being worn and endorsed by celebrities and style icons over the decades. Viewers get a behind-the-scenes look at the creative process within Chanel, including the craftsmanship and artistry that go into making their haute couture and ready-to-wear collections. The films often feature interviews with key figures at Chanel, including designers, artisans, and fashion historians.

Blending storytelling with visually appealing content makes the series informative and entertaining. Each film combines high-quality visuals with storytelling to highlight the elegance associated with the brand. It is designed to appeal to a broad audience, from fashion enthusiasts to those curious about cultural and historical narratives. The series has resonated exceptionally well with viewers: *Chapter 6. Mademoiselle's* clip has been watched over two million times on the brand's YouTube channel, while the previous chapter — about Chanel's humble beginnings and transformation — has over 6 million views.³¹ Rather than inviting the consumer to purchase a product through a showcase of seductive imagery, this series brings the audience into the house's heritage and legacy.

As demonstrated by these examples, the documentary fashion film can be adapted into various formats depending on the purpose of its creation and the distribution platform. Fashion series often offer exclusive behind-the-scenes access to the inner workings of fashion houses, including the design processes. They frequently focus on the lives, challenges, and successes of prominent figures in the industry, such as designers, models, and stylists. These series also offer viewers valuable insights into various aspects of the fashion world, from trend forecasting to the business side of fashion. The use of a "serial format" by fashion archives, with short episodes dedicated to critical aspects of the archive's history, its founder, and its tangible and intangible heritage, can be valuable not only from a commercial promotion perspective — such as product sales or brand name promotion — but also for advancing knowledge of fashion history more broadly. Producing fashion films is among the strategies a fashion company can employ to make its heritage strategically accessible beyond the limited circle of industry insiders. Due to its brief segments — that can be shown together or individually — the serial format is particularly suited for web distribution, whether on the archive's or fashion company's website or any other online platform (magazines or databases). In addition to being particularly appreciated by younger generations, the serial format is highly effective for presenting a vast and diverse heritage — such as that of a fashion archive. Users can individually select items or stories to explore, focusing on each one with the flexibility to choose the most suitable aesthetic to highlight a particular object, whether it is a fabric or a story tied to the archive's founding.

30. The list of all episodes is available on the brand's website: <https://www.chanel.com/us/about-chanel/the-stories/>.

31. Lisa Wang, "Top 10 Fashion Films of the Season," *The Business of Fashion*, October 30, 2013, <https://www.businessoffashion.com/videos/technology/alexander-wang-rodarte-salvatore-ferragamo-gucci-vuitton/>.

Exhibitions, Museums and Fashion Films

Prigent returned to the designer with the documentary *Jean-Paul Gaultier at Work* (2015), which aimed to assess the designer's legacy by following his creative process. The film involved the designer recreating twelve of his most emblematic designs, such as the conical bra, the sailor T-shirt, and the men's skirt. As underlined by Rees-Roberts, addressing the viewer directly, the designer "retraces the various stages of his work step-by-step, delving into the house's archive to re-edit the design process. Prigent's film fetishises the creative process through *mise-en-scène* by erecting a mock-up studio within the label's premises".³² Prigent's film shows the designer re-creating the twelve most iconic creations in front of the camera: ten outfits and two outfits. The film can be viewed as a sequence shot, in which the garments materialise before the viewer's eyes, revealing how his thought process develops between ideas and material.

Prigent's *Jean-Paul Gaultier at Work* was first broadcast in France in April 2015 by the TV Channel ARTE as part of a tie-in with the Grand Palais museum, which co-financed the film for the promotion of the Paris stop of the global touring exhibition *The Fashion World of Jean-Paul Gaultier: From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk*. Organised in 2011 by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, in collaboration with Maison Jean Paul Gaultier (Paris), and curated by Thierry-Maxime Loriot of the MMFA, the exhibition was the first dedicated to the groundbreaking French couturier. It was organised around seven themes tracing the influences on Gaultier's development since he emerged as a designer in the 1970s. The travelling exhibition started in 2011 in Montreal. Subsequently, it moved to San Francisco (de Young Museum), New York (Brooklyn Museum), Madrid (Fundación MAPFRE), Stockholm (Arkitekturmuseet), London (Barbican), Munich (Kunsthalle), and other cities, concluding in 2016. For the French stop in its tour, at the Grand Palais in Paris, the exhibition has been expanded with unique multimedia installations designed specifically for viewers in the French capital. Jean Paul Gaultier has even stated that he considers it a unique phenomenon rather than a retrospective.

