

## Polyvore.com: An Evaluation of How Fashion is Consumed Online

In a world where advertisement drives consumers to buy, sell, trade, and barter for goods, there are online sites that strive to be different. One of these is *Polyvore.com*, a database of all things trendy in one place that caters to the fashion forward who seek to express themselves creatively in an online space. The idea of cataloguing and collaging brands, stores, trends and celebrities in this space was conceived of in 2006 by Pasha Sadri, who was initially working on a mood board to organize and place information for decorating of his home. From this idea came *Polyvore* a year later with \$2.5 million in funding from Benchmark and Harrison Metal to launch the official website. Since its release in 2007, *Polyvore* has generated a large volume of user traffic estimated at 20 million unique visitors each month as of 2012 (Hamanaka, 2014). The about page on *Polyvore* explains that “Polyvore disrupts the traditional e-commerce model by giving everyone everywhere a voice in shaping today's trends and influencing purchases. Our global community of stylists share tips on how to mix and match looks to make the most of your closet and predict trends before they hit the mainstream.” Sadri great organizational method of mapping permits the collaboration of thought, taste, style, and placement which can help with the visualization of a set whether for room décor or fashion design.

The structure of the web-based campaign is sophisticated, yet simple, allowing users to rely on their own fashion judgment to lead them where the trends go. Along the top of the home page, there are tabs that can be clicked on for further information on what’s trending in outfits for men and women, then breaking down in to subcategories such as beauty and accessories. Also included is a tab for home items such as furniture, art, and home accessories. They even have a section dedicated to helping users find sale or clearance items across all websites. (See Figure 1.)

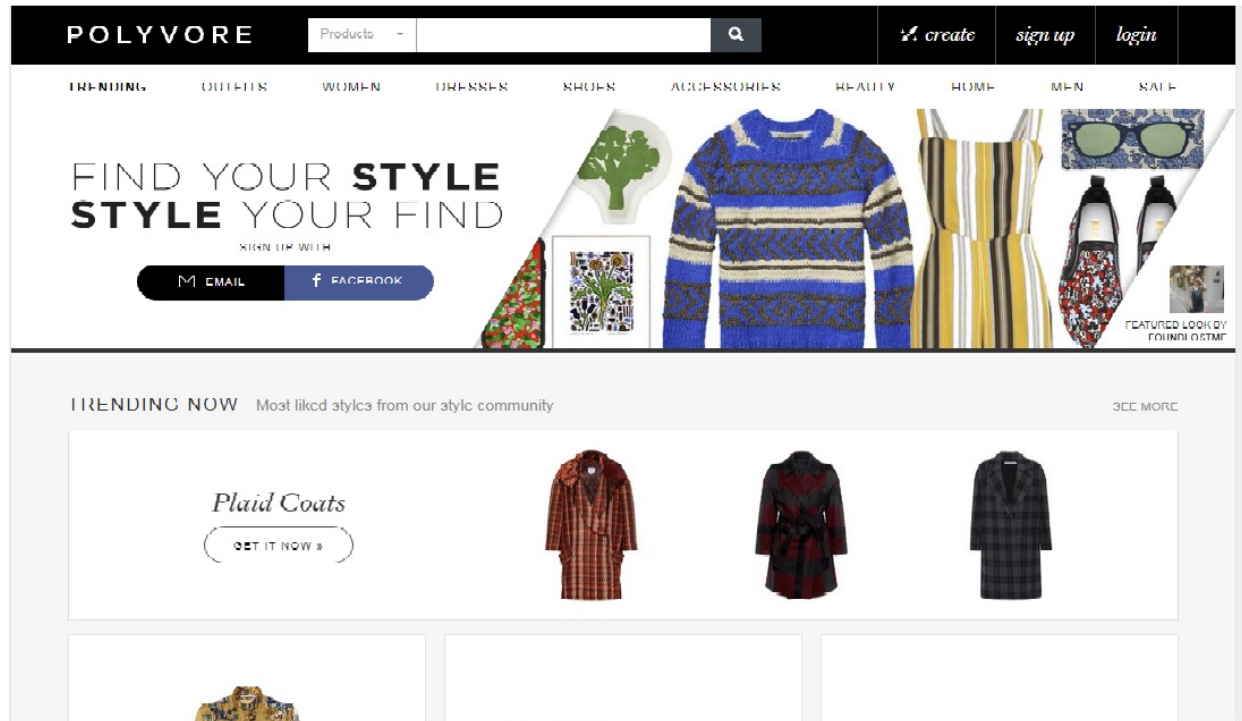


Figure 1: Screenshot of *Polyvore* Homepage.

