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Karl Lagerfeld

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## Abstract

This paper explores the designs, consumer target market, promotion and the relevance of Karl Lagerfeld within Fendi. Starting with his background in Germany and then Paris. This paper shows how Lagerfeld has grown within the fashion industry for most of his life. As well as his ready to wear lines for both Chanel and Fendi; two very powerful fashion houses. While doing this he also created his own line of clothing. Throughout his years in fashion he has used muses which included well known models, musicians, etc. He has used these muses to bring his story and message to life. Photos of his many muses will be referenced and shown throughout this paper from Vogue and Bazaar Magazine. As well as some iconic photos of Karl Lagerfeld himself.

*Keywords:* Fashion House, Chanel, Fendi

## Introduction

Karl Lagerfeld, a German designer has been a known name within the fashion industry for many decades. His countless pieces have shown how timeless and purely beautiful he crafts his fashion pieces. He has worked alongside two big fashion houses, Chanel and Fendi. He has maintained both brands as well as his own. He has been very inspirational within fashion and his work will live on.

## Background

Karl Lagerfeld was born Karl Otto Lagerfeldt in Hamburg, Germany. Later in life Karl Lagerfeldt dropped the “t” in his last name giving him the name Karl Lagerfeld, the name everyone knows him as today. Although the exact date of his birth was never revealed it’s believed that he was born September 10, 1933, he is 85. Throughout his young life he was surrounded by wealth and intellect. Between his father, Christian bringing condensed milk into

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Germany and his mother, Elizabeth being a successful violin player his household was very wealthy. He completed his education for drawing and history at Lycée Montaigne. He also manages to speak four different languages, Spanish, French, English and German (Biography).

In the 1930's he moved to a rural area in Germany where he was excluded from any extensive knowledge of Hitler. During this time his study of fashion and design began. But it wasn't until he moved back to his home town Hamburg that he really immersed himself into fashion. When Lagerfeld was 14, he moved to Paris to further his love and knowledge of fashion. While staying in Paris he submitted his work winning and meeting someone who would become a close friend of his, Yves Saint Laurent. Lagerfeld still resides in Paris, France to this day (Biography).

Lagerfeld went on to work with French designer Pierre Balmain, where he worked his way from a junior assistant, to an apprentice later. From there he went to work as a creative director with another fashion house before finally branching out on his own, in 1961 (Lagerfeld).

Lagerfeld soon after designed collections for Chloe and Fendi. He was initially brought on to Fendi to oversee the company's fur line as well as others. Lagerfeld gradually began to make a name for himself, being known in the fashion industry for his innovative, timeless and in-the-moment styles. Lagerfeld had many innovative ways in which he created, one of them were how he often shopped in flea markets. He would find old wedding dresses, deconstructing and then reimagining them (Biography).

By the 1980s, Karl Lagerfeld was a major star in the fashion world. During his career he developed a reputation for jumping from one label to the next. These labels include Fendi, Chanel, and his own brand Karl Lagerfeld in 1984. He has put together a record of success that not many matched at that time as well as now. He can return and revamp popular ready-to-wear

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fashion lines. Around the same time Lagerfeld launched his own label, in 1984, which he himself described as "intellectual sexiness." In 2005 Lagerfeld sold his own label to Tommy Hilfiger(Karl Lagerfeld).

Lagerfeld's work is always changing, as he continues to reinvent himself. Constantly collaborating on art projects as well as fashion projects, he even managed to come out with his own perfume, CHLOE (Lagerfeld).

### Apparel/ Target Audience

Karl Lagerfeld has been around for over five decades and has made his presence known within the fashion community. He has several looks that he is widely known for. He continually adds to this iconic line up of muses that often includes the top models, musicians, etc. This lineup includes people like Cara Delevingne, Ines De La Fressange, Florence Welch, Kendall Jenner, Willow Smith, the list goes on. The looks that are constructed around each muse always differentiates from the other. He is constantly reinventing himself, his muses allow him to do this with ease. In his early years in the 80's at Chanel he mainly utilized Ines De La Fressange, a French model. She encapsulated the beauty needed to tell the story he wanted to portray. "When Lagerfeld cast De La Fressange as his muse, she immediately became more than a mannequin or the face of his latest fashion campaign...she also became the first official "brand ambassador" (Hastings). De La Fressange was able to perfectly embody the vision Lagerfeld needed through her modeling and became the main face for Chanel during the 80's.

Some of the iconic looks were worn by Ines De La Fressange, Blake Lively, Florence Welch, Willow Smith, Kristen McMenamy, and Stella Tennant. In his early years at Chanel Ines Da La Fressange is seen getting tailored by Karl Lagerfeld in an oversized suit jacket. Florence Weltch bold silver floor length dress incorporates a lot of texture with a fun a flowy feel. Willow

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Smiths outfit is the most casual out of the three looks. This outfit gives a sporty and youthful vibe but can be still worn in an elegant setting. These three outfits show how versatile Karl Lagerfeld was and is within Chanel. He had a way of encapsulating his muses in the outfits he made for them, perfectly expressing their true essence (Hastings). The target audience for Chanel are women who want to identify with what Chanel represents. "Chanel represents elegance, simplicity, modern and class" (En).

