

Are Decision Support Systems out of Fashion?

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Extended Abstract

This paper discusses opportunities and pitfalls of running a DSS to support fashion purchase decisions in a large department store chain. The main characteristics of a DSS, which has already become indispensable for the daily work of fashion purchase managers, are described. Its organizational impacts are analyzed from three perspectives: it is shown how the system leads to innovative business procedures, shift functions within the company, and changes the role of IT for the corporation.

Beyond the analysis of a special system, the paper focuses on general questions regarding the potential benefits of a DSS in the fashion industry. Does its success depend on intelligent and appropriate concept, design, and usage of the DSS, or is the fashion purchase business an example of an industry that confronts DSS designers with insuperable, system-immanent problems?

While a well-designed system might provide all information available to purchase managers and their teams as well as sales managers, the author doubts that any system will provide decision support when the crucial background information is missing, e.g., when nobody knows what kind of fashion will be popular next year. Or, to phrase it more drastically, once somebody knows or has a save guess what kind of fashion will be popular next near, what would then be the value-added of a DSS beyond a certainly indispensable information system?

Selected References

- 'The Role of IT in Retailing: The Case of Supporting Fashion Purchasing at a European Department Store Chain' (with J. Kronen and T. Jelassi), *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, March 1996.
- 'FIPS Sets the Fashion: A DSS for Purchase Planning in a European Department Store' (with J. Kronen), *IFIP WG 8.3, Conference Proceedings*, San Sebastian, Spain, September 1994.

- 'FIPS: An Innovative IT-Application for Fashion Purchase Planning in a European Department Store' (with J. Kronen), *Association of Management, Conference Proceedings*, Dallas, USA, August 1994.