

MODEM Dialogues – In conversation with Hervé Huchet

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Portrait Hervé Huchet - Photo credit ® Promas

Questions conceived and hosted by [Florian Müller](#)

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MODEM:

Few people have observed as closely as you how fashion moves between countries, cultures and markets. Looking back at the beginning of your journey, was there a particular experience that first showed you the power of connecting creative ideas with new audiences?

HERVÉ HUCHET:

My experiences first as a buyer and later as the director of international trade fairs (*PRET A PORTER Paris, Made in France, Sport Achats, Tissu Premier, Interselection, The Train, Living Room, among others*) were defining because I have always been driven by a deep curiosity for what is new and different. At the major Parisian trade fairs, people from all over the world came together to buy and sell, creating a unique crossroads of clothing cultures. There was a constant demand from groups of manufacturing countries seeking to adapt to the expectations of Western buyers, particularly in terms of creativity and quality.

Following our advice, many came to study in France and developed partnerships with French brands. They significantly improved both their production methods and their collections. This

profoundly transformed their approach to fashion, to the point that they helped cultivate a genuine appreciation for French fashion in their home countries, many of whom are now customers of French brands. I found these go-betweens fascinating. They gave me a passion for international exchange and partnerships, along with the conviction that, in the long run, they benefit everyone. They also made me realise that international business is not simply about exporting, but about cultural exchange, from which everyone grows.

MODEM:

French brands, like many companies around the world, see international expansion as an opportunity, while every market follows its own logic. In your experience, what is most often misunderstood when labels expand into new countries?

HERVÉ HUCHET:

The first mistake is to believe that a market opens simply because you present a collection there. In reality, a market opens because you take the time to understand it. Every country has its own codes, its own calendar, its own distribution network and its own way of consuming fashion. International expansion requires preparation and careful work. At PROMAS, we always prioritise study trips before launching commercial operations. Understanding a market is often more important than trying to sell there immediately.

Every market must be developed patiently over several seasons. It is a medium to long-term investment, and it is far better to focus on one region of the world at a time, strengthen your position there, find experienced local agents, and only then move on to other destinations. For young creative companies, we created the **"Boarding Pass" programme**, offering support and coaching for Asia, particularly South Korea, Japan and China. The programme is largely subsidised by **DEFI**, allowing emerging brands to enter new markets with the right preparation and resources.

MODEM:

Entering a new country is one thing, becoming truly relevant there is another. How do you notice that a brand has understood the local customs and goes beyond simply arriving with a collection?

HERVÉ HUCHET:

A brand begins to understand a market when it stops focusing solely on selling and starts wanting to learn from it. Local social media can be an excellent indicator of curiosity, but it is not enough. What truly makes the difference is the ability to listen to distributors, agents and buyers who understand the expectations of their customers. A successful brand is one that can adapt the way it communicates without giving up its identity. At the same time, hiring a sales professional with export experience remains the best guarantee for successfully entering new markets. Their expertise saves valuable time because they have already built strong distribution networks, established relationships with agents and understand local business practices.

MODEM:

Throughout your career, you have accompanied designers and entrepreneurs at many different stages of their development. Which qualities allow you to recognise early on that someone has the potential to create something lasting?

HERVÉ HUCHET:

Originality, the balance of a collection and the quality of sourcing remain essential, but they are

no longer enough. I also pay close attention to a designer's ability to organise themselves, communicate effectively, honour their commitments and build a sustainable business. In this industry, a beautiful collection opens doors. Consistency, reliability and respecting deadlines are what keep those doors open. The rule has always been the same: first delivered, first sold.

MODEM:

In fashion, initial contacts can remain simple, while others turn into relationships that continue for many years. What creates the trust that allows these bonds to grow over time?

HERVÉ HUCHET:

Trust cannot simply be declared. It is built season after season through commitment, keeping one's word, loyalty and, above all, continuous communication. It often begins with a genuine enthusiasm for a collection, but it only lasts if both sides honour their commitments. A brand must meet its deadlines, guarantee consistent quality, communicate regularly and offer exclusivities whenever they make sense. Buyers also have responsibilities: presenting the collection respectfully, targeting the right customer base, taking the time to understand the brand and respecting payment schedules. Long-term relationships also require regular exchanges about consumer perceptions and changing purchasing habits.

