Style in the Age of Instagram

Predicting Success within the Fashion Industry Using Social Media

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1. Problem

Fashion brands want to be represented by the top popular models. New faces must adhere to stringent (and often criticized) aesthetic criteria, increasing their homogeneity. Casting decisions are therefore mainly driven by information cascades, making a priori predictions particularly difficult. However, social media are affecting this traditional system.

Can we predict which fashion model will become famous?

2. Data Collection

We collected data about new models (new faces) from a comprehensive online fashion database and from the popular image-sharing platform Instagram.

We used Instagram posts to analyze the influence of social media on fashion model success.

3. Dataset

Fashion models are a highly biased sample of the general population of US females of similar age (dashed lines, upper). Individual performance, measured as number of walked runways (lower), shows a strong rich-get-richer mechanism, consistent with previous work.

4. Results

A. Regression analysis shows that buzz on social media (number of comments) is positively correlated with increased chances of walking a runway.

B. We predict the tenure of a cohort of new faces for the 2015 Spring / Summer season throughout the subsequent 2015-16 Fall / Winter season (right). Our model trained on 2015 S/S data predicts most of the new popular models who appeared in 2015-16 F/W (predictions shown on the right). A strong social media presence may be more important than being under contract with a top agency, or than the aesthetic standards sought after by the industry.