



IMRAN AMED, FOUNDER OF BUSINESS OF FASHION.NET →

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by Robert Chan

Imran Amed was a McKinsey & Co consultant until his passion led him to found a web blog reporting on the business aspects of the fashion industry. We talked investment clothes, designer electronics and style with the Harvard MBA holder

What's your take on all the labelling on men's behaviour – metrosexual, menager and the like?

I think most of that was to make men feel comfortable with the idea of pampering themselves. Period. Now, the idea of men getting manicures, buying skin potions and thinking about fashion has become acceptable in many quarters. Ironically, the success of the word metrosexual has made the word itself redundant.

A lot of magazines and blogs are now talking about "investment" clothes. Do you see clothes as an "investment"?

Some of my clothes are definitely a long-term investment. I have a bespoke boiled cashmere blazer from a Japanese brand called ICHO that will last forever – and I was happy to pay accordingly. Other clothes are a bit trendier and will eventually become dated. I tend to pay less for these clothes, unless they are really special. But overall, I always look for good value, which for me is the balance between design, quality and price.

With the whole emphasis on menswear now, business-led or not, where do you think menswear is headed now?

Clothes – even expensive ones – fall apart within a year. With a reduction in the demand for clothing, the supply will have to fall as well. Going forward, men and women will still buy clothing, but they will scrutinize carefully. They will value creativity and craftsmanship more than ever before. Those who survive this downturn will have paid close attention to delivering this kind of value to their customers.

What's your take on designers partnering with technology companies to co-brand products?

If done strategically, licensing and co-branding can be natural and

effective ways for a fashion brand to grow – especially if the design brings added consumer benefits to the product. But the collaborations have been getting out of hand lately. It's not quite as bad as Pierre Cardin in the 1980's, but it comes close. Many brands have gone too far in the extension and licensing of their brands. The worst examples are where brands like Prada simply stamp their brands on a product that doesn't live up to the same design integrity as their core products. Perhaps this economy will make people think twice about such short-term strategies. Or perhaps it might make them more desperate to pursue them? We'll see.

For the man on the street who might not be all that interested in fashion but would like to look stylish nevertheless - what advice would you give him?

Be yourself. Don't ever let someone force you to buy clothing that you don't feel comfortable wearing. Fashion should make people feel good and confident. Be your own icon.

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What's your earliest memory of dressing up?

I honestly can't remember. I just remember caring. A lot.

What do you always carry with you?

My large, black spiral bound sketchbook for notes and drawings and random ideas. And my BlackBerry.

What was the last happy experience that you had that involved either business and/or fashion?

I just finished London Fashion Week yesterday for Autumn/Winter 09. It was a strong week here and they had a day dedicated to menswear for the first time. Look out for a rising talent named Carolyn Massey.

Are there any famous fashion names on your speed dial and who would you like to call right now?

I wish I could answer this one.

What will you be up to next after this interview?

Sleep! **G**

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