

Writing Contest Entry

Kristell Trujillo

Academic Writing

Exclusivity For All

A rite of passage in the New York fashion scene has become based on owning a Telfar Bag. Available in an array of colors, featuring its signature embossed logo, and promoted by its hilariously unconventional advertising, the brand has turned its underdog status into a fashion staple and status symbol. Designer Telfar Clemens's brand gained traction over the pandemic's surge in racial conflicts, leading to a massive social media campaign aiming to bring attention and support for black-owned businesses. Contrary to the scarcity model followed by luxury brands, Telfar, has triumphed in its ability to control our consumer predictability through its weekly drops. Nicknamed the "Bushwick Birkin" for its popularity yet affordability, the brand's personable and sometimes nostalgic appeal has imposed on our internal dialogue demanding we get our hands on this bag.

On August 19, 2020 @TelfarGlobal on Instagram presented "THE TELFAR BAG SECURITY PROGRAM". Using a mash-up of Oprah's infamous "you get a car!" clip, while rapper Quavo's voice is heard repeatedly saying "You get a bag!"; a sample taken from the Gucci Mane and Migos song "I get the bag", linking a connection to Hip-Hop culture in their advertisements. The post was followed by a specific set of rules to secure the coveted Telfar bag. Telfar's emphasis on having a product that can be accessible for all and the use of this specific clip and song is consistent with the theme that everyone can get a bag if they want one. Their intention to have the bag available to all is strongly pushed on the consumer by repeatedly reminding them how fast they sell out. For the following 24 hours, all colors and sizes would be available for preorder and



shipped within six months. They emphasize in their caption three times “we are making the bag FOR YOU”, and this is an enticing way to make the consumer overlook the long wait because they are made to feel as though they are receiving a custom-made bag made specifically for each person. Although it seems like a lengthy wait for a bag, just to know your bag is guaranteed is enough to create a sense of hype around this sale. Through the use of a limited time frame to purchase, the brand manipulates our devotion and desire to feel the determined need to take advantage of this date and make a purchase. The bag security program is a pioneering move on behalf of the brand because they could now beat the growing demands of their products which, they know will only continue, but this creates convenience for the production of the bag. The pre-order method allows the brand to not overproduce and have too many bags on the market, which could in turn draw down the value and appeal of the bag.

During the 2021 Superbowl weekend, to draw hype to their brand while piggybacking off a major sports event, Telfar posted an announcement stating the next bag drop the Monday following the big game plus a bag giveaway during the Super Bowl. Characterized for their unconventional spoof advertising, the ad itself is significant for creating a nostalgic feeling in their followers. Social media influencer ‘Gitoo’ is seen jumping out of a giant Telfar bag in what can be taken for an infomercial parody. This advertisement is reminiscent of the Uncle Majic Hip Hop Magician infomercial that many people in the New York and New Jersey, area including myself, remember seeing on their television over a decade ago. It is funny, nostalgic, and is the perfect example of the brand’s easy-going nature. The announcement made a call to have Telfar lovers spot the hidden bag in one of the Super Bowl’s commercials. Telfar Lured their customers to participate in the submission of clips demonstrating their excitement for finding the bag they would then win. In the book *Fast Food Nation*, Eric Schlosser analyzes how McDonald's

recognized the importance of creating familiarity to lure consumers, stating, “The essence McDonald's is embracing is “trusted friend’... ‘Trusted friend’ captures all the good-will and the unique emotional connection customers have with the McDonald's experience” (50). The nostalgic factor appeals to us, the consumers, because it resonates with things we have seen and experienced and also creates trust in that the brand does not take itself too seriously. One person commented under the ad stating, “Y’all asking (mostly black/brown queers into sustainable fashion to watch an entire game of football? For a free bag?... Marking my calendar”. This comment is representative to the grip the brand has on the consumer. This person is a perfect example of how the desire for a Telfar bag makes people behave in a predictable manner, demonstrating that their customer base is willing to do something they would not typically engage in just for the chance of a free bag.

It is not unusual to find dozens of Telfar bag unboxing videos on YouTube. One video in particular depicts the customer predictability that is used through luring customers to not only buy a single bag, but it is the reason why people continue to purchase several colors and sizes. In her YouTube video called “How to Get a Telfar Bag: Tips from Someone Who’s Never Lost out,” Mani chronicles how she has successfully been able to buy four different bags and shares her tips and tricks. Mani states, “every single Telfar drop, I have not missed whatsoever.” She is the ideal customer, and this is one of Telfar’s greatest purposes for producing bags in a variety of colors and sizes. Doing so appeals to all people, seasons, and occasions and plays on the internal dialogue where we convince ourselves to buy another bag, making it difficult to settle for just one.

Telfar’s Instagram page does not contain fancy editorial magazine shoots; instead, there are regular everyday women, men, kids, LGBTQ people, and disabled people sporting their

Telfar bags. From the pictures to the advertisement's monologues, the approach to the customer personalizes their experience and communicates with them in a way that is personable, thus eliminating the robotic type of interaction between consumer and retailer. Telfar Clemens, in an interview with PaperMag, states, "We are really not like other brands. We are very straightforward about who we are addressing. That person is actually us, so sometimes our customer service emails read like diary entries" (Katz). The brand has thrived because it's very accessible to the consumer making it distinctive to the more exclusive brands in the fashion industry. Control on the consumer mind has turned the Telfar brand into a force, evident in the expressions of stress left under their posts when customers fail to secure a bag. Telfar's engagement with their customers generates free publicity and hype for the brand and this is all partly possible due to limiting the time there is to order to just a single weekly release. The only question on everyone's mind now is: when is the next twenty-four hour Telfar drop?

Works Cited

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