

Michael Kors: The American Fashion Designer

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Introduction to the Fashion Industry

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**Abstract**

This paper explores the life of the American designer, Michael Kors. It discusses various aspects of his notable career in the fashion industry, explaining how he strives to provide consumers with products from his company, Michael Kors Holdings Limited. The company has three distinct lines including Michael Kors, MICHAEL Michael Kors and KORS Michael Kors, in addition to other trademarks. The company produces ready-to-wear men's and women's lines, accessories, footwear, watches, jewelry, and a full line of fragrance products. The collection of products are sold in various lifestyle, retail, and department stores such as Saks Fifth Avenue, Bergdorf Goodman, and Bloomingdales. Michael Kors store locations are operated amongst licensing partners in various cities such as New York, Chicago, London, and Paris. He has consistently received recognition for his work, as he has achieved his goal of targeting a niche market, ensuring that his products are attaining to consumer needs. Michael Kors is known for being a notable designer, retailer, and marketer of a men and women's apparel and accessories company, holding the Michael Kors trademarked name.

### Background of Designer

Michael Kors is an American fashion designer, acknowledged for his unique aesthetic, execution, and extravagance. Michael Kors, who was given the birth name Karl Anderson Junior was born in Long Island, New York, on August 9, 1959. As a toddler, Kors was a model who appeared in national advertising campaigns for products including Charmin Paper Towel and Lucky Charms cereal. (Kilcooley-O'Halloran, 2017). His biological parents separated shortly after his birth, and his mother remarried to businessman Bill Kors, granting Kors the opportunity choose a new distinct surname and forename. At the age of five years old, Kors designed, sold, and customized apparel from the basement of his parents home, known as Iron Butterfly. During this time, Kors redesigned his mother's wedding dress, slowly gathering his interest in the fashion industry (Business of Fashion, 2016). Consequent to his name change, Michael David Kors was rediscovered and moved to New York City at the age of nineteen to attend the Fashion Institute of Technology. Kors attendance at the college lasted for approximately two months, completing two semesters. In 1978, he designed and merchandised his first collection at Lothar's Boutique where he worked as display director, buyer, and designer (Bauer, 2012).



From such modest beginnings, Kors began to receive popular recognition as he worked his way up within the fashion industry. On May 1981, the Kors Michael Kors luxury fashion line was established when fashion director Bergdorf Goodman gave him the opportunity to display his line to buyers at the Saks Fifth Avenue Department Store (Telegraph.CO, 2017). Instantly after, his company Michael Kors Holdings Limited was established with a women's collection,

and was stocked in major outlets such as Lord & Taylor, Saks Fifth Avenue and Bloomingdales. In addition to designing clothing for his house, he was given the title for the first ever women's ready-to-wear designer and director of Celine in 1997, leading to a launch of his first menswear line in 2002. Kors work continued at Celine until 2003, where he left to continue building his designer house, creating a name for himself (Business of Fashion, 2016).

### **Market Segment of Designer**

The Michael Kors company has three distinct lines including Michael Kors luxury line, MICHAEL Michael Kors attainable luxury line and KORS Michael Kors men's line all of which target various consumers. The company produces ready-to-wear men's and women's lines, accessories, footwear, watches, jewelry, and a full line of fragrance products (Investors.Michael Kors, 2017). Kors has developed a strategic way of distributing his network, focusing on speciality stores, licensing partners and leading department stores. He operates his business in three segments, wholesale, retail and licensing which allows him to efficiently segment his desired target market. The luxury collection of goods suit the fashion and functional demands of Kors targeted market, appealing to a broader audience/niche market (Biron et al, 2017).



Kors seeks to target male and female consumers amongst the middle and high class community, with income levels ranging from approximately \$50,000 to \$100,000 (Cochrane, 2018). Of this desired community, ranges 25 to 54 years olds, including average teenagers and upper income teenagers who seek to have the luxury brand. Kors believes whether male or

female, each gender presents the same design challenges, but “it’s about knowing, listening and understanding what your customers want. In the end, it always comes down to empathy and the ability to put yourself in their shoes” (Powell, 2018). Michael Kors stores are operated amongst licensing partners in various cities such as New York, Chicago, London, Paris, Istanbul, Dubai and Hong Kong (Investors. Michael Kors, 2017). In addition, countries such as China are becoming exposed to Michael Kors products, as the country has large market growth potential.

### **Description of Designer Looks**

Michael Kors is known for luxurious accessories and sportswear of quality, standards and on edge creativity. He is not particularly known for specific looks; however, he designs various statements to conclude his lines. Kors bags include backpacks, crossbodies, shoulder bags, totes, satchels, and minibags all of which have various shapes and sizes suitable for consumers. Leather is the most commonly used fabric for handbags, amongst snakeskin which is valuable for its quality and durability. Leather primarily serves as a identity of high status to many consumers because of its price, style, and sleekness. Wallets are a varying item because they come in routine styles such as wristlet and envelope wallets. Kors jewelry statements includes bracelets, rings, earrings, and necklaces which has pendant designs varying from 14 karat gold to rhodium (Michael Kors, 2018).



As a designer, Kors is primarily known for men and women's ready-to-wear fashions. Kors garments for women include dresses, tops, skirts, dresses, pants, sweaters, and outerwear. However, the garments for men include t-shirts, polos, shirts, shorts, pants, sweaters, jackets,

outerwear, and suits. For both men and women, the fabric line includes denim, cotton, suede, lace, polyester, silk, and gauze. Kors products are manufactured specifically to the company's specifications, particularly by independent third-party contractors in Asia. Majority of the company's employees are located in the Americas, Europe and Asia with full time, part time, retail selling, administrative and other forms of positions (Michael Kors, 2018).



### **Promotion of Designer Merchandise**

Michael Kors promotes the merchandise his company manufactures through various mediums to increase shareholder value and global brand awareness. Kors fashion estate continues to design new products and luxury lines. Social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter are used to run advertising campaigns as a strategic way to market Michael Kors products. Promotional videos on such social media sites are to help display soon to release Kors lines attaining to the brands digital marketing strategy. The company targets customers within the niche market by selling through a multi-channel strategy to enhance the Kors brand image. Kors has grown social media presence to 40 million followers as he has been deemed "one of the most followed fashion designers" on Instagram (Cochrane, 2018).

The company maintains durable relationships with multiple wholesale customers such as Bloomingdale's, Macy's and Nordstrom to help sell products in lifestyle, outlet, and collection stores worldwide. Kors has gathered a large audience, ensuring that a large consumer base is reached, thus maintaining the brands residence in the luxury market. His merchandise is sold at

store locations worldwide, such as Canada, China, Japan Korea, Italy, England, France, Germany, and the United Arab Emirates (Michael Kors, 2018). He seeks to meet the needs and wants of consumers by making his products easily and readily available. Product innovation allows customers to see the design features that are embedded within primary products, apparel and accessories.



### **Evaluation of Designers Work**

From my viewpoint, Michael Kors is an important designer due to his timeless innovation and execution as a fashion leader. Kors namesake lifestyle luxury brand has successfully grown rapidly across the world, meeting consumer buying needs and wants. Kors is an honorary designer who not only loves what he does, but enjoys donating to nonprofit organizations helping those who are in need. In 2012, Kors assisted in raising awareness to fund and deliver meals to hungry and sick New Yorkers, as well as in countries across the globe such as Cambodia, Uganda, and Nicaragua. His ability to give back to those in need, reveals that he seeks to provide for those that need assistance but may not receive it. To my belief, Michael Kors' strong ability to create, innovate and adapt while staying true to the standards of his namesake brand, helped lead to his success as a designer for over 30 years.



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