

Fashion Secrets NYC: What does the public think happens in the Garment District?

A proposal for exploring public perception of the Garment District using Social Media and Crowd Sourcing

Client: Fashion Center Business Improvement District / Design Trust for Public Space

We worked with the Fashion Center BID and the Design Trust for Public Space, an advocacy agency for the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA). Each agency has unique goals. The Fashion Center BID is comprised of the businesses and landlords who have joined the organization from within the general boundaries of 35th Street to 41st Street between 5th Avenue and 9th Avenue. The Fashion Center BIDs' mission is to "sustain and improve the vibrancy and vitality of the Fashion District by promoting" the location to fashion and non-fashion businesses¹. The Design Trust for Public Space is a non-profit, located in the Fashion Center BID, who's main mission is to improve NYC's "parks, plazas, streets, and public buildings" through partnership projects with advocacy organizations, public agencies and design professionals². The DT recently partnered with the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA), a non-profit trade association for designers, on a project called Made in Midtown,³ which examined the role that fashion plays in Midtown Manhattan. The designers represented by the CFDA are interested in maintaining a low profile in the area, but are interested in the role that proximity in the district creates. The DT and the Fashion Center BID are interested in continuing to study additional aspects of the importance of the location of the Garment District as a public space and a strategic location.

Research Question

Our team decided to focus on furthering the research on the role that the district plays within the city. Specifically, we were interested in what the public perception of the district is and who is the community interested in the district. These upper levels of non-descript buildings dot the district and the regular passerby would have no idea that operations related to the creation and production of fashion related industries are taking place up above. We decided to explore this question by crowd sourcing what the public thinks happens above ground level in the district. We used two methods to ask this question: engagement on the street via stickering campaign and text messaging and engagement online via social media.

Precendents & Methodology

Our methodology was influenced by three different projects: Give A Minute (<http://www.giveaminute.info>), Foursquare (<http://foursquare.com>), and Cripplebush Ghost Tour (<http://cripplebush.org>). Give A Minute is a project, which is crowd-sourcing peoples' ideas for improving cities (Chicago, Memphis, New York and San Jose) to open a dialogue with community leaders. FourSquare is a location-based game, where users can add locations and check into the locations via a mobile device to gain points and rewards for locations and number of check-ins. Users can also leave tips at locations for others to find when they check into a location. Finally, the Cripplebush Ghost Tour was a guided and self-guided (sticker and text-message based) tour where members of the Williamsburg and Greenpoint communities could learn more about the history of their neighborhoods. Using these three ideas, we asked for people to guess what happens above street level in the district, and in exchange provided participants with a fact or "secret" about the district. We asked for these places and tips, similar to Give A Minute and FourSquare, using a sticker and text message methodology like that of the Cripplebush self-guided tour.

¹ <http://www.fashioncenter.com/about/who-we-are>

² <http://www.designtrust.org/about/whatwedo.html>

³ <http://www.madeinmidtown.org/>

The Stickers



Figure 1: A photo of a sticker on scaffolding

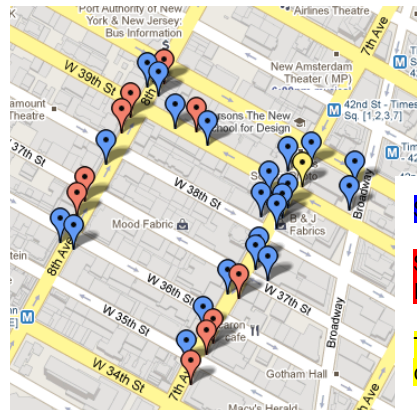


Figure 2: Sticker Locations

Stickers with fact codes

Stickers with general information code

The Info Kiosk with a different general code

The Website

A link to the website was posted on Facebook and Twitter by all the project members as well as some other friends of the project team members. It was also posted as the status message in Google Talk of the project team members. Finally a link and description of the project was emailed to Fashion Center BID distribution list and some friends and family of the project team members.

