Making the Marque: Tangible Branding in Fashion Product and Retail Design

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Abstract

This paper explores concepts of fashion branding in order to identify six tangible elements of a brand that may be manipulated in order to influence consumer behaviour. These tangible elements are contextualized within the case of the British luxury brand Burberry to show how fashion branding may be influenced by fashion practitioners working in product design, promotional and retailing roles. The critically important role of fashion designers and retail architects in contributing to branding is investigated in some detail using in-depth interviews. The paper emphasises the significance, especially in the contemporary market environment, of creative disciplines such as fashion product and store design in creating brands that are commercially successful.

Keywords

Branding; Product Design; Retail Design; Brand Management

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Introduction

The brand and the practice of branding are recognized within mainstream marketing literature as elements ubiquitous to virtually all successful businesses (Keller & Lehmann 2006). This is not least the case within the fashion apparel marketplace, an environment characterized internationally by fierce competition, short product lifecycles and unpredictable consumer demand (McColl & Moore 2010; Wigley 2011). As a consequence, fashion businesses are recognized as possessing many of the World's most influential, innovative and valuable brands: of Interbrand's Top 100 "Best Global Brands", twelve are owned by businesses selling product ranges comprised by either general apparel or by luxury and sporting clothing and accessories; Louis Vuitton and H&M are each judged as more valuable than globally iconic brands such as Ikea, Volkswagen, Pepsi and Sony (Interbrand 2011); and the logos of Zara, Ralph Lauren, Hugo Boss and Chanel proliferate in shopping streets and malls around the World. From a consumer perspective, fashion brands serve a role announcing our status and desired image to others (Kort et al 2006), while social and media conversations about clothing revolve not around the garment itself, but around the brand to which it is associated by designer identity or retail outlet (Horn & Gruel 1981; Tungate 2008). This clearly implies that, in the minds of many consumers and practitioners, 'fashion' and 'branding' are all but synonymous (Power & Hauge 2008) – as illustrated in Figure 1, a photograph of visual merchandising emphasising the variety and appeal of the brands available within a UK department store.

[*Insert Figure 1 here*]

In light of this, it is perhaps surprising to find that the practical nature of the relationship between fashion and branding has been largely ignored as an area of academic interest. Those studies that have focused on fashion branding have often followed interpretative

precedents set by mainstream marketing and management perspectives. These have, for example, considered fashion brands as the drivers of business diversification (e.g. Wigley et al 2005), as influencers of consumer behaviour (e.g. Mulyanegara & Tsarenko 2009), or investigated their applications within specific market sectors (e.g. Fionda & Moore 2009) and particular channels of distribution (e.g. Rowley 2009). While these (and other) studies are very valuable, their inconsistent and often loose interpretations of the constituents and roles of a brand sometimes obscures their application within the practice of fashion - defined by this Journal's first Editorial as broadly covering the creation, communication, consumption and social, economic and cultural consequences of clothing (Black 2009).

The aim of this paper is to investigate the relationship between fashion and branding from a practical perspective, by exploring fashion practitioners' understanding of the brand concept and how they may incorporate it within their professional practice. After a brief outline of the methods used in research, the paper offers an account of how traditional academic conceptions of 'the brand' may be applied in fashion practice, using the example of Burberry to illustrate. It continues by exploring fashion designers' understanding of the brand before examining how brand identity may be expressed within the design of a fashion brand's key consumer touch-points – the product itself and its primary arena for distribution, the retail store. The paper concludes considering the role of fashion practitioners in assuring the commercial success of 'the brand'.

Research Methodology

The broad scope and poorly-defined nature of the topic area necessitated a wide-ranging and diverse approach to gathering data. To develop a coherent structure for the enquiry, secondary literature was consulted. This consisted of mainstream branding literature, from which a practical interpretation of brand management was developed, with a view to contextualising aspects of fashion practice within this. Further secondary data was found

within the fashion industry media, market analyses and information published by participating brands, primarily to inform the sections describing the tangible branding of Burberry. A variety of primary data collection techniques were used, all qualitative in nature. As a starting point, questionnaires were distributed to fashion designers with a view to understanding their most basic interpretations of the brand and its relative importance in their work. These were followed up with in-depth interviews with designers directly employed or contracted by leading fashion brands as well as independent and more directional labels in order to further explore the designer's relationship with the brand. To explore the application of branding in store design, interviews with a leading retail architect responsible for flagship fashion stores in the UK and USA were completed. As a condition of participation, the identities of all the individuals and their employers were made anonymous. Finally, these insights were used to inform site visits to stores undertaken in London and New York and observational research in the UK market. This overall methodology has precedent in fashion research (e.g. Morgan & Birtwistle 2009; Moore et al 2010) and is appropriate as the aim demands an in-depth exploration of poorly-defined phenomena and professionals' interpretations of them (Strauss & Corbin 1990; Easterby-Smith et al 1991).

