

Title: The Evolution of Vera Wang: From Figure Skating to Fashion Icon

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Vera Wang, a name synonymous with elegance and sophistication in the fashion world, has journeyed from the ice rink to the runway, leaving an indelible mark on the industry. Its important dive into the multifaceted career of Vera Wang, tracing her transition from figure skating to fashion design, exploring her brand's genesis and evolution, and analyzing her expansion beyond bridal wear. Furthermore, dissecting her marketing strategies and collaborations, examines celebrity influence, assesses consumer perception and brand loyalty, identifies challenges faced, and speculates on future directions.

Vera Wang's early life was shaped by her passion for figure skating, where discipline, precision, and artistry laid the foundation for her future endeavors. Vera Wang was born on June 27, 1949, in New York City to Chinese immigrant parents, Vera Wang pursued an education that blended elite arts and academia. She started at the prestigious Chapin School and then the School of American Ballet, showcasing her early engagement with the arts. Later, she attended Sarah Lawrence College, where she chose to major in art history. Wang's education also included a brief period of study abroad at the Sorbonne in Paris during her sophomore year, further enriching her academic and cultural experience before returning to the U.S. to complete her degree. Despite her love for skating, Wang ultimately pursued a career in fashion, influenced by her mother's profession as a translator at the United Nations and her exposure to high fashion at an early age. She graduated from Sarah Lawrence College with a degree in art history, laying the groundwork for her future as a designer. After graduating from college in 1971, Vera Wang stopped pursuing figure skating and started working at Vogue magazine. By the age of 23, she was promoted to senior fashion editor, a position she maintained for 15 years.

The inception of Vera Wang's eponymous brand came with the opening of her bridal boutique in 1990. One might say fashion isn't something you choose but it's a calling or a creative spirit that pulls you and motivates you to create in your most vulnerable state. "In 1989, Vera Wang married her longtime boyfriend, Arthur Becker. Dissatisfied with the limited bridal wear options, she designed her wedding gown and had it custom-made for \$10,000. The next year, supported financially by her father, she opened her bridal boutique in New York City's luxurious Carlyle Hotel on Madison Avenue (Biography.com Editors, 2021)." Her bridal designs revolutionized the industry, offering modern, couture-inspired gowns that appealed to contemporary brides seeking sophistication and luxury. Wang's bridal gowns have been chosen

by celebrities such as Mariah Carey, Jennifer Lopez, and Victoria Beckham, making her designs highly sought after for weddings and red carpet-events. Her influence extends beyond bridal wear; she has designed costumes for figure skaters like Nancy Kerrigan and Michelle Kwan, contributing to her rise as a household name. Wang's style, characterized by clean lines, intricate detailing, and a blend of traditional and avant-garde elements, became synonymous with her brand identity. Her design philosophy centered on celebrating femininity while embracing individuality, setting her apart from traditional bridal designers.

Vera Wang's brand has expanded into fragrances, jewelry, eyewear, handbags, and home collections, all embodying her signature style of simple elegance. Wang's contributions to fashion have been recognized with numerous awards, including the CFDA Womenswear Designer of the Year in 2005 and the André Leon Talley Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006. Her partnership with Kohl's in 2006 made her designs more accessible to a wider audience, showcasing her ability to blend high fashion with affordability. Vera Wang's legacy in fashion is marked by her commitment to blending traditional elegance with contemporary design, making her a true pioneer in the industry. "Expanding her design and entrepreneurial efforts, Wang has embarked on a host of other high-profile ventures (Ling, H., & Austin, A. W.,2010)." This strategic move broadened her brand's appeal and revenue streams, catering to a wider audience seeking her signature aesthetic across various lifestyle categories. Wang employed meticulous attention to detail and quality craftsmanship to maintain brand consistency, ensuring that each product line embodied the essence of her design ethos.

Wang's marketing strategies evolved with the digital age, leveraging social media platforms and digital campaigns to engage with consumers and promote her brand. Vera Wang has masterfully positioned her brand at the pinnacle of the luxury fashion market, particularly within the bridal and ready-to-wear segments. Her strategic emphasis on the exclusivity and unique allure of her designs achieved through intricate detailing and the selection of distinctive fabrics, sets her apart from competitors. This focus appeals to affluent consumers who seek not just clothing, but pieces that signify exceptional craftsmanship and individuality. By targeting a demographic that values exclusivity and personal style, Vera Wang has cultivated a loyal customer base. Furthermore, her meticulous approach to brand reputation and exclusivity, including the strategic choice of distribution channels and the maintenance of high price points, underscores the brand's luxury status. This not only fosters a sense of scarcity but also amplifies consumer desire for her products. Collectively, these strategies have cemented Vera Wang's brand as a beacon of luxury and exclusivity in the global fashion landscape, renowned for its bridal and ready-to-wear collections. Key collaborations and partnerships with luxury retailers, beauty brands, and lifestyle influencers further amplified her brand's reach and prestige, solidifying her position as a global fashion authority.