Prigent's film uncovers that the distinction between commercial and journalistic formats, between corporate advertising and documentary television, is even more indistinct. This indicates that modern fashion brands can integrate audiovisual production by granting the documentarian access to the house's vast archive and presenting its heritage through an educational lens.

The second example of fashion film comes from the "home of fashion film": Nick Knight's SHOWstudio.³³ Established in 2000, SHOWstudio has become a seminal space for exploring fashion, art, and technology, offering a groundbreaking approach to the presentation and consumption of fashion. Knight's work is marked by its avant-garde aesthetic and its ability to challenge traditional conventions of fashion imagery. He has collaborated with influential designers, models, and artists, including Alexander McQueen, John Galliano, and Lady Gaga, to create visually compelling and conceptually innovative works. SHOWstudio has been instrumental in reshaping the fashion landscape by using live broadcasts, fashion films, and interactive media to engage with audiences in new and immersive ways. Knight's approach emphasises the democratisation of fashion, making it more accessible and transparent through real-time content and digital experimentation. His contributions to fashion extend beyond photography; he has played a crucial role in developing fashion film as a legitimate artistic medium. His work has been exhibited in major institutions, including the Victoria & Albert Museum and Tate Modern, solidifying his status as a key figure in contemporary art and fashion. Through SHOWstudio, Nick Knight continues to push the boundaries of how fashion is created, viewed, and understood, positioning his work at the forefront of cultural and technological innovation.

*Museum of Costume*³⁴ (Alice Hawkins, 2011) exemplifies how SHOWstudio utilises fashion film by collaborating with museums and institutions. The film focuses on the designer and artist Nudie Cohn. The Antwerp MoMu's 2011 exhibition *Dreamsuits: Designs by Nudie Cohn, the Rodeo Tailor* was the

32. Nick Rees-Roberts, *Fashion Film: Art and Advertising in the Digital Age* (London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 103.

33. "Show Studio. The Home of Fashion Film," <https://www.showstudio.com>.

34. "Show Studio. The Home of Fashion Film," https://www.showstudio.com/projects/museum_of_costume/fashion_film.

first European exhibition to examine the work of the Ukrainian-born tailor Nudie Cohn, who revolutionised the clothing of Country and Western Music. Initially a designer of highly decorated g-strings for New York dancers, Nudie Cohn relocated to Hollywood in 1947 and pioneered the rhinestone cowboy style, which has since become synonymous with Country and Western fashion. His imaginative, elaborately embroidered, and richly embellished outfits graced the wardrobes of numerous music and film icons, including Elvis Presley, Gram Parsons, Porter Wagoner, Dolly Parton, Roy Rogers, John Wayne, Elton John, Cher, John Lennon, Steve McQueen, Johnny Cash, and Bobbejaan Schoepen. Contemporary musicians such as Bobby Gillespie of Primal Scream, Mike Mills of R.E.M., Beck, fashion photographers like Craig McDean, and designers ranging from Tommy Hilfiger to Ralph Lauren have drawn inspiration from his work.

Bobbejaan Schoepen was a dedicated client and collector of Nudie Cohn's designs, leading to a deep friendship between the two and the accumulation of an extensive and well-maintained collection of Nudie's creations. The Antwerp exhibition honoured Nudie's distinctive aesthetic and the relationship between the two friends. Alongside the exhibition at the MoMu Gallery, Lannoo Publishers released the book *Dreamsuits: The Wonderful World of Nudie Cohn*, authored by Mairi MacKenzie. The book features archival materials from Nudie Cohn, Bobbejaan Schoepen, and other stars, detailed photographs of the suits, and the original Rodeo Tailor story.

The 8-minute fashion film *Museum of Costume* was produced and commissioned to complement the Antwerp exhibition; London-based photographer and filmmaker Alice Hawkins applies her distinctive perspective to Cohn's equally distinctive couture designs, capturing their shimmering details on fashion film. Showcasing outfits from the personal archive of legendary Belgian entertainer Bobbejaan Schoepen and his wife José, Hawkins' film is driven by the notion of Cohn's creations blurring the boundary between costume and art. A long-time client and close friend of Nudie Cohn, Bobbejaan Schoepen owns a collection of thirty-five complete stage outfits, the largest in Europe. For *Museum of Costume*, Hawkins animates Schoepen's collection through a variety of Nudie Cohn devotees — from Elvis impersonators to musicians, nightclub owners, and even Hawkins herself — preserving the Rodeo tailor's most iconic designs on film.