Practical approaches to branding

Despite (or possibly because of) the significance of branding within the discipline, the marketing-specific academic literature as a body offers little unanimity as to what exactly constitutes a brand (Kapferer 2004). However, there has long existed a consensus interpreting a brand name as more than simply an identifying label; rather, it is a sophisticated amalgamation of components conveying ideas, attributes and values augmenting those of a simple product (Gardener & Levy 1955). Implicit within this conceptualisation is the idea that a brand consists of both tangible and intangible components, each of which are interdependent and are interpreted cumulatively by

consumers (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley 1998; Keller 2008). The tangible components of the brand include those which are readily apparent in the consumer's observation, purchase or use of the products sold under any brand name – for example its logo and associated slogans or motifs, distinctive details in its design, or the functional qualities that it possesses. The intangible elements are those that are less readily obvious but are none the less perceived – such as its heritage, personality, and market positioning – which drive consumers' psychological responses to, social interpretations of, and ultimately purchase of and loyalty to the brand (Holt 2002; Keller 2008). Summing up this conceptualisation of the brand as possessing tangible and intangible components, Kapferer (1997 p.28) defines the brand as "…a sign – therefore external – whose function is to disclose the hidden qualities of the product which are inaccessible to contact". This definition suggests that a brand's success in the market (in terms of either mass or niche appeal) is due to consumer interpretations of its intangible attributes, while in turn these are symbolised, embodied, and contributed to, by its tangible attributes (Schembri 2009). Thus, for example, consumers don't buy Ralph Lauren products simply for the polo player logo or the product to which it is applied, rather for the psychological and emotional impulses that sight of the logo triggers, and the perceived affiliation to a desirable lifestyle embodied by that logo (Henderson et al 2003; Solomon & Rabolt 2004).

Considering this in the practical context of brand management, it is obvious that tangible components can be created, evolved, and manipulated to reflect whatever image is desired. Equally obviously, intangible components are to a great extent out of the control of brand managers – they can only be hinted at by tangible, or visual, elements with the hope that consumers perceive them as portraying an image analogous to that intended (Hutton 1997; Schmitt & Simonson 1997). Therefore the tangible components of the brand become the practical focus of brand managers and, by consequence, those practitioners responsible for their creation – for example product designers. This practical interpretation of brand management is illustrated in Figure 2.

[*Insert Figure 2 here*]

Tangible brand components and fashion practice

While there is again little consensus within the literature that specifically or definitively identifies tangible brand components, a number of authors (e.g. Bailey & Schechter 1994; Grossman 1994; Henderson et al 2003) have specified those elements of the brand that are most visual. These include the logo and signage associated with the brand, the design, functionality, packaging and labelling of its related products, the visual theme of marketing initiatives used to promote them, and finally the design of points of customer interaction such as websites and retail stores. Within the fashion industry, and interpreted using the wide definition of the term provided in the introduction, all of these activities may arguably constitute an aspect of 'fashion practice'. The example of Burberry, the British luxury fashion brand, is used here to explore the application of tangible brand elements within fashion practice. Burberry is described by its Chief Executive as being "an iconic British luxury brand" (Burberry 2011) characterized by commitment to authenticity rooted in heritage, a democratic approach to the luxury marketplace (presumed to refer to their pricing vis-à-vis competitors and broad customer appeal) and innovation in both its creative and commercial activities (Burberry 2012). According to the Chief Creative Officer Christopher Bailey, key concepts informing these activities include interpreting British culture, climate and heritage in product and store design, making these relevant to a contemporary Global audience, and engaging with consumers on a meaningful and personal basis using digital applications and innovative means of promotion. Recognized as the preeminent contemporary British fashion brand and with a highly recognisable identity and iconography conveying well known values, Burberry is an excellent example for the exploration of tangible brand elements within fashion practice – summarised in Figure 3.

[*Insert Figure 3 here*]

Firstly, the most basic inquiry of Burberry would convey the evident significance of its brand name, logo and signage. These are given greater or lesser prominence depending on where they are applied, but are present throughout the company's products, promotional materials and points of sale. Historically, some inconsistencies have been evident in these; over and above the stylistic evolution of the logo and typeface to reflect changing trends and technologies, prior to 2002 the brand was often styled "Burberry**'s**" (Moore & Birtwistle 2004). Alongside this (or more accurately, underneath it), the text "Established 1856" has appeared and disappeared with little apparent consistency, while the size, exact form and detail of the "Prorsum Knight" logo has evolved over time. However, the fundamentals of the name and logo have remained the same and both are now central to the brand's visual identity – the Prorsum Knight logo is recognized on Burberry's corporate website as a "historic icon" intrinsic and essential to the brand (Burberry PLC 2012). Currently styled in liquid metallic silver on a black background, the logo reflects the confidence and contemporary appeal of a brand which has enjoyed critical acclaim and significant commercial success of late (Leitch 2012). Noted as defining the brand by Burberry PLC (2012) alongside their logo is the "trademark check", the tartan-style arrangement of tan, black white and red stripes that is synonymous with the brand. While this is less apparent than it has been in the past, it continues to be present on both products (notably accessories) and promotional materials.

