

# Centered on Co-Creation: An Analysis of Brand Building and E-Community Construction Scheme for Avant-Garde Fashion Brands

Zhaotong Guo\*

*Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton, Park Avenue, Winchester, Hampshire, SO23 8DL, United Kingdom*

*\*Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

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**Abstract:** Taking the avant-garde luxury fashion brand Issey Miyake as the research subject, this paper focuses on its brand philosophy centered around free creativity and craftsmanship innovation. It examines the design logic and Eastern deconstructive aesthetic connotations of iconic series such as the Pleats Please line, the A-POC One Piece, and the 132 5 collection. The study analyzes the brand's current artistic communication pathways, multi-product line matrix, and marketing practices like the Evian crossover collaboration. The research reveals that Issey Miyake has long prioritized niche artistic communication forms such as fashion exhibitions and art shows, while lacking robust online interactive marketing strategies, resulting in insufficient user engagement and brand loyalty. Leveraging the bidirectional interactive communication characteristics of Web2.0, this paper proposes an optimized solution for building a brand-exclusive online community. The community will serve three core functions: two-way communication, event promotion, and user co-creation, divided into two co-creation models—freedom-oriented and theme-directed. It also suggests collaborating with social media platforms and fashion KOLs to achieve comprehensive promotion of the new brand identity. Meanwhile, the study critically analyzes the advantages of online communities in uniting like-minded audiences and empowering brand co-creation, as well as operational risks such as difficulty in managing public opinion and resistance from core customer groups to mass-market communication. The research ultimately concludes that brands need to update their brand identity and leverage online communities for user-generated word-of-mouth marketing to align with digital communication trends, thereby strengthening their unique artistic tone and influence in the mass market.

**Keywords:** Issey Miyake; Avant-garde fashion; Deconstructed design; Brand communication

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## 1. Introduction

In the current luxury fashion world, most brands endeavor to try various forms of marketing to capture consumers' attention. PR seeks media attention and the exquisiteness of advertisements or marketing activities.

However, few brands focus on garment technology or creation. Issey Miyake is one of these special luxury brands.

## 2. Visual understanding

Issey Miyake refuses to be called a fashion designer but would like to define himself as a clothes maker. He tries to imply the beauty of both cloth appearance and function. Issey Miyake is a “pioneer of cross-fertilization” and a true innovator. He launched the collection in the 80s, which opened a new era in clothing and introduced a style onto the streets that appeared to belong only to a fantasy world of ephemeral pleasure<sup>[1-3]</sup>. The brand’s basic philosophy is to use free thinking to continue focusing on both the importance of imagination and the development of new technology with which to make clothing. The creation is the point. Issey Miyake collections are the best proof of the brand’s creation. From Pleats Please to A-POC, 132 5, to me, Issey Miyake, every try is a breakthrough. “I have endeavored to experiment to make fundamental changes to the system of making cloth,” once said by Issey Miyake, A-POC is short for “a piece of cloth”. It represents Issey Miyake’s specific technologies and techniques that produce responsive, performative, or phenomenal dresses. These garments can deliver generative surface methods for an architecture operated through the user. When referring to 132 5, the notion is one piece of fabric, a three-dimensional shape reduced to two, and the fifth dimension, which Miyake describes as the moment the garment is worn and comes to life “through the communication among the people.”



**Figure 1.** (left) Dresses from Issey Miyake’s 132 5 collection, on view in Paris. Photos from *Women’s Wear Daily*.

Pleats Please is the most famous collection of Miyake. The creative use of fabric brought the fashion design world a new style. In the old Western fashion design world, fashion designers used to be limited in the beauty of cloth. In Miyake’s design, he brought in Eastern philosophy and sought a new form of beauty in both humans and cloth itself<sup>[4-5]</sup>.



**Figure 2.** (Left) Union Suit by Irving Penn (Nicolas, C., 1988:35).



**Figure 3.** (left) Mathew Ames by Irving Penn (Tzenkova, A., 2010).



**Figure 4.** (left) Minaret Dress, S/S 1995 (Louise, 2005).

In the 1980s, Japanese designers changed the fashion world using deconstruction. Unlike construction design, deconstruction views cloth in a totally different way. These designers included Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo, Yohji Yamamoto, etc. These Japanese designers brought the Western world a new way to design and view cloth. Eastern philosophy also attracted lots of consumers. This try changed the fashion world, and after that, more Western designers like Hussein Chalayan and Maison Martin Margiela tried to use the new way<sup>[6-7]</sup>.