Fashion films produced for museum exhibitions can be crucial in bringing archival collections to life, making them accessible and engaging to contemporary audiences. By capturing the essence of iconic designs through the moving image, these films allow viewers to experience the garments in motion, highlighting details that static displays cannot convey. They offer a strong narrative that bridges the gap between fashion and art, creating a deeper connection to the designer's creative process. In addition, fashion films serve as a lasting record, preserving the cultural and historical significance of the pieces beyond the temporal constraints of the exhibition. For fashion archives, collaborating on such projects enhances the visibility of their collections and reinforces the importance of fashion as a form of artistic expression. In this way, fashion films extend the reach of museum exhibitions, allowing them to resonate with diverse audiences and ensuring that the legacy of fashion designers endures in the digital age.

Distribution Practices: The Fashion Film Festivals

Fashion film communication, dissemination, and audience engagement are essential in a world undergoing relevant technology changes. The concept of fashion films has grown significantly over the past decade, driven by advancements in digital technology and the increasing importance of online content. This growth has led to the establishment of various fashion film festivals worldwide and specialised events that showcase short films focusing on fashion, style, and the intersection of art and design. Celebrating the unique medium of fashion film³⁵ — which combines elements of traditional filmmaking and fashion photography to create visually captivating narratives centred around clothing, accessories, and the broader fashion industry — these festivals offer filmmakers, designers, and brands a platform

35. In addition to specialised festivals, already established short film festivals (London Short Film Festival, Aestetica Short Film Festival) began to include fashion film categories alongside traditional ones.

to gain recognition and showcase their work to a global audience while also fostering discussions on the future of fashion and its portrayal in media.

In the last ten years, fashion film festivals have multiplied as fashion film has grown in importance in the fashion scenario. To name but a few, some of the most notable fashion film festivals include *A Shaded View on Fashion Film* (ASVOFF), the world's first fashion film festival, founded in 2008 by fashion journalist and filmmaker Diane Pernet and held in Paris; ASVOFF blends fashion, cinema, and contemporary art, showcasing cutting-edge fashion films and exploring the genre's potential as an artistic medium. The festival is renowned for its avant-garde approach and has become a key platform for emerging and established talents in fashion and film; *Fashion Film Festival Milano* (FFFMilano), established in 2014 by Constanza Cavalli Etro, the festival has quickly gained international recognition as a key platform for showcasing creative fashion films from around the world; *Berlin Fashion Film Festival* (BFFF), a leading European platform that connects the creative community with fashion, presenting innovative films that challenge the boundaries of fashion and film; *London Fashion Film Festival*, a key event in the UK that celebrates the fusion of fashion and film, featuring a diverse range of films from emerging and established talents; *La Jolla International Fashion Film Festival*, often considered the "Cannes of fashion film festivals", this event in California highlights cutting-edge work in the fashion film genre, attracting a global audience of creators; Ditte Marie Lund's *Copenhagen Fashion Film Festival*, known for blending fashion with sustainability and art, this festival reflects the Scandinavian approach to design; *Madrid Fashion Film Festival*, a prominent event in Spain that highlights the best of international fashion films, focusing on creativity and storytelling.

In terms of global reach and participation, these festivals attract submissions from both emerging and renowned filmmakers, designers, and brands. They feature a different range of short films that show fashion through different lenses, including storytelling, artistic expression, and brand identity. In recent years, some festivals, such as *Fashion Film Festival Milano*, have strongly focused on sustainability, encouraging filmmakers to reflect on eco-conscious fashion and ethical production themes.

In addition, they emphasise inclusivity, showcasing films that highlight different cultures, identities, and perspectives. This commitment to diversity is reflected in their programming, which often includes works that challenge traditional norms and push the boundaries of fashion. Alongside the screenings, fashion film festivals also offer a range of educational activities, including panel discussions, workshops, and masterclasses with industry experts. These sessions provide valuable insights into fashion and film's creative process and future.

Many of these festivals collaborate with major fashion houses, media outlets, and cultural institutions to promote and amplify the impact of fashion films. The festivals' partnerships with institutions like established fashion magazines, online issues, and platforms enhance their influence and reach. Festivals often expand their accessibility by offering online screenings and digital events, allowing a global audience to participate. This shift towards digital platforms has been significant in recent years.

