Haute Cocktail
Table of Contents

Table of Contents .............................................. 2
Autobiography .................................................. 3
Resume ........................................................... 4-5
Timeline .......................................................... 6-7
Thesis Summary ................................................. 8
Thesis Project ..................................................... 9-21
Statement of Future Plans ................................. 22-23
Thesis Summary

My thesis project emphasizes on my fashion and cocktails website, Haute Cocktail. Through this medium and social media I share and present trends, styling ideas, personal style and cocktail recipes to my readers.

I've always been really interested in the fashion industry, designers and styling. As a fashion student and professional, starting a website touching on the subject of fashion was a way to express my point of view and connect with people within the industry and others with similar tastes. Mainly I started showcasing editorials for fashion inspiration and curating items that followed a specific trend. Fashion is a fun and unique way of expressing and celebrating who you are. In that note, and along with the theme of dressing up in a cocktail dress to go out and be festive (hence the name Haute Cocktail), I started sharing cocktail recipes every Friday. Now, Haute Cocktail has expanded to include my personal style through the coverage of my life and special events, creative posts on brands I'm working with and has replaced editorials for outfit inspiration styled by me.

Haute Cocktail started as a hobby, and quickly grew into something that has helped me showcase my passion, talent and life to an audience that has been growing steadily ever since its creation. It has connected me with industry professionals and brands, helping me create new content and engage my readers. I chose Haute Cocktail as my thesis project to gain the knowledge and experience to make this a more professional looking, engaging and successful website. I was also interested in finding ways of monetizing it and continue to grow my business.
Thesis Project

Fashion and cocktails website, Haute Cocktail, is the subject of this thesis project. Fashion has always been a source of entertainment, inspiration and personal expression. Add to this a specific aesthetic, personality and point of view and you have a unique brand that people can go to again and again. Haute Cocktail has been aiming to become one of these go-to fashion and lifestyle brands by developing a stronger personality and presenting a unique point of view. These elements need to be supported by the look of the website and its social media platforms, content, imagery and the brands/companies associated with it. As a business, Haute Cocktail also aims to establish and build strong relationships with compatible brands and companies to bring new and engaging content to its readers and as a way of monetization. In order to achieve all these, I have been working on several general points. First, I’ve been enhancing the look of the website and its images to make Haute Cocktail more professional looking, memorable and shareable through social media. Promoting new content and being more active in social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram have aided in increasing awareness of the website and growing its readership and followers alike. This aspect is really important as these numbers are the barometer used by companies and blogger networks to assess if they should work with you. The more readers and followers, the more chances of better, bigger and higher paying opportunities. My last main subject would be monetization. Several ways have been successfully tried to start and generate more income through Haute Cocktail. These include affiliate programs, sponsored posts and per-click campaigns.

I was really interested in pursuing this project because of the potential of Haute Cocktail, which was started as a hobby, to gain momentum and become a paying career for me. The moment I started finding opportunities to work with brands, connecting with fellow bloggers and
attending events I knew I was on the right track to becoming stronger, better and find even more opportunities and potentially create my own within the topics I cover on the blog.

The process started with small steps and findings through other blogs and bloggers. I found a badge on a blog that directed me to Business to Blogger, a website that announces blogger jobs for bloggers to apply to and hopefully get to work with brands in different types of projects. My first piece of clothing sent to me for review happened because of an application I sent to work with an online dress store. After that, I’ve had marketing agencies directly contact me to pick items to wear and review on my blog.

Another tactic I used was to follow compatible brands and business on Facebook and Twitter. Through Facebook I learned about a fashion show going on locally and decided to RSVP and attend. There I met fellow fashion blogger and photographer Jennifer Rocha who suggested me joining the meetup group NJ Fashion & Beauty Bloggers. Through this connection I was featured in NJ.com in their fashion section, spotted and was accepted into the meetup group. Consequently, I started and have continued a relationship with Neiman Marcus and AM3 PR who has invited me to attend Nolcha Fashion Week in NYC and work with brands like Cat Footwear and Magnifico Giornata.

Most recently, these type of events and connections have led me to apply and join blogger networks where I get to work with brands while getting product for review and payment for a post. I’ve even had marketing companies approach me directly to write sponsored posts on their products and events. Affiliate networks are another way of monetization I learned about and successfully implemented on my website generating me my first paycheck ever from several that I have received since then.