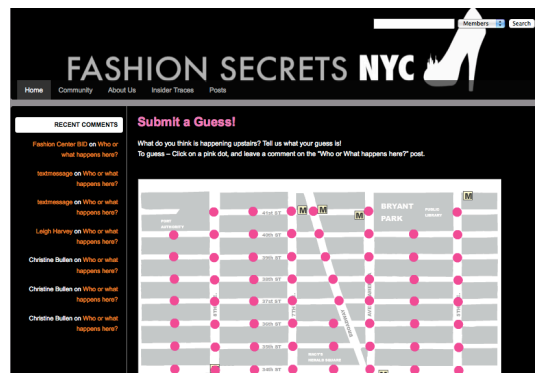


Figure 3: The Home Screen

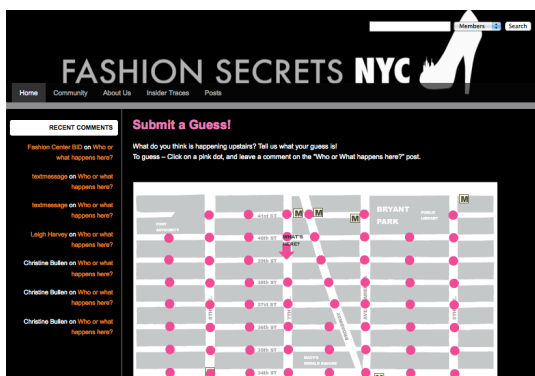


Figure 4: Click on a location

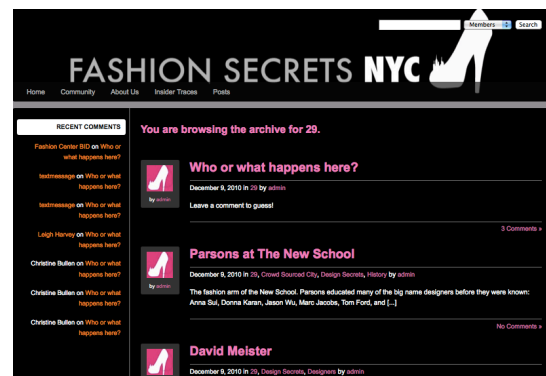


Figure 5: Facts for that location

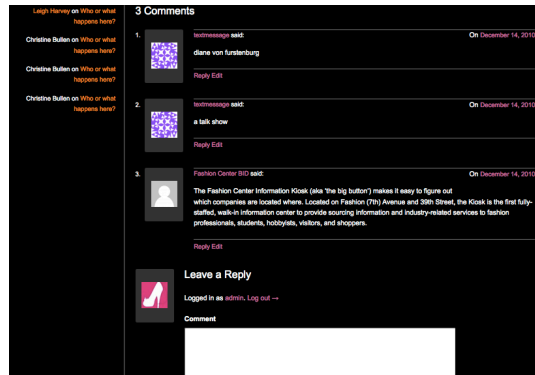


Figure 6: Add a comment to contribute your guess

Results

Text Participation

There were only two individuals who engaged with the project via text messaging. Both phone numbers are New Jersey numbers, corresponding to nearby locations – Hackensack, NJ and Little Falls, NJ. Both locations are roughly one hour by transit and twenty-five minutes by car. A total of six text messages were received – constituting two guesses, two follow-up answers, and two messages in an attempt to have a conversation. The stickers were initially posted on Friday, Dec 3rd and Monday Dec 6th, but the responses were received on Friday December 10th and Saturday December 11th, in the late afternoon/early evening. The timing of the text messages and the fact that they were generated by the info-kiosk code suggests that the respondents were visiting the Garment District, and not

Both responded to the follow-up question, which asked if they were in the Garment District. One believed they were, one did not. Due to the fact that the texters used the Info-kiosk number, we can't be sure if they were at the kiosk at the time of texting or elsewhere. If they were at the kiosk physically then they were in the district, otherwise they may not have been.

