

Identifying and Understanding Sales Patterns of Fashion Products

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Abstract

The fashion industry is characterized by frequent new product introductions and very short product life cycles. Importantly, the shapes of these product life cycles, i.e., the sales patterns of fashion products, vary dramatically between products. The shapes include bestseller products or shelf warmers, fast-moving fads or long-lasting classics. The variety in shapes poses significant challenges for managers, and previous research has not empirically addressed their differences. To fill this void, we seek to identify and understand typical fashion sales patterns. To this end, we compile a data set that covers observed sales for 590 fashion products at a European online retailer. We estimate the sales pattern of every product using a flexible two-parameter Weibull function and cluster the resulting parameters to identify distinct typical patterns. The results suggest that there are 5 typical sales patterns that differ in life cycle length, shape and underlying product characteristics.

Keywords: *Fashion Products; Sales Patterns; Clustering*

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