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# Fashioning the Brand:

a creative & commercial interpretation  
of the role of the brand in fashion



Futurescan 3 – November 2015

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University of Huddersfield

- **Context & Background:**
  - The Brand in Fashion.
- **Aim & Objectives:**
  - Practitioners' understanding of 'the brand'.
  - The functions of the brand in fashion.
- **Methodology.**
- **Findings.**
- **Conclusions.**

## The brand:

- Definitions.
- Constituents.
- Practical roles.

*Vague*

*Contradictory*

*Confusing*

*A complex organism composed of tangible and intangible constituents and performing a variety of roles for consumers and companies.*

## Fashion Market/Products:

- Competitive.
- Commoditised.
- Creative.

*Critical  
Defining  
Universal*

*A market in which branding is especially significant in determining the success of participants.*

## The brand in fashion:

- Commercial functions.
- Creative functions.
- Research dissonance:

*Conflict*

**Creative**

Fashion researchers  
underestimating the  
scope and role of  
branding practice

**V**

**Commercial**

Marketing researchers  
underestimating the  
significance of branding  
in fashion practice.

## Aim:

- Provide a conceptual model representing the commercial & creative functions of a brand within a fashion business.

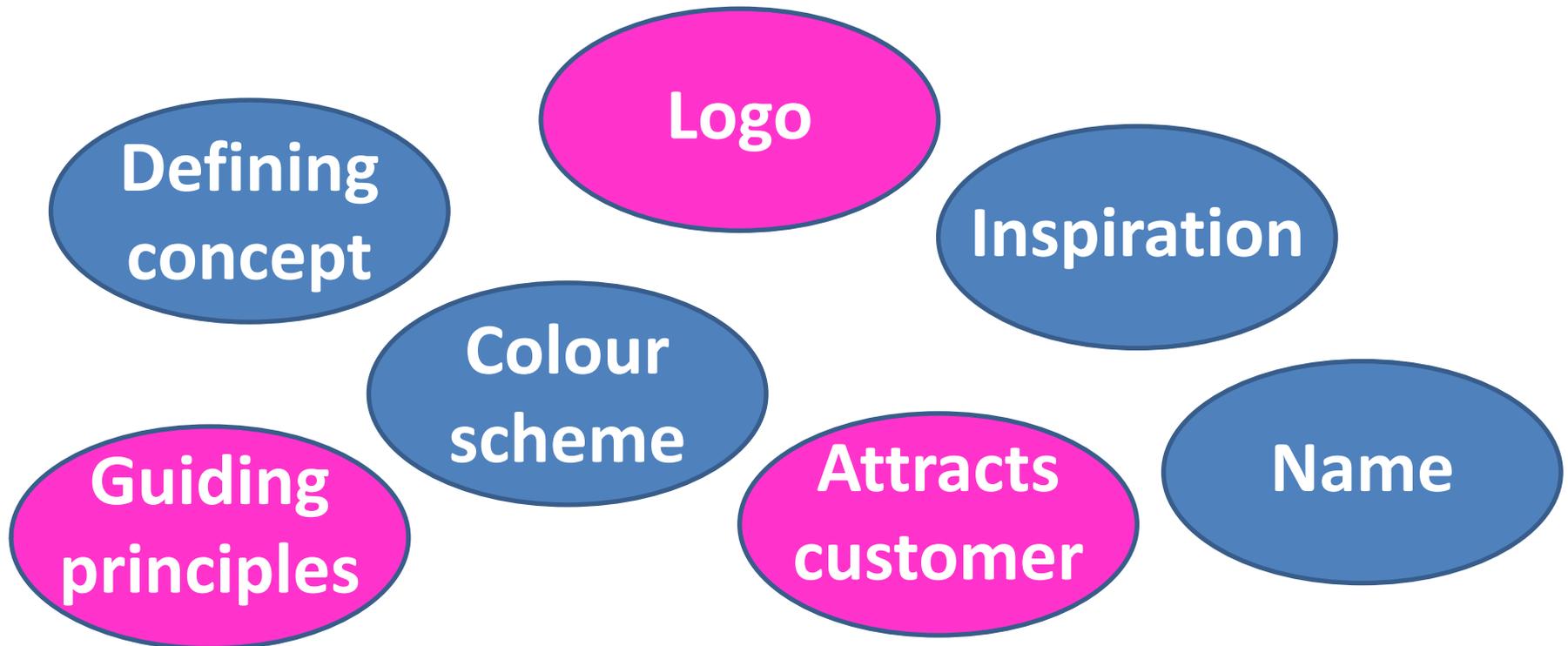
## Objectives:

- Account for the fashion brand as understood by creative & commercial professionals.
- Explore the role & functions of the brand in the fashion industry.