### 3. Communication campaign

Existing practices of communication and performance

Every collection of Miyake is a new try in either appearance or function. The breakthrough made the brand famous for creation, freedom, and individuality. Unlike other fashion designers, Issey Miyake's clothes appear much more often in various exhibitions. Consumers or common people come to the exhibitions to watch the artist or creator's masterpiece and disseminate Issey Miyake's idea and philosophy to every corner of the world.

Apart from Issey Miyake's creative designs, the brand also uses other marketing methods to promote itself. His fashion shows feature explosions and performance art but manage to maintain a sense of elegance and refinement. They look like the opening of a fabulous new art gallery rather than a common fashion or beauty demonstration.

Issey Miyake also has its own lab, Reality Lab. It aims to search for continual means by which to turn

ideas into reality for those who can use them – this is the reason the name came from. Unlike other fashion designers, ‘Reality Lab’ demonstrates Issey Miyake’s creative mind and never stops searching; it also represents the brand philosophy- freedom<sup>[8]</sup>.

When talking about the photography, the collaboration between Irving Penn and Issey Miyake could be regarded as a model. Irving Penn used his own creation to understand Issey Miyake’s cloth in an inspiring way. “The A-UN exhibition and Penn’s photographs were the ideal opportunity for me to step back and take a good look at my own work,” said Miyake. The photographer used his objective point of view to translate the artist’s work, and Miyake gave him freedom and accepted the new idea. This could represent Issey Miyake’s philosophy.

Issey Miyake also adopts other marketing strategies. It consists of 7 lines: Issey Miyake is the main collection line, Issey Miyake Fete, Pleats Please Issey Miyake, HaaT, me Issey Miyake, Bao Bao Issey Miyake, and 132 5. Issey Miyake. Apart from clothing design, the brand also has its watch line and perfume. Each line has its main focus and characters but shares one principle: free thinking.

The brand value is free and unconventional thinking - thinking that takes into consideration the spirit of creation, curiosity, and love as a universal expression.

Issey Miyake seldom does promotions. In 2010, Issey Miyake collaborated with Evian (Woollard,2010). Following the typical bottle shape of Evian, the source of life, Issey Miyake drew inspiration from Pleats Please to create a modern and colorful floral design full of life, joy, and a breath of liberty. This collaboration promotes both brands in an artistic way and represents Issey Miyake’s breakthrough in global marketing. It won Issey Miyake more fans and showed the world the Japanese luxury fashion brand’s economic value. The good result also suggests more marketing activities should be taken into account if Issey Miyake wants to continue to be outstanding or expand in the luxury fashion world<sup>[9]</sup>.

From the discussion above, a conclusion could be drawn that the main characteristic of Issey Miyake is creation, and the philosophy is freedom. However, it is not enough to focus only on technological creation, and the emphasis on marketing cannot be ignored. As for Issey Miyake, the priority was always given to fashion shows and art exhibitions rather than more commercial marketing. This led to consumers of Issey Miyake having no sense of brand belonging or brand involvement.

#### **4. Web 2.0 trend**

Now the web era has moved to the Web 2.0 era. Unlike Web 1.0, it is no longer a one-way report, but two-way communication. Web 2.0 allows consumers or users not only to get access to the information published by websites or brands but also to express their own ideas. For the first time, common users could take advantage of the Internet to communicate with each other rather than receiving information.

New communication technologies have sprung up, such as RSS, Facebook, Twitter, Wiki, etc. These social tools give users more opportunities to talk online and express themselves. Social networks also offer great chances for Issey Miyake to get involved in consumers’ groups and communicate with them in their languages, therefore understanding them more deeply. Right now, there are a vast number of brands that adopt social networks to do marketing and regard them as an important way to expand. Many luxury brands use Twitter and Facebook accounts to attract fans to share and report the brand’s news. In terms of Issey Miyake, well-executed social network activities could be an excellent way to promote the brand, and it is a necessity<sup>[10]</sup>.

## **5. The building of e-community and the promotion of the new logo**

In terms of the discussion above, Issey Miyake could build an e-community based on its International official website to promote the brand and the new logo. Building an online Issey Miyake e-community could bring consumers together and improve their brand loyalty; moreover, it could keep the new logo in their minds. Through the online e-community, consumers could share their ideas, communicate, and, more importantly, co-create. As consumers' power cannot be ignored in this era, especially when Miyake's consumers are at the forefront of fashion trends, co-creation could encourage consumer participation and also take advantage of consumer intelligence.

