

An iconic fashion industry staple could be in grave danger

[Dennis Green](#)

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The fashion show may soon be a thing of the past.

In a world where bottom lines are shrinking and fashion brands are losing market share to activewear companies like Nike and Lululemon, fashion shows are increasingly being seen as an unnecessary expense.

In 2016, [the Atlantic provocatively asked](#): "Is this the end for Fashion Week?"

The fashion show is "definitely incurring challenges," Ketty Maisonrouge, a Columbia Business School professor and the head of luxury marketing agency [KM&Co.](#), recently told Business Insider.

Brands both big and small are skipping years, skipping either the fall/winter or spring/summer shows, or skipping some cities on the fashion show circuit altogether. In February of this year, [12 brands skipped New York Fashion Week](#), including Tommy Hilfiger, Tom Ford, Vera Wang, and DKNY.

One issue is the long lead time that clothing takes as it moves from show to shelf. That gives fast-fashion brands a chance to copy the styles at a lower production cost before the originals even hit stores. In other words, "The only people who benefit are the people who copy it," designer Diana von Furstenberg [told WWD in December 2015](#).

To combat this, some brands - [like](#) Rebecca Minkoff, Tom Ford, and Burberry - are trying to make the most out of their runway shows with a "see now, buy now" model, where consumers can buy new products as soon as they hit the runway. Unfortunately, these pieces are far out of season when they're shown, and people often still wait to buy them until they need them.



Because of the massive expense of elaborate fashion shows, many fashion brands are deciding to do cheaper presentations that highlight certain aspects of the clothing and allow spectators to get up close. Others are diverting their budget to social media marketing, which allows them to go directly to consumers without passing through buyers and the media. This could have a leveling effect for fashion brands, as smaller brands will no longer need to put forth the upfront cost to stage an elaborate show to reach buyers and customers.

"I don't know if it's a trend that will stop," Maisonrouge said.

Ultimately the fate of the fashion show rests on the reaction the brands get from skipping.

"I think the brands that have done it more than once think it's better for them," Maisonrouge said. "If they feel like people like it this way, I'm not sure [brands will come back]."

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