- Interpretivist approach.
- Qualitative data collection.
- Interviews with 13 industry professionals:
  - Fashion designers.
  - Marketing/management professionals.
  - Variety of companies and market sectors.
- Results analysed, compiled and validated.

## Understanding of the brand:

- Varied from simple to sophisticated.



## **The brand for commercial professionals:**

- Accorded with academic definitions.
- Tangible & Intangible dimensions.
- “The look of a business”:
  - Stores, websites, marketing materials.
- Applied marketing terminology:
  - Positioning, image, values, personality.

## **The brand for commercial professionals:**

- Primarily a tool for influencing customer response – promotion & perception.
- No spontaneously mention of design.
- Felt they had an active and powerful role in manipulating the brand.
- Refer to the brand using personal, possessive pronouns: “my/our brand”.

## The brand for creative professionals:

- Had a less specific understanding.
- Applied brand to personal practice:
  - Design, archives, collections.
- Dichotomous view of brand influence:
  - They are influenced by the brand, but...
  - They do not in turn influence the brand.

## **The brand for commercial professionals:**

- Primarily a tool for informing design development and range planning.
- Spontaneously mentioned marketing.
- Felt they had a passive role where they were influenced by brand, not vice-versa.
- Refer to the brand using impersonal terms: “the brand”.

## Proposed definition of the fashion brand:

*The fashion brand is composed of tangible components (including logos, slogans, marketing communications) and intangible components (including positioning, image, personality and values) which are both appealing to the target consumer and inform the development of products.*

## **Role & functions of the brand:**

- Brand perceived as a tool for influencing consumer opinion & driving sales.
- Commercial interviewees regarded the brand purely as a promotional device.
- Creative interviewees regarded the brand as informing their work in a more sophisticated way.

## **Commercial role & functions of the brand:**

- Attract customer attention.
- Build cohesive identity & values.
- Create positive image, status & personality in consumers' minds.
- Compel customer purchase.
- Reassure & reward customers to ensure longer-term loyalty.

## **Commercial role & functions of the brand:**

- Attract customer attention.
- Build cohesive identity & values.
- Create positive image, status & personality in consumers' minds.
- Compel customer purchase.
- Reassure & reward customers to ensure longer-term loyalty.

## **Creative role & functions of the brand:**

- Inspiring the overall look of new products & collections: concept, colours, features.
- Informing the evolution of design concepts: fit, drape, detailing.
- Connecting product design to promotional activities in the market.

## Creative role & functions of the brand:

**CONCEPTUALISATION**

**SAMPLING**

**PRESENTATION**

**Design concept  
inspiration,  
accrued from  
archival  
research and  
brand heritage  
and history**

**Design  
development  
accrued from  
understanding  
of brand's  
established  
qualities.**

**Final  
development  
of products  
and collections  
to connect  
with marketing  
initiatives.**

## Commercial:

- Brand is a tool for promotion.
- We influence the brand via our professional practice.

## Creative:

- Brand is a tool for product design & promotion.
- Our professional practice is influenced by the brand.

## **Definition of the fashion brand:**

*The fashion brand is a concept composed of tangible (including logos, slogans, marketing communications) and intangible components (including positioning, image, personality and values) which serves a function in both influencing the attitude and behaviour of customers, and inspiring and informing the form and function of products.*

## Role & function of the fashion brand:

**Fashion  
designers**

Brand has 'upstream' influence in informing creative decisions of designers employed by the business.

**THE  
FASHION  
BRAND**

Brand has 'downstream' influence in promoting products to consumers, and influencing their attitude and behaviour.

**Fashion  
consumers**