In seeing these developments and possibilities it became clear that Haute Cocktail would benefit from the knowledge, experience and guidance available at the Academy to grow and become my profession and source of income.
Monetization is one of the biggest challenges when creating and running a website, and even though I've been able to break the ice in this department there were several opportunities I had to work harder to get, while there are others I'm still working for. I'm also interested in having PR agencies and companies know my brand and think of me when there are event and fashion show invites to be sent or opportunities to work with their brands.

A big part of being successful in this industry is about building your website and brand. I wanted to have a professional, clean looking website that will be pleasant to visit and return to. In trying to improve the look of the blog, I hired a blog designer to create a banner, badge and design the while website. Eventually, as I grew and needed to add more tabs and elements to Haute Cocktail I had to change the design a bit. The knowledge I gained in HTML helped me achieve this without damaging the other elements of the design that I wanted to leave untouched.

This year, I decided to take the leap and migrate the website from the Blogger platform into Wordpress. The industry leans more towards this platform, so I knew it would benefit my SEO ranking, look as well as my resume. People suggested to hire someone to do the migration for me, but I wanted to do it myself in order to save money and learn the structure and backbone of my blog. It was hard and frustrating, but through research and several calls to my website hosting providers I was able to successfully migrate posts, pictures and links to the new platform. The website has definitely a better look to it, I've noticed that people are finding it easier when doing searches online, I'm working on making my SEO better through plugins, among other things and can happily say I know how to use Wordpress on my resume, which opens doors in the industry when collaborating and working with other websites.

Sadly, in the process I has to reset my analytics and I'm working once again to reach 10,000 page views a month. I accomplished this by making sure to write posts everyday from Monday to Friday and promoting them as much as possible though social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram. This was I accomplished a 33% growth in a year.
Currently, I’m aiming towards reaching 10,000+ unique pageviews a month to be able to apply and better my chances of being accepted into bigger and better blogger networks like Glam and Style Coalition. Through these, I’ll be able to connect and work in paying opportunities with well known brands and companies.

Another challenge I encountered was being able to join another network where I could work with brands on campaigns that were paid by click. I was really interested in learning more and experiencing this type of monetization. However, they required a certain amount of Twitter followers in order to join, and I was a couple of hundred followers behind. I amped up my engagement on Twitter to successfully reach the minimum amount of followers needed to apply to the network. After acceptance into it, I got to work my first paying campaign with them with the beauty brand Algenist, not only helping experience and learn another way of monetization, but introduce a little bit of more beauty topics into Haute Cocktail. The expansion of content is another bullet point I’m aiming to tackle once there are less time constraints.

Reading my midpoint review thesis proposal was like looking at baby pictures of myself as a blogger and editor and my website. Even though there are elements that have stayed the same and gotten better and stronger, there are many that are no longer relevant. Haute Cocktail is still a fashion and cocktails website showcasing trends and my personal style. The images I create are better making them more shareable in social media like Pinterest and Twitter. I’ve successfully redesigned the look of the blog and have applied quantification codes to learn and understand my audience. I’ve also continued the coverage of events, but not as a peek into the industry for my readers, but a way to share my outfits within a social context where they can also learn about a product and/or location. I still don’t write about my relationships, but here and there you’ll get to meet my friends and hear stories about my boyfriend. In general, I’ve opened more about who I am and that has definitely influenced the amount of people reading my blog. Posts on my outfits, as well as personal experiences like a recent surprise birthday party my friends
threw me are actually some of the most popular posts.

Big changes include the topic of sustainability. I no longer focus the brands I talk about or events I cover on sustainable ones, as I'm no longer pursuing developing my own sustainable clothing line to promote as a blogger. At this time, I promote brands, events and styles that reflect an aesthetic, style and social lifestyle. Haute Cocktail is classic and feminine with an edge and that reflects my style. People who come looking for trendy pieces and style inspiration will find it through brands that are compatible to this specific aesthetic. Ensembles, either worn by me or styled for people to shop for don't involve office attire. I want my readers to find garments and inspiration that can dress them for fun night outs and fun days in town. Showcasing events I attend and what I wore has become part of the social lifestyle the blog approaches and showcasing a weekly cocktail is the cherry on top. I also have price points in mind as most of the merchandise presented on the website is worth $300 or less. I've also discarded the idea of recurring to guest posts from other bloggers for now. The idea has crossed my mind in the event I want to add different lifestyle topics like health, etc. that I think a second person should be in charge of, but for the time being Haute Cocktail will only reflect my taste, style and experiences. I think this is a good way to keep the cohesion of the content of the blog, as have my readers and companies know exactly who I am and where do I stand when it comes to style.