Festivals hosted in global fashion capitals, like Milan or Paris, are usually closely linked to the cities' rich fashion heritage. They play a significant role in the city's cultural calendar, attracting industry professionals, fashion enthusiasts, fashion students, and tourists. For emerging and established filmmakers, these festivals have the advantages of building an audience, making contacts, and developing networks. For example, Kevin Frilet's film *Under* (2014) — a 4-minute promotional film shown at *A Shaded View of Fashion Film Festival* in 2015 — won the award for best-emerging talent and has been subsequently shown at a different short film festival and on Nowness online platform.³⁶ The platform gave the film and its director comprehensive visibility, so Armani hired Frilet for his *Acqua di Giò* perfume commercial (2016). Moving the attention to the *Fashion Film Festival Milano*, it is appropriate to mention Kenzo's film *My Mutant Brain* (Spike Jonze, 2016). Commissioned to the well-known director

36. Launched in 2010 as an editorial platform and now promoted as a global media channel, Nowness claims to curate contemporary culture through storytelling. <https://www.nowness.com>.

Jonze,³⁷ the film, created by the French fashion house to advertise the Kenzo World perfume, was released on August 25, 2016, via the official Kenzo YouTube channel and registered a million views in a few days.³⁸ The following year, the commercial was presented at the Milan festival, where it won seven awards — including Best Fashion Film, Best Director, Best Editing, and Best Production — undoubtedly increasing its popularity.

Participating in a fashion film festival can offer a fashion archive numerous benefits:

- 1) *Bring history to life through visual and eye-catching storytelling.* Fashion archives hold a wealth of valuable fashion items, historical garments, accessories, sketches, and other artefacts that document the evolution of style and fashion over time. A fashion film festival provides a creative platform to transform these static pieces into dynamic stories. By collaborating with established or emerging filmmakers, a fashion archive can present its collections in a way that resonates emotionally with the audience. For instance, a film could show the journey of a particular garment, from its creation to its cultural impact, making history more accessible and engaging to the public.
- 2) *Expand audience reach and engagement.* Traditionally, fashion archives attract researchers, historians, scholars, and fashion enthusiasts, but a fashion film festival can broaden this reach. The festival audience typically includes a mix of fashion lovers, filmmakers, creatives, influencers, and industry professionals, offering the archive exposure to new demographics. In the digital age, an archive's presence is no longer confined to physical spaces. A fashion archive can enhance its digital footprint by participating in this particular event: it can amplify the archive's reach for future collaborations with digital creators, brands, and fashion houses, and connect with younger generations who are more visually and digitally oriented. Fashion films' visual and emotional appeal can also encourage more people to visit the archive, physically or virtually, increasing its visibility and relevance.
- 3) *Celebrate the vision of the founder and the archive's legacy.* Fashion companies are often deeply connected to the vision and passion of their founders, whose dedication to preserving fashion history has shaped the archive's identity. A film can tell how the archive existed, the founder's motivations, challenges, and contributions to the fashion world. Showcasing the history of the archive can highlight its role in preserving cultural heritage and maintaining continuity in the evolving fashion industry, positioning it as a resource for current and future generations.
- 4) *Promotion of educational opportunities and industry connections.* Fashion film festivals often include panel discussions, workshops, and networking events. A fashion archive can position itself as a thought leader in discussions about fashion history, preservation, and storytelling. The festival environment also represents an opportunity to connect with filmmakers, designers, and other creatives interested in working with the archive on future projects.
- 5) *Promotion of sustainable and ethical fashion.* Sustainability has become a significant focus in the fashion and film industries in recent years. Fashion archives can contain examples of past craftsmanship, sustainable practices, and ethical design. By showcasing films that highlight these aspects of the archive's collection, the archive can contribute to the conversation on sustainability and position itself as a resource for those looking to learn from the past to create a more sustainable future in fashion.
- 6) *Leverage archival resources for creative inspiration.* Fashion archives are often a source of inspiration for designers, creatives and students. By participating in fashion film festivals, the archive can promote its collections as a resource for filmmakers and artists looking for inspiration. This can lead to new interpretations of archived pieces, where filmmakers reimagine them in contemporary

37. Jonze is best known for his acclaimed feature films, but less known is his work as an author and director of music videos (for artists such as REM, Björk, and many others).

38. For a further analysis, see: Adriano D'Aloia, "‘Hey Siri, Play Me Something I'd Like!’ Ecophenomenology of Fashion in Spike Jonze's Fashion Film," *ZoneModa Journal*, Vol. 10 (May 2020): 99–113, <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0563/10557>.

settings or use them as the basis for innovative fashion film projects. The resulting films can then feed into the archive, becoming part of its educational tools and enriching its narrative.