Branding is also evident on Burberry packaging and labelling. Every product sold has a Burberry swing ticket containing pricing and product information, and a stitched or embroidered Burberry label inside it. Additional on-product packaging such as packets for extra buttons, are printed or embossed with the Burberry logo. Primary packaging (i.e. that supplied at point of manufacture) such as dust covers, plastic wraps and shirt collar inserts are similarly branded. Secondary packaging (i.e. that supplied at point of purchase) such as tissue wraps, carrier bags, stickers and garment carriers all carry branding consistent with the most recent style of logo. This extends to products ordered from the Burberry website,

with them being dispatched to the consumer in Burberry-branded secure packaging and wraps.

Product design is another major arena for the expression of tangible brand components. At the most basic level, this includes inclusion of the logo on the exterior of products. While this is not practiced with as much prominence as other brands (including direct competitors within the luxury market), it is apparent on garments and most particularly accessory products and those sold under the Burberry Sport and Brit sub-brands (see Figure 4). Examples of this range from the fairly obvious – for instance application of a zoomed-up Burberry script on Sport t-shirts – to the more subtle, such as the edited interpretation of the Burberry check on dresses. It is apparent, from studying the Spring/Summer 2012 collections that this most obvious form of on-product branding is most common in the lower-priced and most casual collections (Burberry Sport and Brit) and relatively rare in the higher-priced, more formal and directional collections (Burberry London and Prorsum). This perhaps reflects the experience of the mid 2000s when the company, having established itself as a credible and desirable brand, was the victim of counterfeiters who imitated its most recognisable aspects (notably the check pattern), applied it indiscriminately to inappropriate products, and sold them to consumers who might otherwise not have afforded genuine Burberry products (Bothwell 2005). Since then, Burberry has sought to integrate logos and the check pattern in products in more sophisticated, filtered and subtle ways. In addition, Burberry (2012) proclaims the trench coat as defining their brand. Within the S/S 2012 collection, no less than 36 individual models of trench coat are available for women ranging from £450 to £3,995. These cover a variety of styles, cuts and fabrics and most are available in a variety of colours; however all are consistent in their overall look, conforming to Christopher Bailey's contemporary interpretation of this classic product. It is clear that this iconic product in itself represents something tangibly recognisable in consumers' interpretation of the brand – indeed Burberry is exceptional as a brand in boasting an entry in the Oxford English Dictionary which defines a type of raincoat. Finally, throughout the collections, the Burberry logo is used in the

detailing of products, for example printed in the lining of men's suits or engraved in the edges of coat buttons.

Marketing Communications offer a fourth opportunity for the tangible expression of the brand. This is most superficially evident within advertising, with the Burberry text and Equestrian Knight logo typically appearing overlaid on the images used. As with on-product branding, the use of the logos on advertising appears more subtle than other competing luxury brands. At a more sophisticated level, the setting, styling and editing of the photography used in the advertising announces itself as belonging to Burberry. A 'house style' is evident, with the use of British models, a focus on the details of the products and setting which convey a contemporary interpretation of Britishness whether shot in a studio or on location. Products that are distinctively 'Burberry', such as the trench coat, or accessories integrating the check pattern feature heavily, arguably announcing the brand more immediately than do the relatively subtle logos employed on adverts. Perhaps influenced by the significance of the trench coat, Christopher Bailey is inspired by the ever-present but always-changing dynamic of the British weather in setting the creative direction for the brand and its communications. This is clear when considering Burberry's advertising archive over the past 5 years, with sun, wind and rain clearly influencing several shoots. The integration of this theme within marketing communications conveys distinctive brand values and personality with such power that the best Burberry adverts are recognisable even without their distinctive products and trademarks.

The fifth venue for expressing tangible brand values is in the design of purchase points – either stores or transactional websites – and other properties. Burberry use signage and logos to identify their stores and administrative properties, most obviously in the traditional interpretation of a brand as 'a name above the door'. Iconography and imagery, often linked to the contemporary promotional campaign is also displayed both in windows (alongside product displays) and inside the stores. The architecture of properties is deliberately intended to reflect Burberry's brand credentials also, for example in the selection of North