On the cocktails department I've upgraded to taking my own pictures of drinks and adding the recipe on them to make them pinnable. I've been invited to dinners, tastings and product launches for brands like Blat Vodka from Spain and Magnifico Giornato. Business owners as well as bloggers have asked me to guest post and collaborate with them by sharing cocktail recipes with their readers while linking back to Haute Cocktail.

In my fashion journal you can find the directed study courses I took, the goals I had when I first enrolled, what I learned and how I applied that knowledge and experience into the growth of my website. {Carla's Fashion Journal}
Working on this project has taught me a lot. I’ve learned and gotten ideas of different types of content I can create and ways of creating more appealing and shareable imagery. Most importantly, I’ve learned how to better engage my readers and promote my brand. Through the courses I’ve taken I’ve gotten cues and ideas on things to do to help the growth and expansion of Haute Cocktail. Ideas, tips and new concepts are added to a Bog to-do list in order for me to do more research on and implement. Following this method, plus the response of my readers and what they engage with the most, I’ve been able revamp and create better content. I’ve learned to let my personality shine through my written word; to creatively promote through air, land and sea the content I create; to quantify and use that information to create content and find more and better paying opportunities; and to network, network, network. My studies at the Academy and my experiences throughout this project as a professional have aided me to place Haute Cocktail in the better and stronger position it is today.

Mission Statement

Haute Cocktail aims to celebrate life by inspiring the chic, modern woman to experiment with lively fashions and exciting cocktails.

Content Strategy

Haute Cocktail will continue to provide its readers with posts about personal style through intimate stories and events attended; shoppable collages of current fashion trends; styling ideas and cocktail recipes. Every week, one fashion trend will be covered in a shoppable trends collage and later in a styling ideas post. In addition, there will be a weekly post open to cover anything from events to reviews on products/brands to information on giveaways/contests/announcements, etc.

In the future, my main goal is to develop an editorial calendar following this weekly
formula to work on themed content ahead of time, and have the flexibility to write more posts per day, when applicable. Following a theme through the holidays and special days on the calendar will help me create content that will speak to my readers in a timely manner, while giving me the advantage of posting more frequently throughout a day and/or week. By having the time to write more posts, I'll also be able to incorporate other related topics like beauty and exploring (restaurants, stores, traveling). I also aim to start a monthly column where I get to interview a Haute Cocktailista on her profession, goals, favorite fashions and cocktails. This will ultimately have people coming to the website more often and increasing readership and engagement.

Presentation

Here are examples of the basic content created for Haute Cocktail. During a regular week you'll find trends, personal style, outfit inspiration and a cocktail recipe. On occasion you can also find giveaways, contest announcements, events coverage, stories of my life and travels, among other things.

- Valentine's Day date outfit post.
- Denim as a spring trend post.
- Outfit ideas using denim.
- Cocktail recipe.
- Outfit post through event coverage.
(Haute Outfit) Red Dress & Kisses

Let’s rewind and go back to that busy Valentine’s weekend when I went out to a surprise date with the boyfriend on Friday night. We headed over to the city to have dinner over at The Capital Grille and wrapped up the night enjoying the Broadway show, Wicked.

I love having fun with themes, so I picked a pretty red dress in chiffon with sequined straps and added a pair of kiss printed tights to get the Valentine’s stamp of approval. I added a black leather vest that I haven’t been able to take off since I bought it to make the ensemble look more edgy and fun. This outfit really showcased what my personal style is all about... A little bit girly, a little bit rock n’ roll! What’s your style? Did you go for a Valentine’s theme outfit, too?

P.S. I want to thank Xquisite Color & Cuts in Hoboken, NJ for having me over and making my hair look fabulous for a crazy active weekend.

Dress: Minuet - Red-y to Sparkle Dress (available here) / Tights: Undertones NYC @ Ricky’s NYC / Vest: H&M / Wedges: Pierre Dumas @ Via Mode / Bag: Khof's
{Haute Trend} Denim Fashions

As you may have noticed, denim fashions have been on the scene for a bit now. However, it has expanded from the classic jacket and sought after shirt to include dresses, accessories and anything your heart desires wrapped in denim. Denim garments will look perfect with eye-catching pieces in bright colors, prints or embellished. I've been searching for the perfect denim shirt to pair with my leather vest and sequined skirt for a while. Can't wait to find it and rock these looks this season! How do you wear your denim/chambray pieces? What's your favorite piece below?