Website

Site Traffic

64% - Direct Traffic – traffic coming directly to the site rather than through a referring site (audience that was targeted via email or from typing the site in directly, potentially some noise from the project team not logged in as admin)

35% - Referring sites – Facebook, Facebook Mobile, Twitter – where we posted the link, and where our social network reposted

1% - Search Engines – Google search

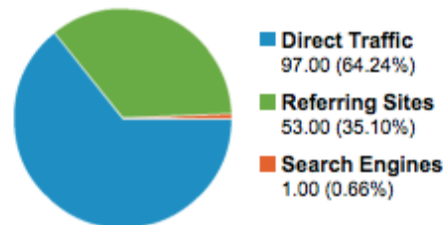


Figure 7: Site Traffic Sources

Top Traffic Sources		
Sources	Visits	% visits
(direct) ((none))	97	64.24%
facebook.com (referral)	51	33.77%
google (organic)	1	0.66%
touch.facebook.com (referral)	1	0.66%
twitter.com (referral)	1	0.66%
view full report		

Figure 8: Site Traffic Source Breakdown

120 people visited this site	
	151 Visits
	120 Absolute Unique Visitors
	746 Pageviews
	4.94 Average Pageviews
	00:05:32 Time on Site
	22.52% Bounce Rate
	79.47% New Visits

Figure 9: Site Visitor Averages





Site Usage		Goal Set 1		Views:    		
Visits	Pages/Visit	Avg. Time on Site	% New Visits	Bounce Rate		
151	4.94	00:05:32	79.47%	22.52%		
% of Site Total: 100.00%	Site Avg: 4.94 (0.00%)	Site Avg: 00:05:32 (0.00%)	Site Avg: 79.47% (0.00%)	Site Avg: 22.52% (0.00%)		
Source/Medium	Visits	Pages/Visit	Avg. Time on Site	% New Visits	Bounce Rate	
1. (direct) / (none)	97	5.67	00:07:47	71.13%	23.71%	
2. facebook.com / referral	51	3.61	00:01:32	94.12%	19.61%	
3. google / organic	1	8.00	00:01:57	100.00%	0.00%	
4. touch.facebook.com / referral	1	3.00	00:01:08	100.00%	0.00%	
5. twitter.com / referral	1	1.00	00:00:00	100.00%	100.00%	

Figure 10: Detailed Traffic Sources and Site Use Information

Looking at the time spent on the website by where the traffic generated from, provides some interesting insight. The direct traffic is spending more time on more pages on the site, whereas the Facebook and other referrals are just checking out the site and then leaving. This suggests that having a targeted audience is more likely to lead to engagement, than an open call even within a social network.

Website Participation

The website asked visitors to leave comments on posts to provide their guess about who or what is in the district. Visitors to the site wrote 11 comments/guesses; additionally, the project team added two comments to represent the guesses from the texters and an additional comment as an example. Of the 11 visitor comments: the majority - 9 of 11, 82% – were from a supportive family member of the project team and a Fashion Center BID employee.

Discussion & Recommendations

In looking at the data collected, there are some hints at strategies that are effective as well as hints of issues with the methodology. The goal of the project was to engage the crowd so as to understand what the crowd's perception is of what types of things are going on within the garment district, but there were really only a small number of participants – some of whom were doing so based on their affiliation with the project (familial and employment). In reflecting on why our methods might not have reached the public – we came up with a few ideas. First, there is an issue of the location itself. The Garment Center is heavily trafficked and full of visual noise. We were limited in the surfaces we were allowed to place stickers on, which made it difficult to allow the stickers to market themselves in the area and attract attention. Additionally there are already a number of colorful things throughout the area, so the color and size of our stickers may have been lost in all of the other activity of the district. Another potential issue may have been that the question on the sticker was not compelling enough to encourage people to respond. Turning to the website, the lack of participation may also have related to the usability of the site, but similarly it could've been due to a lack of a compelling enough question to trigger a response. Finally, there is also likely an issue of implementation time. We did start to see some reaction to our efforts in response to emails and additional postings on social media sites, but we may have needed to collect for longer to really assess the success of the website.

We do believe that these methods can be useful tools, but that ultimately the success falls to a question of having a community who is engaged in the process and a compelling enough issue to trigger participation. It is our recommendation that for crowd sourcing to be successful as a data collection tool, a compelling reason to participate is needed. What this reason is would depend on who the target population is, so if the target population is the community, then the reason to participate should relate to the community needs. Or if the target population is the public, a game format might be a more successful engagement method. For the community population, crowd sourcing and social media can be useful as an advocacy and marketing tool generating conversation around the need of the community.