English stone and wood as aesthetic elements underlining the British heritage. Moore et al (2010) recognized the role of flagship stores as marketing tools as well as points of distribution, and this is endorsed by the example of Burberry's store on East 57th Street, New York. Opened in 2002, the store was designed to express Burberry's heritage in context of the vitality of New York (Madigan 2003). Previously an Escada store, the exterior was completely overhauled, with a new façade announcing Burberry to the city and giving an opportunity to 'choreograph' customers as they shopped the store. The new façade integrates old (caramel-coloured limestone) and new materials (aluminium mesh) to reflect the heritage and dynamism of the brand, arranged in such a way as to be reminiscent of the Burberry check. This added 6 feet to the depth of the building, allowing the creation of an atrium that, on entry, is designed to make customers feel they are entering a World of Burberry. The interior of the store is distinctive, rejecting both 'olde-English' and modern minimalist influences in favour of a style that is reminiscent of contemporary British home interior design and again combines traditional and modern materials (Madigan 2003). Dominated by a 'grand staircase' and topped by a glass roof, again the cues of British heritage and the relationships people have with the weather are expressed. Within the store, the full range of products is available, including a trench tailoring service, allowing customers to truly engage with the brand. Since 2003, Burberry has used stores to express brand credentials around the World, using a variety of distinctive designs within architecture to convey the brand's identity, personality and positioning (see Figure 5). Branding is similarly very apparent within Burberry's website, where again a 'house style' reflecting British heritage with contemporary, cool design is evident. Logos are subtly apparent, but distinction and consistency is created in the use of specific fonts and colours throughout. The innovative and modern nature of the brand is apparent in the on-line shopping experience with integrates still and moving visuals and clear attention to detail as the customer browses, selects and purchases product. This endorses Burberry's status as an acknowledged leader of digital activities within the luxury fashion market (Barrett & Bradshaw

2011). Quite clearly, thanks to customers' direct interaction with them, the retail venues of a fashion brand are a great opportunity to convey brand values.

The final arena for the expression of tangible brand attributes is in product functionality. As distinct from product design, which covers the essentially aesthetic, visual and tactile qualities of the product (i.e. 'how it looks'), product functionality is concerned with its technical performance aspects (i.e. 'how it performs'). While in practical terms the functional element may be more or less closely aligned to product design according to the nature of the brand and its products, in the case of Burberry, two essential functional attributes are clear and distinctive from the purely aesthetic qualities evident in its products: high quality and weatherproofing. Burberry's heritage is founded on products that could endure the harshest treatment in the most inhospitable environments, and so they are committed to excellence in manufacturing. This is exemplified by the trench coat, examples of which are made only in specific factories specialising in the materials and techniques necessary to conform to Burberry's high standards. At the same time, the uncompromising commitment to quality ensures that only the best English, Scottish and Italian fabrics are used in Burberry clothing. Alongside this, the trench represents Burberry's heritage of weatherproofing, further explored by Christopher Bailey with his interest in the dynamic nature of the elements. The trench and its utilitarian role are so concentric to the Burberry identity that its technical features and performance inform other garments, for example in tailoring and the higher-end Prorsum ranges. Consumers therefore appreciate that a Burberry garment, be it a trench coat or a dress, has specific attributes and qualities that distinguish it from other similar garments. Thus developing a functional aspect to the brand's collection is a significant means of expressing brand credentials.

Cumulatively, the brand's name, logo and signage, it packaging and labelling, the design of its products, their marketing communications and points of purchase serve to express brand image, personality, heritage and market position to consumers. However, logic dictates that some elements are more significant than others. While customers consume brands, they

buy products – thus the role of product design, not only in terms of the product's appearance but also with respect to how that appearance may encapsulate or express other tangible brand component, is arguably most significant of all. Meanwhile, notwithstanding the growth of online shopping, the vast majority of consumers (89% in the UK – Mintel 2012) buy fashion products in store. Hence the retail environment becomes especially significant also. The application of branding within these two aspects of fashion practice will be explored in the final sections.

Branding in Fashion Product Design

The above discussion makes clear the potential impact of fashion practitioners – especially those responsible for the creative direction and output of the company – on the appearance, image and success of a brand. This is clearly evident in the senior management structures of many fashion businesses, with previously distinct senior roles such as 'Head Designer' and 'Marketing Director' merging in a 'Creative Director' role responsible not only for leading product design but also styling marketing communications and points of sale. This widened responsibility of senior executives, who usually (but not exclusively) are fashion designers by training, is reflected in less senior designers' understanding of the brand concept – one interviewee acknowledges that a brand is not simply a "business idea", nor is it composed merely of products, rather it is an amalgamation of creative and commercial concepts and artefacts aimed at appealing to a target consumers actual or desired lifestyle. Another interviewee is more specific: "[a brand is] the designs and promotion of the designs that encapsulates the ethos of the company and the customer that is being targeted"; this makes explicit the link between product design, its promotion and its intended purchaser in the minds of fashion designers.

As discussed above, branding may be expressed in fashion design in a variety of ways; in the use of logos and distinctive visual characteristics on garments; in the development of

iconic product or specific features; in product detailing; and in the development of a consistent visual theme, functional or utilitarian quality throughout the product range. Designers were broadly in agreement with this, one stating that her most basic interpretation of branding was "putting a logo on a garment". The application of a logo or brand name to a design took various forms, with the only apparent pattern explaining this being the price point and market segment in which the brands in question participated. For instance, a designer with very wide experience noted that sportswear brands she had worked for encouraged the most obvious use of logos on their products, high-street retailers tended to minimise obvious branding, and designer businesses applied their logos in subtle ways – for example with embroidery or on inconspicuous parts of the garment. This experience was mirrored by another designer who noted that "higher end brands speak more quietly but those lower down the ladder seem to want to shout the brand name more by slapping it on wherever they can". The same was true of different market sectors – one designer noted that menswear and youth products had more visibly apparent branding while products aimed at women and more mature customers tended to have less. Historical changes were noted too, one designer observing that "designer brands in the 1990s seemed to go for big logos on their garments, but most seem to be much more subtle about it now".