Chanel is a huge fashion house that Karl Lagerfeld had the privilege of working with reviving the entire brand with his ready to wear pieces. But he was also heavily reviving Fendi's fashion house as well. He has been creating and building a relationship with Fendi for over 50 years. "The famed Roman luxury label, once a small, family-run business...Lagerfeld was in his 30s when he was contacted by the famous five Fendi sisters" (Martin). He was originally brought into the creative process as a freelancer but become a lifelong partner. "The designers enduring relationship with Fendi is a collaboration that began in 1965 and has continued uninterrupted for more than 50 years. In today's transient world, where designers are lucky if they last four seasons, five decades is a remarkable feat" (Martin). Lagerfeld's longevity is inspirational while transcending and excelling in all aspects. (Martin) The target audience for Fendi are people who want to look elegant and formal but not to flashy, this mostly consists of business women. Although this has been the case for a long time Fendi has been trying to target millennials for the last year or so. "The goal is to communicate the Fendi vision in an "authentic and innovative way" through a by-millennials, for-millennials platform that features (allegedly) unretouched and unfiltered images, city guides and more" (Bauck). All Fendi products is made in Italy where it first launched in 1925. When creating for Fendi Lagerfeld predominantly works with fur.

"Fendi and Lagerfeld have broken every fur barrier in the business. They have perfected groundbreaking techniques that most fashion designers take for granted today, including knitting

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fur, pleating it on fur skirts, creating ultralight 'summer fur,' and pioneering the intricate intarsias that allow several different kinds and colors of fur to be sliced up and stitched back together like artful puzzles. Throughout the years, Lagerfeld rebelliously ripped out lining, tinted fur wild colors, shaved it, gilded it with 24- karat gold, wove it like a basket, and buried it in precious jewels, embroideries, and palettes" (Martin).

One of the many beautiful collections at Fendi is Lagerfeld's haute couture collection. This fashion show took place outdoors at the Trevi Fountain, revamped by Fendi's large donation. Most of the pieces photographed of this collection featured model Gigi Hadid. These pieces embodied elegance, structure, and femininity in the purest ways. With heavy embroidery, intricate knits Lagerfeld played with colors that immediately captures the eye. Although you can see the modern influence come to life there is always a trace of the brand's history. These three pictures of Gigi Hadid embody what it means to be elegant, sophisticated, and bold. (Martin).

Choosing to mostly touch on the two main fashion houses instead of Lagerfeld's personal collection was due to him selling his line to Tommy Hilfger in 2005. His personal line is innovative and elegant for the everyday person. But focusing on what he is doing right now seemed to make more sense. Lagerfeld's elaborations on the garments he has made and continues to make for Fendi, and Chanel are exceptional. He has continued to create and stay true to himself and the brand: "At present, the Fendi archives are filled with more than 70,000 sketches created by Karl Lagerfeld. This may very well be another world record" (Martin). His originality has never faded throughout his many years of being in the fashion industry. (Martin).

### Promotion

I think that Fendi's clothing is mostly promoted through the fashion shows they have for fashion week twice a year. Fendi is a widely known brand that doesn't need as much promotion

as others. Although there was a period where it seemed as if it were fading. His ready to wear line has been seen on celebrities recently. This can be because of a rebirth of interest or they could be sending clothes to stylists for celebrities to wear. He could be using these celebrities as his muses to promote Fendi's clothing. This has brought the light back onto Fendi in the past years.

### Relevance

This designer is considered one of the most important designers for numerous reasons. He knows how to create a story and an image for two famous fashion houses. He has managed to sustain his impact and vision for over five decades. He remains iconic for this alone, encapsulating distinguishable brand image and messages. He juggled three brands at once until he sold his own line, Karl Lagerfeld in 2005 to Tommy Hilfiger. He was exceptional at reviving both Chanel and Fendi in unimaginable ways. He pours out originality and creativity with ease: "...a designer who sketches faster than he talks"(Martin). He makes clothes specifically for the brand's target market never bleeding one brand into the other. He maintains relevance within the fashion industry being 85 years old, he never seems to slow down. Aside from his amazing vision in fashion he has his own look. His silhouette is easily recognizable with his iconic look, his look is legendary.

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(Gigi Hadid in Chanel from Bazaar Website)

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Chanel ready-to-wear spring/summer, 2012 (Florence Welch from Vogue Website).



(Willow Smith and Karl Lagerfeld from Cosmopolitan Website)

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(Blake Lively with Karl Lagerfeld from Alamy Website)



(Ines De La Fressange with Karl Lagerfeld from Vogue Website)

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(Karl Lagerfeld from Vogue Website)