In sum, fashion film festivals offer a fashion archive a unique opportunity to show its historical and cultural significance with contemporary visual storytelling. The archive can engage new audiences, preserve its collections in modern ways, and strengthen its position within the broader fashion and creative industries. The archive can create a bridge between the past and present through fashion films and series, ensuring that its collections continue to live and inspire.

A Vision for Digital Fashion Heritage: Fashion Film' Database

Fashion heritage, which includes tangible and intangible cultural assets, presents numerous challenges in preservation and accessibility, calling for innovative solutions. These films capture the visual essence of garments and embody the narratives behind brands, often addressing social themes and ethical issues.

This final chapter explores a possible vision for preserving fashion heritage through a digital database dedicated to fashion films. This project aims to highlight how fashion films can document creative processes and cultural and social contexts, ultimately enhancing tangible and intangible heritage in the fashion industry and addressing the growing needs for accessibility and preservation discussed in previous chapters. In alignment with the studies on fashion film as a preservation medium (chapter 3), this database would enrich the digital archive, fostering a stronger connection with contemporary audiences. The concept of a digital archive builds upon the methodological framework presented in chapter 2, emphasizing democratized access to fashion heritage. By curating collections of films and including interactive content (such as user reviews, forums, and interviews with fashion historians), this database would serve as a participatory platform, encouraging an active approach to preserving fashion heritage. Fashion films would thus become not merely passive viewing objects but educational tools, aligning with the role of “visual archives” underscored in the case studies. Furthermore, this database could support the development of an online community that shares content related to the fashion world. Therefore, this initiative would support historical preservation and digital innovation, promoting fashion studies through accessible tools for future generations.

Expanding Access to Fashion Heritage

A digital database for fashion films could democratize access to fashion heritage, allowing a global audience to explore its history, cultural impact, and evolution. Traditional archives often need more geographical and administrative restrictions, limiting access to preserved materials. A fashion film database, however, would provide open access to curated collections, including commercially produced films and personal documentaries, historical footage, behind-the-scenes material, and experimental works, offering a comprehensive view of the fashion industry's heritage.

Each film could be accompanied by contextual information, such as production details, insights, and relevant historical data, enhancing users' understanding and providing an interactive, dynamic record of the creative processes and philosophies behind fashion. The database aims not simply to present fashion films to be passively watched but to foster active engagement among viewers. In this regard, recent studies on “Online Brand Communities” (OBCs) provide valuable insights; these communities, comprising brand enthusiasts and followers, create a space for continuous exchange, where narrative extends beyond that offered by brands or archives, incorporating user contributions such as comments, reviews, and discussions.³⁹

The database could include interactive features such as user reviews, community forums, and live discussions with filmmakers and fashion historians. It could be transformed into a participatory space where

39. Simonetta Buffo, “Fashion Film and OBC (Online Brand Community): The Co-authoring Dynamics” in *Fashion Communication in the Digital Era. Proceedings of the FACTUM 23 Conference (Pisa, Italy, 2023)*, eds. Nadzeya Sabatini et al. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2023), 262–68.

the public preserves and actively discusses and enriches fashion heritage. Following social media engagement dynamics, this environment would support a “world of stories” — a narrative universe where each film contributes to a broader storyline shaped by brands and users.

A Tool for Fashion Studies and Educational Initiatives

Fashion films can also serve as educational tools, providing insights into the evolution of aesthetics, branding strategies, and cultural narratives within fashion. A dedicated database would be a valuable resource for educators, students, and researchers in fields such as fashion studies and media studies, as well as in related disciplines like art history and sociology, promoting interdisciplinary discussion and learning.

Advanced search features, such as filters for designer, style, era, and theme, make the database a valuable tool for researchers and independent exploration by enthusiasts. Furthermore, collaborations with universities, academies, and public or private institutions could lead to the development of online learning modules, allowing the database to become a democratic, accessible space for education and training.

The database would preserve fashion film heritage and support future innovations in the medium. A dedicated section could highlight emerging trends like virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and other cutting-edge technologies that expand the boundaries of storytelling in fashion. Audiovisual storytelling enables viewers to experience fashion’s emotional and sensory dimensions in ways that static displays cannot offer. By incorporating immersive technologies such as VR and AR, the database could allow users to attend virtual fashion shows, interact with 3D representations of iconic garments, or explore historical settings recreated in digital form. Such experiences cater to the evolving expectations of digitally native generations, making fashion heritage exploration more engaging and relevant.