All designers agreed that while 'slapping a logo' on a garment was the most simple and common form of on-product branding, those businesses which only took such superficial approaches were unsustainable; "there has to be some substance behind the logo – it has to represent something rather than just be a name or a picture". Another designer shared this view, commenting on the number of consumers and apparently fashion designers who mistook the application of a name to a product as constituting the creation of a brand; "branding *can* involve sticking a logo on [a product]… and when you look at some of the stuff some people buy and even some designers sell you might think its as easy as that – but it's not, for me as a designer *and* as a consumer, a brand has to be more than just a logo." So how else might a brand be expressed in product design? One designer states it may be via

"fabrication, colour, fit, style, referencing classic or authentic details". Another agreed, noting that he had recently been using more traditional fabrics while working for a 'heritage' brand because "when customers see proper tweed, good wool, lovely leather, they're more likely to think they're getting a proper product that is what the adverts say it is". Shape and fit also helped form an impression of the brand: "Everyone says 'I only buy brand X because I know the shape flatters me'… and to some extent maybe that's a coincidence of working from the same blocks and patterns, but a lot of brands deliberately develop specific shapes, silhouettes and structures because they know what their customers want". Another agreed, noting that brands as diverse as Miss Sixty, Zara, Karen Millen and Armani were notable by having distinctive fits and cuts that helped inspire customer loyalty. Similarly, quirky detailing was used by designers to emphasise brand identity. One designer who had designed men's shirts for various UK and European brands noted that "one shirt is like another, but what makes them stand apart are the details. Even if they're just things a customer would only notice when he's wearing it – the cut of the cuffs, the finish to the buttons, the lining or tabs inside the collar – all make him think his shirt is a bit special". Another designer noted that she had worked for a menswear brand that developed a very loyal following thanks to its quirky, vintage-themed styling. Print and pattern were also recognized as forming brand identity. "When you see the Damier pattern, or the brown and tan checkerboard, you immediately recognize LV'", stated one designer. Others agreed, pointing out that designer and luxury brands tended to use this technique often: "…Prada, Gucci, Vuitton, Burberry, they all have a unique print or pattern that might be changed from time to time, like Marc Jacobs did for LV, and obviously that's a way of identifying the brand without really putting a logo on it".

The development of iconic products is identified as also contributing to brand identity. The designer who had worked with a British heritage brand noted this in particular, referencing the popularity over recent years of quilted fabrics in casual jackets: "I don't know if we were clever enough to kick off that trend, but we certainly took advantage of it because although

loads of brands were doing similar types of jacket, we'd done them for years and quite rightly could say ours is 'the real deal' – it's a core part of what our brand had always been about". The brand's association with a specific type of garment and the coincidence of that garment being on trend for a while facilitated the development of brand identity and informed the development of a wider product range. Another designer noted that 'mega' brands like Chanel and Dior often carried a signature product that remained consistent but evolved to reflect prevailing trends. Connected to this, finally, the development of a consistent look or theme to collections also served to endorse the brand. A designer who had worked for a high-quality knitwear brand noted that "although we developed a more fashionable image, and brought in new products and different cuts, it was important for us to keep a similar look throughout the range because we wanted to emphasise the timelessness of the brand – to say it stood for something that wasn't swayed by trends." Another designer showed how all her work heavily referenced the brand's archive: "Of course as creative people we want to come up with new things, but we have to always remember where the brand's come from and what it's about, and try and nurture that – when I think about it, really what my job is all about is taking the brand and everything it means, and finding new ways to interpret and communicate it today."

Another designer agreed with this interpretation of his work: "I work for a brand that has a very rich heritage and is loved by its customers. It's not my place to mess with that, I have to maintain that heritage, and I hope in a little way add to it as time passes." This neatly serves to conclude this section by considering the nature of a fashion designer's role in branding. Fashion, as a creative discipline, in context of the products it creates and society's view of them as 'fashionable', is an ever-evolving and often transient concept; yet history shows that successful brands are stable and have the potential to outlive the lifespan of their creator, employees and customers. Therefore, to greater or lesser extents depending on the history, popularity, and reputation of the brand, designers have to perhaps curb their most creative impulses to conform to the demands of a brand as they play their transitory role in the

narrative of the brand's history. "It is frustrating in some ways [to not be able to design exactly what I'd like], but my creativity isn't diminished, maybe it's just expressed differently", admitted one designer. However, as another noted, "Every fashion designer who has to earn a living has to design to different influences that aren't always their own, be it customer profiles or costs or whatever, whether they're running their own brand or working for someone else. I don't think designing to suit a brand restricts creativity, it just means you have a different set of influences. Perhaps understanding, and being comfortable with [those influences] is what makes a successful brand and a happy designer!"