Vera Wang's collaboration with Kohl's to create the "Simply Vera" lifestyle brand marks a significant extension of her design philosophy into a broader market. "This partnership allows her to offer a wide array of products, including clothing, shoes, jewelry, cosmetics, eyewear, perfumes, and more, exclusively through Kohl's (girls for business)." This move not only diversifies her brand but also makes her designs more accessible to a wider audience, blending her signature luxury style with the affordability and reach of a major retail chain. However, expanding a brand globally comes with its challenges. Vera Wang's venture into the Asian market, particularly in Shanghai, encountered a setback when the brand introduced a fee for customers to try on wedding gowns. This practice sparked controversy and was perceived negatively, potentially harming the brand's image in a key international market. Recognizing the importance of customer perception and the brand's reputation, Wang promptly abolished this

practice. This incident highlights the complexities and learning curves involved in global brand expansion, demonstrating the need for adaptability and sensitivity to cultural and market expectations. Despite such challenges, Vera Wang's strategic partnerships and swift response to feedback continue to reinforce her brand's prestigious positioning and commitment to customer satisfaction.

Celebrity endorsements and red carpet appearances played a pivotal role in shaping Vera Wang's brand image. From Hollywood A-listers to royalty, celebrities flocked to Wang for their most memorable fashion moments, cementing her status as a go-to designer for glamorous occasions. Vera Wang's success in the fashion industry has been significantly influenced by her strategic use of celebrity endorsements and red carpet presence. By dressing high-profile celebrities for their weddings and prominent events, Wang has generated considerable media attention and solidified her brand's association with luxury and glamour. For instance, Michelle Obama's choice of a custom-made Vera Wang gown for Barack Obama's inauguration ball in 2009 showcased Wang's designs on a global stage, reinforcing their elegance and sophistication. Similarly, celebrities like Kim Kardashian, Taylor Swift, Selena Gomez, and Chloë Grace Moretz wearing Vera Wang dresses to significant events have further elevated the brand's visibility and prestige.

Wang's impact extends beyond weddings and red carpet events; she has also designed custom gowns for influential figures like Ariana Grande and Michelle Obama. These collaborations have not only enhanced Wang's reputation as a top-tier designer but have also broadened her reach to diverse audiences. “The cumulative effect of these celebrity endorsements and red carpet appearances has propelled Vera Wang to the forefront of the fashion industry. Her non-traditional wedding gown designs have become iconic, reshaping the

landscape of bridal fashion (Chen, 2021).” With an overall retail value exceeding \$1 billion and wedding gowns ranging from \$2,900 to \$23,000, Vera Wang's brand has established itself as a symbol of luxury and elegance, thanks in part to her strategic partnerships with celebrities and influencers.

Consumer perception of the Vera Wang brand is characterized by four classes of admiration for its timeless elegance, impeccable craftsmanship, and aspirational lifestyle appeal. Vera Wang's consumer perception and brand loyalty are shaped by the broad spectrum of customer profiles that the brand targets. These profiles encompass four distinct classes, each with unique preferences and lifestyles. The first class, comprising Very High-End Customers, consists of individuals who value luxury living but prefer a discreet public presence. This group, which includes businessmen, dignitaries, and celebrities, pursues refined tastes and exclusive experiences, such as hosting private classical concerts in their beachside properties.

High-End Customers, the second class, actively engage in social and fashion events, seeking to align themselves with trends and luxury brands like Vera Wang. This group, which includes starlets, fashion professionals, and public figures, prioritizes style and image enhancement while supporting charitable causes. Middle-end customers, the third class, consist of senior white-collar workers who balance work commitments with social and leisure activities. Seeking a blend of luxury and affordability, they gravitate towards discounted luxury brands like Vera Wang during sales periods, while also frequenting high street stores and enjoying upscale dining experiences.

Finally, Middle-Low-End Customers, the fourth class, are ordinary employees who appreciate affordable fashion options but still aspire to incorporate luxury elements into their lifestyles. Despite their lower income levels, they engage with brands like Vera Wang through

social media and seek to emulate higher-end lifestyles. In sum, Vera Wang's ability to cater to such diverse consumer segments underscores its brand appeal and fosters loyalty across a wide range of preferences and budgets. Brand loyalty is cultivated through exceptional customer experiences, uncompromising product quality, and consistent brand messaging that resonates with discerning consumers seeking luxury and refinement.