Shop for denim fashions below.

Dorothy Perkins Blue Studded Denim Shirt - 39 | Miss Selfridge Cloud Print Denim Dress - 70 | Madewell Two-Tone Chambray Shirt - 88 | Charlotte Russe Lace Overlay Baseball Cap - 9.99 | Miss Selfridge High Waist Embroidered Short - 57 | Topshop Spot Swing Skirt - 60 | Oasis Hayley Denim Dress - 77 | Boohoo Tora Denim Studded Drawstring Bag - 23.08 | Miz Mooz Martin Boot - 159.95 | Miss Selfridge PU Sleeve Denim Trucker Jacket - 85 | Miss Selfridge Light Wash Embroidered Short - 57 | Deux Lux Empire State Clutch - 115
Denim: 1 Trend, 3 Outfits

Get inspired with these cute denim outfits that you can also mix and match and pack for a weekend getaway! You’ve stocked up with all sorts of denim fashions; dresses, skirts, pants, shorts, jackets, etc. Now, you are craving styling ideas to give life to all the denim pieces hanging in your closet. No matter if your go to are pants, skirts or dresses you’ll find a denim ensemble that’ll speak to you right here.
If you have styling questions or just want to say hi feel free to e-mail me at info@haute-cocktail.com.

P.S. Be sure to enter my earrings giveaway!

Look #1: Topshop Curved Panel Shirt - 72 | Rebecca Taylor Denim Vest - 295 | Topshop Houndstooth Pleat Shorts - 70 | Steve Madden Outlaw Stud Biker Boot - 207.81 | Miss Selfridge Neon Chain Bracelet - 18

Look #2: Topshop Collarless Biker Jacket - 104 | Topshop Ikat Print Bralet - 50 | Topshop Denim Skater Skirt - 40 | Jeffrey Campbell Lita Spike Heel - 209.95 | Topshop Neoprene Satchel - 50

{Haute Cocktail} Moscow Mule

The Haute Cocktail of the week is the Moscow Mule. I got to taste it at the unveiling of the Paramount Hotel in NYC a couple of weeks ago. The Moscow Mule is the signature cocktail of the revamped hotel and is a refreshing and tasty concoction made of citron vodka and ginger beer. I loved that they served it in copper Moscow Mule mugs with stainless steel straws, making them even more fun and cool to drink. Plan on making them the next time you have friends over or as a refreshing summer drink. You can garnish them with sprigs of mint and lemon wedges. Cheers and enjoy the weekend! Have you had a Moscow Mule before?

P.S. Remember to enter my earrings giveaway before it ends!
{Haute Outfit} Bright Red at the Paramount Hotel

Last night, I attended the unveiling of the Paramount Hotel in New York City. The modern, chic hotel located in the heart of Times Square has a trendy lobby filled with lounges to relax and an amazing fireplace to keep warm. I fell in love with a big table of books at the center of the room and the cool DJ booth right on top of the fireplace.

We were greeted upstairs to more lounging areas and a bar serving wine, champagne and Moscow Mules (Check back here on Friday for the recipe!) for the occasion. There were cheese platters and hors d’oeuvres were passed throughout the night. My favorites were the Truffled Mac n’ Cheese bites and an Apple Pie Shooter as a creamy, adult-friendly dessert. All in all, their Paramount Bar & Grill is a great place to dress up, grab a cocktail and delicious food before or after venturing into your next New York adventure.

Tights: H&M | Skirt and Belt: Forever 21 | Top and earrings c/o Lash Clothing | Shoes: Payless | Bag: Kohl’s
Haute Cocktail’s readership is composed of women between the ages of 24-35, who are educated professionals with no children. They are affluent readers, giving them more disposable income to spend on fashion and nights out. These women like to find trendy fashions to wear for all their events as well as luxurious items to add to their closets. Other topics they are interested in aside from fashion are beauty products and fragrances. Most of these women reside in urban cities and surrounding areas within the United States, UK and Canada while the main readership is comprised of Caucasians and Hispanics. These women are the ones who work hard and enjoy to play as often as they can, hence their pack calendar. You can find them spending time with friends and family at a restaurant or bar, concert or show, birthday or wedding and traveling. They are fashionable social butterflies with a unique sense of style.