Branding in Fashion Retail Design

The image and personality of a brand may also be actualised within the environment in which it is sold. This is most apparent within the overall design and construction of the store, and its integration of logos, visual iconography and other clues as to the identity of the brand. The concept of the store being a venue for the realisation of the brand is acknowledged by the architect interviewed, suggesting that brands are selling not just products, but lifestyles, images and aspirational values desired by customers. Therefore, the store is a place for the "transport of desire through the transportation of goods". Furthermore, the store must not only reflect those images and values, but augment them in order to literally inspire customer purchase; "the architectural design concept should reinforce the brand narrative with a complimentary spatial narrative. For us, the operative metaphor is of a theatrical mise-en-scene". Extending this metaphor further, it is apparent that the design of a store as a venue for the realisation of brand values follows three acts, or phases, summarised in figure 6. Each will be considered below.

Firstly, and obviously, when considering how to express the values of the brand within a store design, the architect must be familiar with those values – in the words of the interviewee, he must understand the brand's DNA. At its most basic level, this involves an

appreciation of the brand at a very broad commercial level – e.g. market position, womens- or menswear, product categories – but also at a creative level, for example understanding the brand's use of patterns, draping, fabric cut and so on. Overlaying this is an appreciation of the overriding themes, points of inspiration and heritage evident in the brand's historic collections, individual products and their designers' work;   "Our process is to distill the source material – conversations with the brand's designers and creative directors, their current retail concepts, even their marketing collateral - into conceptual imagery that fuels discussion… so that we begin to fuse program, site, and client with environmental aspects such as light, form, movement, color, and materials." Often this leads the store architect to find inspiration in the design of the brand's products: "In designing the environment for a brand often I'm able to reinterpret characteristics of the fashion designer's garment design, architecturally into the physical structure."   Summing this consultative phase of the process of branding a fashion retail environment, the architect noted his intention is to "become familiar with the essence of the brand and advise what will work spatially and scenographically with the brand's DNA to craft a series of brand and spatial narratives".

Moving onto the practical elements of designing the store, the next phase considers the location and actual architecture of the store. The architect, who has worked on projects throughout Europe, the USA and Asia, emphasised the significance of the geographic location of the store and the corresponding impact of that location's urban landscape, and social and cultural heritage. For instance, he noted that stores in West European cities tend to be more conservative due to the (compared to US and Asian cities) cultural and historic heritage they exist in, New York stores make emphatic statement in keeping with that city's reputation for confidence, and Japanese and Chinese stores tend to reflect ideas of futurism and technology. Also, he noted that it is unusual for an architect to begin with a literally blank canvas – most stores are build within existing buildings, meaning that the major structural features and floorplan cannot be changed. At the same time, especially in European cities, stores are often opened in buildings that thanks to their age or historic significance enjoy

protected status, limiting the changes possible. A good example of this was in the architect's work for a brand wishing to open a store in a historic street in Paris. The façade of the building could not be changed from its classical style which was not compatible with the modern, minimalist and enigmatic qualities of the brand. To overcome this issue, the architect converted the interior, removing interior walls and whole floors to create a space that was slightly discombobulating for the consumer. Together with clever use of lighting and mirrors, this made what appeared externally to be a very conservative store becomes a space very appropriate to the nature of the brand.

The final phase of creating a store to reflect the brand covers the conceptualisation and application of the design. This involves moving from the architecture of the store's structure itself to applying the brand DNA to the specifics of its design detail. Significant among this is the selection of materials that are appropriate to the brand. For example, in designing a New York store, the architect chose stone, wood and metal surfaces that traditionally were not visually compatible because the designer on whose behalf he was working is noted for her distinctive use of contrasting fabrics in her garments. Extending this theme further, the same fashion designer is noted for the drape of her garments and how they emphasise femininity; the architect reflected this by suspending fixtures and lighting from the ceiling, sculpting supporting pillars to be curved, and using translucent fabric scrims instead of solid walls to divide the space. In this phase, the architect also considers practical elements, moving beyond the heritage or image of the brand to regard practicalities such as the product being sold, and who the customer is. A good example of this is in the store he designed in Venice for an Italian fashion brand noted for their high quality leather footwear and accessories; a challenge because the necessarily small store footprint complicated the creation of a luxurious environment. This problem was solved by designing the store to deliberately focus on the brand's key products. Because these are typically quite small, the space was used in an efficient manner, presenting the products truly as works of art within an exclusive gallery environment, and using high quality timber and leather on fixtures and fittings to emphasise

the craftsmanship and quality of the product. This approach was doubly appropriate because the customers shopping in that Venice store were typically Asian and American tourists whose baggage restrictions obliged them to purchase smaller items. At the opposite end of the scale, the architect's physically biggest project was on the Milan flagship of one of the World's most important luxury brands. This involved the transformation of an entire building into a 'Brand Universe' intended to reflect not only the creative aesthetic of the brand, but also the diversity of its product ranges and diffusion brands. This demanded creating within one large space a multitude of related and inter-connected smaller spaces, conforming to the brand's overall marketing architecture of master and diffusion brands. The practical challenge was creating a space that had distinct partitioned sections, although connected by a consistent theme and open enough for customers to traverse between. This was achieved by altering the floors of the existing building, using walkways and staircases that appear to float in space in order to encourage customers to explore, literally, different levels of the brand, while a minimalist aesthetic maintained visual consistency.

