The outbreak of the pandemic forced 080 Barcelona Fashion to opt for a digital format to guarantee its survival like so many other international fashion events. Barcelona fashion week intends to take advantage of this accelerated transition towards new technologies and formats while exploring hybrid options to strengthen its positioning and its plans for global expansion.

"We have used this period of transition to define exactly where we want to go. Small scale fashion weeks are rapidly evolving, and we have to be very flexible moving forward," explained Marta Coca, director of the 080 Barcelona Fashion event, regarding the editions held in digital format since the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020. Only one event, a "première" organized last April, was held in person. The physical event saw 300 guests while the fashion week presented the "fashion film shows" of 22 designers and brands. Among them, names such as Custo Barcelona, Paloma Wool, Is Coming, Avellaneda or Eñaut stood out. The designs were immortalized at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (MACBA) for the first time.

Finding the right dates

"We started to organize this edition during the Omicron wave and we had to be cautious with the physical attendance part, but our appraisal has been positive. We are satisfied and we have had a more qualitative than quantitative return, which reflects our positioning, values and DNA," said the head of the fashion event sponsored by the Government of Catalonia through the Consortium of Trade, Crafts and Fashion (CCAM). The project has an annual budget of 3 million euros, split between its two editions.
The change in dates was essential to achieve favorable results. "Initially, the change of dates had to be made due to sanitary conditions. But now we have left the international calendar out of our own free will," said Coca, acknowledging that the event becomes "invisible" in the months of January and February, given the difficulties of carving out its own niche during the major international fashion weeks season. "We don't have to go back to our former dates, we want to separate the fashion week from the traditional calendar to increase awareness", said the leader of the event which will hold its next dates in October this year, when it will celebrate its 30th anniversary, and in April 2023. Meanwhile, the 080 Barcelona Fashion Connect event will be held separately in March like it was during its last edition.

A non-traditional hybrid future

"We are a public initiative, a modest platform on an international level, but well positioned in terms of quality", boasted Coca in terms of the evolution of the fashion event, which has been working for two years on a micro-segmentation strategy that "is now beginning to bear fruit". This growth is based on the premise of changing the paradigm and expanding beyond collections or seasons, so that 080 Barcelona Fashion becomes a "vehicle of expression" to establish brands in the long term. "We want to test formulas and not abandon the whole path we have taken since the pandemic. Public fashion weeks can renew their program constantly, not just every few months," said the director, recognizing that "it makes no sense to have an event that only holds shows twice a year, but rather to function more like a Netflix for accessible fashion".
Under this 360º approach, 080 Barcelona Fashion will explore streaming outside the dates of the event as a tool "better adapted to the viral marketing strategies for brands" and will rely on the digital format to experiment more with gender identity, without the need to present collections in a male or female fashion week. "It is necessary to adapt the presentation schedule to the needs of digital native brands or established brands that need to rejuvenate their targets," said the manager, detailing that not all firms need to present their collections twice a year.

On combining this digital approach with the physical realm going forward, the director is willing to try new formats. "Creators miss physical formats and CEOs love digital formats. We will have to combine both," said Coca, announcing that the platform is looking into the possibility of holding one physical and one digital catwalk a year to cater to all strategies. She also stressed the need to reassert Barcelona as a powerful "European capital", merging relevant initiatives in fashion, crafts, tourism, culture and gastronomy.

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