Within the e-community, the first function is communication between consumers and the brand, the second part lies in activity promotion, and the third is co-creation. When talking about co-creation, it could be divided into two kinds: one is free thinking, and the other is based on topics given by Issey Miyake.

Mobile devices could also access the e-community due to the popularity and potential of mobile Internet. It gives more freedom and choice to consumers. Through the mobile networks, the new logo appears on users' cellphones and will be spread quickly.

Fashion idols, stars and celebrities should be invited to participate in the e-community. Through their social networks and word of mouth, the Issey Miyake e-community could expand in the fashion world and gain fame.

Social networking should be taken into consideration. Facebook, Twitter, blogging, etc will be the main media to promote the brand. Through sharing, blog writing, and inviting subscribers, the e-community could attract attention and expand in a short period of time.

The e-community could bring an effect of "buzz marketing" or "word of mouth". As consumers interact in the e-community, Issey Miyake offers them a positive association, excitement and anticipation about the brand. Within the e-community, buzz about the brand or the logo will be created; therefore, more consumers, or potential ones, will be attracted to the e-community, and the snowball will get bigger.

Moreover, within the e-community, Issey Miyake will open a discussion room about the new logo, using consumers' power to promote it, taking advantage of the 'word of mouth'.

## **6. The analysis of the e-community**

### **6.1. Advantages**

Hines & Bruce (2007) insisted that consumers have the need for security and solidarity by belonging to groups or 'tribes', a local neighborhood committee, or an e-community online. The Issey Miyake e-community enables like-minded consumers to form groups even on a global basis. With the same people together, consumers could communicate more effectively with more interest and, therefore, inspire more ideas. That is to say, when consumers participate in the Issey Miyake e-community, the involvement could inspire their sense of belonging.

In terms of the e-community content, consumers could share their ideas and communicate about the brand. Brand dissemination is no longer a one-way expression but two-way communication. Consumers have the opportunity to take part in brand building and express their own ideas or opinions. When referring to older consumers, the e-community could enhance their loyalty to the brand through community activities.

From the perspective of Issey Miyake, the e-community offers more chances for the brand to understand the consumers and communicate with them in their language. Moreover, the co-creation process and results

may turn out to be future developments, as consumers' power cannot be ignored.

## **6.2. Disadvantage**

As for the disadvantages of the e-community, there are mainly two potential risks. One is the difficulty of controlling buzz, and the other is the potential loss of old consumers.

The social networking performance is hard to control and evaluate. With the strong power of consumers and information communicators, the brand may no longer be the center of communication, and communication could develop in either direction. There have been many cases of reputation ruin due to the spread of information on social networks, so Issey Miyake should be really careful about it.

In the luxury world, negative comments are normally associated with counterfeits, product quality and design, as well as services and celebrities. How to lead the buzz in the ideal direction will be a major issue for Issey Miyake.

As Issey Miyake's consumers are in pursuit of individuality, some of them may hold a negative attitude toward buzz marketing or mass media communication; how to avoid the negative reactions of the old customers should be taken into account. However, one thing is important for Issey Miyake's consumers: no conformity.

Considering all these potential threads, to ensure that Issey Miyake's e-community is successful, all activities within it should revolve around a piece of knowledge which is useful, desirable, open, and shareable.

## **7. Conclusion and suggestions**

In conclusion, Issey Miyake is one of the best luxury brands in creation with a free-thinking style. The products are a combination of science and creation, sense and sensibility, free thinking and a logical mind. However, when looking at the brand logo, it is very simple and without attractive details. For future brand development, redesigning the logo is very important. The newly designed one highlights the brand's characters and philosophy.

After the redesign, how to promote the new logo and the brand is essential. The new marketing approach should consider lots of factors, including brand characteristics, consumers, and marketing trends. Miyake's consumers pursue individuality, and they want to express their own ideas. As for the marketing trend, Web 2.0 changes marketing. The burst of social networks offers the brand an excellent way to promote and communicate with consumers. Therefore, this activity will take advantage of this trend.

The building of the e-community has a lot of advantages. It offers consumers and brands a good platform to communicate and co-create. Word of mouth is a good way to promote and makes consumers more likely to accept it. Meanwhile, as consumers' power is getting increasingly bigger, taking advantage of it is very important. As all consumers go to the e-community, the logo will be kept in their minds.

## **Disclosure statement**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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