By identifying, understanding and expressing the key credentials of the fashion brand in the store environment, it is clear that stores become a crucially important area for the expression of tangible brand elements.   As the interviewed architect noted, "stores have a functional role but only in that they, and the products they display, are in large part a vehicle for transmitting values, for fulfilling the desires and aspirations created by the brand narrative. Why purchase this coat, as opposed to that one, unless you identify with the lifestyle it emblematizes?" As with the fashion designer above, though, he recognized that it is not his role to create those values; rather his work should express them, and extending the theatre metaphor, he likens his role as not the director, but as the stage constructor: "the store design doesn't so much symbolize a brand as embody it. As a theatrical space, it provides a stage upon which the brand narrative is performed."

Conclusion

The paper has shown that though it remains to some extent a 'black art', by focusing on the tangible elements of branding, it is possible to express and manipulate the intangible elements of the brand that influence consumer behaviour. Most specifically, the research has shown that within fashion branding specifically, the role of creative professionals – fashion practitioners – remains significant in forming consumer interpretations of the brand. This is significant because while the current economic environment demands that designers adopt commercial perspectives to their work, the power of their creativity is often overlooked. As one of the fashion designers speculated, perhaps the key to both commercial and creative success is in finding a happy medium between the businesses need for products conforming to a particular brand image and satisfying the designer's own individual creativity by letting them evolve and contribute to that brand image. As the case of Burberry reveals, by allowing designers the opportunity to refresh, re-express and celebrate the historic values of the brand in a contemporary style, the business satisfies both commercial and creative critics. The interviews showed that designers, as fashion practitioners, have a very technical conceptualisation of what a brand is: "A brand is something that sets itself apart from others, something that people choose to buy into for quality and design, for individuality, for the price implications, for its status or for its ethical or lifestyle qualities". This reinforces the significance of adopting a practical approach to branding in every aspect of fashion practice – by focusing on tangible elements of the brand and by letting fashion practitioners express their creativity, a business is most likely to create the intangible brand elements that consumers appreciate. In turn, by creating stores that emphatically express those intangible brand credentials, and reinforce the image created by the products and the marketing initiatives, customers are more likely to invest in purchasing the garments.

Figures

Figure 1 - All About Brands

Tangible Brand Components	Intangible Brand Components	Consumer Responses

• Name, Logo & signage.
• Packaging & labelling.
• Product design.
• Marketing comms.
• Purchase point design.
• Product functionality.
	• Brand image.
	• Brand personality.
	• Brand heritage.
	• Market position.
	• Social status.
		• Emotional responses:
		  • Appeal & desire.
		• Practical responses:
		  • Purchase.
		  • Customer loyalty.
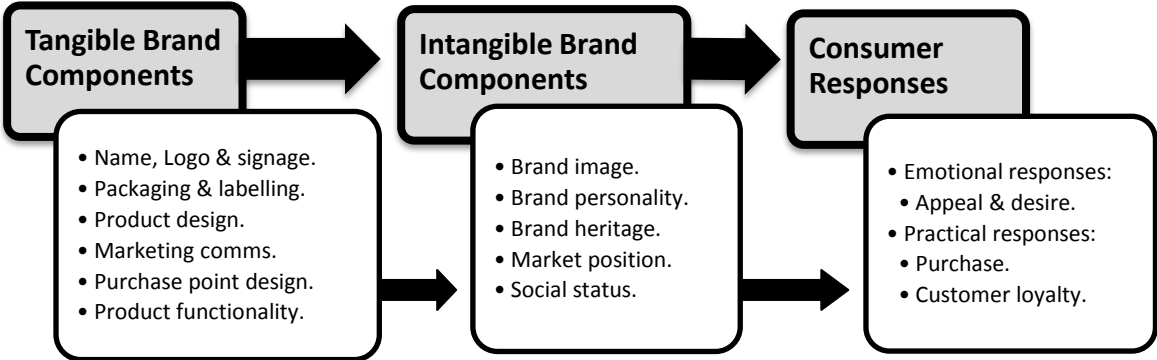
Figure 2 – A Practical Model of Fashion Brand Management