MODEM:

Visibility within the industry is no longer shaped exclusively by their traditional players. Where do you see the most powerful influences today when it comes to attention and reach?

HERVÉ HUCHET:

Today, the strongest influences come from social media, music even more than cinema, and from the street. However, in menswear, I still believe in the power of word of mouth. The brands that emerge and endure are often those discovered through an independent boutique, a passionate individual or a trusted recommendation. Exclusivity, authenticity, Made in, and environmental commitments now create genuine desirability. A sense of exclusivity, ethical and environmental responsibility, and the value of Made in have become powerful drivers of consumer attention.

MODEM:

Behind the image of creativity and success often lie expectations and pressures that remain invisible from the outside. Which aspects of this reality do you believe the economy still needs to acknowledge more openly?

HERVÉ HUCHET:

People often picture a designer sketching a collection. In reality, most of them start out alone, doing everything themselves: designing, sourcing fabrics, developing prototypes, raising funds, convincing buyers, handling communications and managing cash flow. They have to be creative director, entrepreneur and salesperson all at once, without always being prepared or trained for it. It's a huge mental burden. That's why it's so important to build the right support network and surround yourself with experienced people. Helping young brands do exactly that is one of PROMAS' key missions.

What people usually see are the collections, the fashion shows and the brand image. What they don't see is the constant pressure behind it all: creating the next collection before the previous

one has even reached the stores, making decisions with very limited visibility, constantly having to convince others, taking financial risks and continuing to create despite uncertainty and self-doubt. Creativity is often seen as a privilege. In reality, it's also a daily responsibility. Behind every successful brand are years of hard work, uncertainty, setbacks and the determination to keep moving forward. To me, that resilience is every bit as remarkable as creativity itself.

MODEM:

The way people communicate and collaborate shapes the environment in which ideas flourish. Which changes in everyday working cultures could contribute to a more conscious and supportive environment?

HERVÉ HUCHET:

Perhaps the most important change for companies is accepting that growth should no longer be measured solely by volume. A brand can be more profitable while selling less. This requires restoring discipline to production calendars, reducing overproduction and developing collections designed to last beyond a single season. I also strongly believe in more balanced relationships between brands, manufacturers and distributors. When everyone shares risks, exchanges information and works towards a long-term vision, everyone benefits. However, I believe the greatest change should take place in consumer culture itself: consuming less, but consuming better. Fashion has always been the result of collective work. It is a team effort in which every individual must contribute their very best, bringing their passion, their experience of the world and their commitment without counting the hours. In that sense, fashion is very close to the world of art.

MODEM:

A new generation is approaching creativity, entrepreneurship and the meaning of fulfillment in different ways. Which evolutions among young talents give you the greatest sense of hope?

HERVÉ HUCHET:

The new generations certainly have a greater ability to communicate, bring people together, multitask and face challenges with less fear. They have an excellent command of social media, even if they tend to cultivate imitation more than innovation. They are better equipped to manage teams that are not always fully focused and are more resilient when facing failure. At the same time, they may sometimes show less endurance and passion or, to put it more positively, perhaps they have a greater sense of detachment. They are also more open to technological innovation and more willing to integrate it into their processes. They have a stronger ability to embrace and share different cultures. And when they are good, they are truly outstanding.

MODEM:

After decades of connecting people, ideas and opportunities, is there something you would like to share with others from your experience or something you hope they will carry forward from your path?

HERVÉ HUCHET:

It is essential to cultivate your talents, remain aware of the present moment and seize opportunities, even when they lead you down unfamiliar paths far from your certainties. Be willing to take on challenges while remaining true to yourself and your values. Above all, maintain sincere and regular relationships with your clients. High-quality prospecting and a well-

defined long-term strategy are the key foundations for building lasting success.