*Polyvore* is made up of content that is generated by its user base, some of whom are businesses but not all are. Because of the sharing and publishing of this content to the general database, beginner or advanced users can search for fashion or interior decoration items, save them, and organize original pieces or sets based on color and style to fit their tastes. In an article titled “Social Selling Finding Niche with Polyvore,” author for *Women’s Wear Daily* Evan Clark outlines this benefit by taking a direct quote from Polyvore’s chief executive officer and cofounder Jess Lee. “Lee said the trick to Polyvore’s approach is having fashion products in the right environment and context. ‘It has to be visual,’ she said. ‘Fashion is a very visual thing. And fashion is also about mixing and matching. People are in the right mind-set when they come to the site.’” (Clark, 2012). By dragging, dropping, resizing, and cropping, users are able to create the “sets”, or picture collages, centered around fashion and room design. This method is useful

for organizing virtual data as there is no physical way of doing so. The method of saving and coming back to this data is also great for restructuring one's thoughts and documenting progress. One of *Polyvore's* most appealing features is that most any item for use in sets or designs is available for purchase. Not only is this site an archive for past fashion staples, but an inspiration for use in real-time online shopping. Items for sale can vary in terms of pricing, but are generally affordable, depending on the type of look and product. In *Women's Wear Daily*, author Kari Hamanaka speaks on the correlation between price and the shopper in her article entitled, "Polyvore Reveals Most- Searched Fashion Brands". Kari quotes Amy Wicks, editorial curator for Polyvore, "Fast-fashion retailers Topshop, H&M and Forever 21 claimed the number one, two and three spots, respectively, on the list of the top-10 brands users searched for during the year. 'They're all supertrendy, all very fashion-forward, but they're affordable,' ... 'Our members -- who are 18 to 34 [years old] -- they love a trend, but they love it at a great price'" (Hamanaka, 2014).

This website is great for someone, like myself, who is interested in fashion because of the affordances allowed in terms of creativity, materials for use in the set, usability, and options for my own additions from other parts of the internet. The clean format in which users are able to search for items is also appealing; this is because the site's creator focuses on simplicity. With a black and white backdrop, the site design is cleansing to the artistic palate and unadulterated for good reason. The purpose for this is to place attention onto the fashion pieces which can be seen on the home page; it serves as a clean slate, open to room for creativity.

Other online databases that have a similar design concept include websites such as *Pinterest*, which do a great job of collecting data but do not allow creative outlets for using the imagination to create original sets. Instead of just saving items to a board and never looking at

them again, *Polyvore*'s website design allows for users to look back on their sets and use their imagination or personal preferences to create an online personality. This online personality reflects not only the aspirations of a *Polyvore* user or reflect their reality, but allows this same user to document their capabilities as a contributor to social fashion.

On the other hand, there are a couple of shortcomings in *Polyvore*. Because the content is provided by business and non-business users, not all products are available for purchase and therefore only serve the purpose of being an artistic presence in a set. Many a time, I have hovered over an interactive set to check the price on a sweater or shirt to find that it was pulled straight from a blog page with no link to a store website. Other issues to take into consideration are that the quality of the item and whether it is currently in stock cannot be guaranteed by *Polyvore*. This space for sharing and purchasing ideas or fashion pieces is completely up to the discretion of the user.

In short, *Polyvore* is a valuable, though not perfect, site that belongs to all its users and promotes the growth of a social knowledge regarding fashion trends and provides a collaborative environment where such fashion can be documented for years to come. The website itself caters to fashion and this can be seen in variety of options to use when building sets and fashion collages. I use this site frequently to further advance my eye for style trends and can only see this company doing greater things over time.

## Works Cited

Clark, E. (2012). Social Selling Finding Niche With Polyvore. WWD, 204(129), 5.

Hamanaka, K. (2014, December 12). Polyvore Reveals Most-Searched Fashion Brands. WWD,  
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