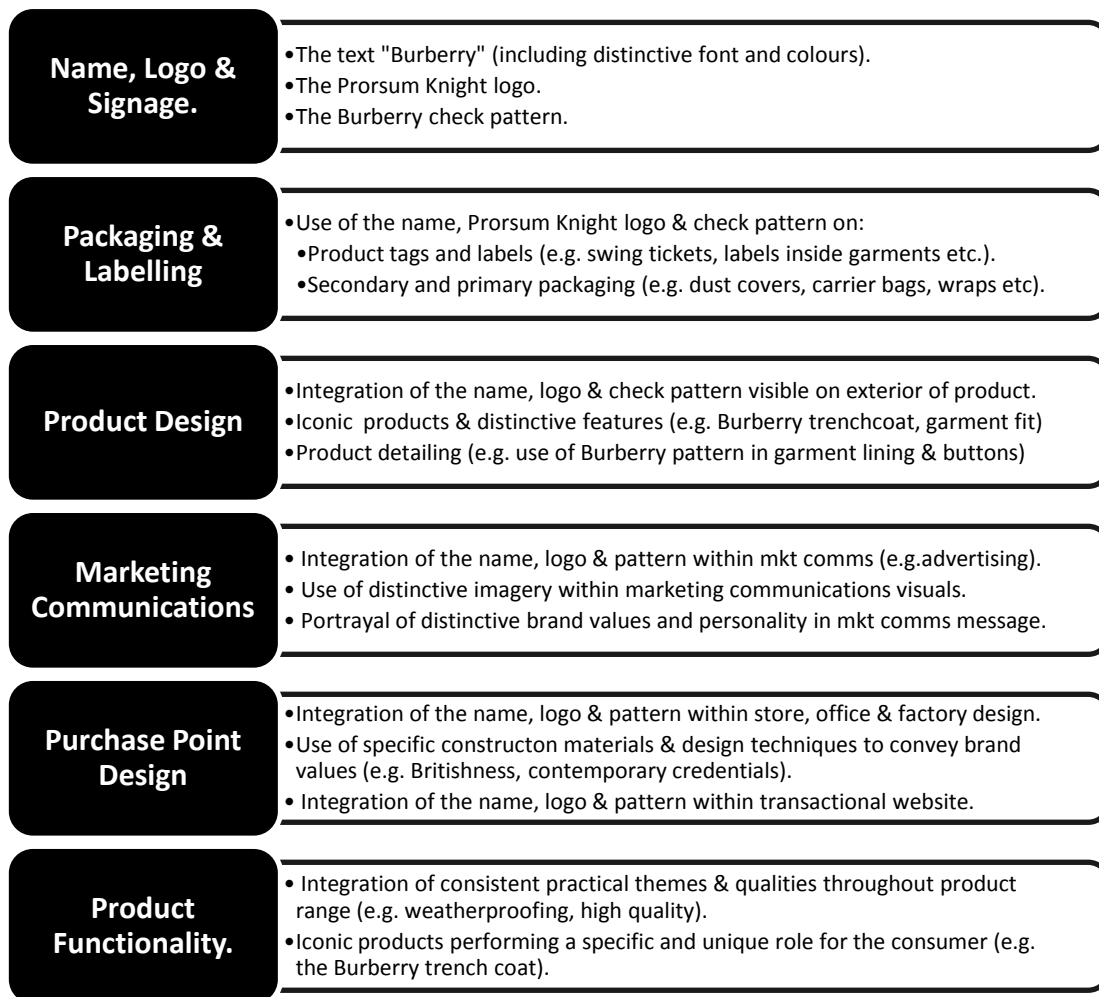| Name, Logo & Signage.	•The text "Burberry" (including distinctive font and colours). •The Prorsum Knight logo. •The Burberry check pattern.

Packaging & Labelling	•Use of the name, Prorsum Knight logo & check pattern on:
	  •Product tags and labels (e.g. swing tickets, labels inside garments etc.).
	  •Secondary and primary packaging (e.g. dust covers, carrier bags, wraps etc).

Product Design	•Integration of the name, logo & check pattern visible on exterior of product. •Iconic products & distinctive features (e.g. Burberry trenchcoat, garment fit) •Product detailing (e.g. use of Burberry pattern in garment lining & buttons)
Marketing Communications	• Integration of the name, logo & pattern within mkt comms (e.g.advertising). • Use of distinctive imagery within marketing communications visuals. • Portrayal of distinctive brand values and personality in mkt comms message.
Purchase Point Design	•Integration of the name, logo & pattern within store, office & factory design. •Use of specific constructon materials & design techniques to convey brand values (e.g. Britishness, contemporary credentials). • Integration of the name, logo & pattern within transactional website.
Product Functionality.	• Integration of consistent practical themes & qualities throughout product range (e.g. weatherproofing, high quality). •Iconic products performing a specific and unique role for the consumer (e.g. the Burberry trench coat).

Figure 3 - Tangible Brand Components – the Case of Burberry

Figure 4 - On-product branding, Burberry SS 2012

Figure 5 - Burberry Stores in (from top clockwise) Beijing, Istanbul and Belgrade.

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┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
│      Brand      │      │   Location and  │      │      Design     │
│  Interpretation │ ──▶  │   Architectural │ ──▶  │ Conceptualisation │
│      Phase      │      │      Phase      │      │     and Store   │
│                 │      │                 │      │ Application Phase │
└─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘
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Figure 6 - Development of a Branded Store Environment

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