This forward-looking approach, embracing advancements in audiovisual and fashion fields, would encourage innovation while recognizing the importance of preserving these creations as part of cultural heritage. By linking the historical narrative of fashion with technological progress, the database would support both conservation and creative evolution in fashion film-making.

Promoting Sustainable and Ethical Narratives

Fashion films can document not only fashion’s aesthetic and historical dimensions but also its ethical, sustainable, and artisanal aspects. These themes are crucial to the contemporary fashion industry. As underlined by Vaccari and Vanni, although it is believed that fashion industries do not have moral obligations toward the future, the “association between fashion and a sustainable future is acquiring more relevance and communicative strength”, and in this context, the “seduction of bio textiles, the zero-waste lifecycle and the use of new technologies in the garment industry are just some examples of the forward-looking agenda of 21st-century fashion”.⁴⁰ Ethical and sustainable aspects are also particularly significant for today’s consumers, especially younger generations, who are increasingly mindful of sustainable consumption and environmental preservation.

Aligned with several *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) of the UN’s 2030 Agenda, the database would promote conservation practices, accessibility, and cultural awareness through sustainable technologies. The platform could raise awareness about sustainable practices in the fashion industry, such as those promoting artisanal crafts, traditional techniques, and production’s ethical and environmental sustainability. By informing the public about product life cycles and responsible consumption practices, the platform could encourage dignified work practices and reduce dependency on fast fashion, which is often unsustainable and harmful to workers. Additionally, the database could highlight and celebrate contributions from designers, artists, and professionals of diverse gender identities, promoting inclusive and diverse representation.

40. Alessandra Vaccari and Ilaria Vanni, “Fashion Futuring. Rethinking sustainable fashion design” in *Cumulus Conference Proceedings Roma*, eds. Loredana Di Lucchio et al. (Cumulus Conference Proceedings Series, 2021), 3449.

Dedicated sustainability sections could focus on films that highlight these aspects.⁴¹ Through collaborations with brands, designers, independent creators, universities, and institutions, the database could serve as an archive and advocacy platform, promoting awareness and inspiring positive action within the fashion community.

Conclusion

This article has explored the intricate relationship between fashion films and the preservation of fashion heritage, providing insights into how these films function as more than just marketing tools or aesthetic statements. By examining significant case studies, the research aimed to demonstrate that fashion films play a crucial role in documenting and safeguarding fashion brands' cultural and historical legacies. These films constitute visual archives that capture the creative processes, historical milestones, and evolving identities of fashion houses, thereby contributing to the preservation of tangible and intangible fashion heritage. The study found that fashion films, particularly those that adopt a documentary format, offer a unique means of conveying fashion brands' rich histories and cultural significance to contemporary audiences. Unlike traditional methods of preservation, which often rely on static archives and exhibitions, fashion films provide an engaging and accessible medium. The research also highlighted the importance of fashion film festivals as platforms for showcasing these films and fostering discussions on critical issues within the fashion industry, such as sustainability and diversity.

For the fashion industry, recognising fashion films as vital tools for heritage preservation can lead to more strategic and intentional use of this medium. Fashion brands can exploit the power of film not only to promote their collections and build a narrative that connects their present identity with their historical roots. In addition, as consumers become increasingly interested in the stories behind the brands, fashion films offer a way to intensify the connection between brands and their audiences by providing a broader understanding of their heritage. As fashion continues to evolve and new technologies emerge, finding innovative ways to preserve and transmit cultural heritage becomes imperative. With their ability to capture both the tangible and intangible aspects of fashion history, fashion films are a valuable tool for heritage professionals. They preserve ephemeral elements such as the creative process, designer intent, and cultural context.

The final chapter broadens these considerations by proposing a digital database as an innovative solution to ensure the accessibility and preservation of fashion heritage. Through a globally accessible, dynamic archive, fashion films create bridges between the past and the present while supporting ethical and sustainable awareness in fashion, as advocated in recent academic debates. In conclusion, a fashion film database would represent a valuable educational resource, supporting fashion preservation with a forward-looking vision and ensuring that heritage remains relevant and inspiring for future generations.

41. See for example: *Who made my clothes?* (MJ Delaney, 2018), *The Unseen* (William Farr, John Emmony, 2019), *Preservation of Hezhen Fish Skin Tradition Through Fashion Higher Education by Zhongjin Zhang for Fishskinlab* (Elisa Palomino, Zhongjin Zhangand, Joseph Boon, 2021).

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