Despite its success, the Vera Wang brand has faced challenges, including market competition, and changing fashion trends. To adapt, Wang has embraced innovation, embraced new technologies, and explored emerging markets while staying true to her brand's core values and design principles. “Vera Wang faces challenges and adapts to competition in the bridal fashion industry, particularly from competitors like Monique Lhuillier. Monique Lhuillier, established in 1996, shares similarities with Vera Wang in terms of brand identity and design aesthetic, focusing on traditional yet avant-garde wedding styles (Laceizhu, 2015)” Both brands are renowned for their high-quality fabrics, techniques, and multi-brand architecture, making them top choices for brides-to-be. However, while Monique Lhuillier leans towards traditional and formal designs, Vera Wang offers a more modern and streamlined approach, avoiding the heaviness often associated with traditional wedding dresses.

To adapt and maintain a competitive edge, Vera Wang has diversified its product offerings and targeted different customer segments. While Monique Lhuillier has a strong presence in bridesmaids' dresses and fine jewelry, Vera Wang has expanded into men's tuxedos with Black by Vera Wang and offers a wider range of lifestyle brands to cater to diverse consumer preferences. This strategic move provides Vera Wang customers with more options and reinforces its position as a leading wedding brand. Additionally, Vera Wang's ability to blend modernity with elegance appeals to contemporary brides seeking a fresh take on bridal

fashion, further solidifying its competitive advantage over traditional counterparts like Monique Lhuillier. By remaining agile and responsive to market dynamics, she continues to thrive in an ever-evolving industry landscape.

Today, Vera Wang remains at the forefront of the fashion industry, with recent projects reflecting her ongoing commitment to innovation and creativity. Vera Wang's current endeavors and future directions reflect her continuous expansion and innovation in the fashion industry throughout the 21st century. In 2000, she launched her first ready-to-wear collection, characterized by an elegant fusion of modern and traditional elements, featuring draping, and layering techniques. Expanding beyond fashion design, Wang ventured into various collaborations and product lines, including designing outfits for the Philadelphia Eagles professional football cheerleading team in 2003 and releasing fragrances and a China and stemware line with Wedgwood.

In 2006, Wang partnered with Kohl's department store chain to create Simply Vera, a more affordable collection encompassing clothing, shoes, jewelry, handbags, and other items, catering to a wider consumer base. In 2011, she collaborated with jewelry store Zales to launch a line of engagement and wedding rings, incorporating diamonds with blue sapphire accents, showcasing her versatility in the fashion and jewelry market. Additionally, Wang expanded her offerings to include men's fashion through an agreement with Men's Wearhouse to offer tuxedos in 2012. Recognized for her contributions to the fashion industry, Vera Wang received a prestigious lifetime achievement award from the Council of Fashion Designers of America in 2013, further solidifying her status as a fashion icon. Moving forward, Wang's brand is likely to continue its trajectory of innovation and expansion, exploring new collaborations, product lines,

and market opportunities while maintaining its commitment to elegance, sophistication, and modernity. As the fashion landscape continues to evolve, Wang's brand is poised to explore new avenues and opportunities, staying ahead of the curve while maintaining its timeless allure and enduring legacy.



The evolution of Vera Wang from figure skating prodigy to fashion icon is a remarkable testament to her talent, perseverance, and innovative spirit. Throughout her illustrious career, Wang has transcended boundaries, redefining the fashion landscape with her timeless elegance, impeccable craftsmanship, and visionary designs. From the inception of her eponymous brand in the early 1990s to her pioneering ventures into ready-to-wear collections, fragrances, jewelry, and lifestyle collaborations in the 21st century, Wang has continually pushed the boundaries of creativity and excellence. Her strategic marketing initiatives, strategic collaborations, and celebrity endorsements have solidified her brand's status as a symbol of luxury, sophistication, and aspiration.

Wang's ability to adapt to changing market dynamics and consumer preferences while staying true to her design ethos has been instrumental in her enduring success. Despite facing challenges from competitors and navigating the complexities of global expansion, Wang has remained agile and resilient, leveraging her brand's strengths to overcome obstacles and seize new opportunities. By embracing innovation, exploring emerging markets, and staying ahead of trends, Wang has positioned her brand for continued growth and relevance in the ever-evolving fashion industry.

Looking to the future, Vera Wang's brand is poised to explore new avenues of creativity, collaboration, and expansion, while remaining steadfast in its commitment to timeless elegance and modern luxury. As Wang's legacy continues to inspire generations of designers and fashion enthusiasts alike, her influence will undoubtedly endure, shaping the future of fashion for years to come. In essence, Vera Wang's journey embodies the transformative power of creativity, resilience, and determination, leaving an indelible mark on the world of fashion and beyond.

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