Chapter 49
Brand Experiences, Retail Scenarios, and Brand Images in the Fashion Industry

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ABSTRACT

Postmodern consumers experience fashion brands within numerous in-store and out-of-store contexts, and they tend to focus on their holistic experience with the brands across various retail scenarios. In a fashion brand context, the interaction of multiple retail environments greatly affects consumer behavior towards the brands. The objective of this chapter is to provide a review of the main issues related to brand management and customer experience management in a co-creation perspective. By overviewing the literature on brand management, retailing, and consumer behavior, the authors provide relevant insights for academics and practitioners to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the fashion brand experience and fashion brand image.

INTRODUCTION

Although creating superior customer experience seems to be one of the central objectives of today's retail environments, brand experience management has only emerged as a top management priority in the last decade (Interbrand, 2014; Meyer & Schwager, 2007; MSI, 2014-2016; Verhoef et al., 2009). A number of factors have contributed to this trend, but perhaps the most important one is the growing realization that one of the most valuable activities through which firms can enhance customer value is the coordination of multiple experiences across each point of contact between the customer and the brand. In a fashion brand context, where the shopping experience is a significant motivator for purchases, the interaction of multiple retail experiences greatly affects consumer behavior towards the brands (Kim, 2012). Accordingly, brand experiences are created at both ends of the marketing supply chain,

namely brand manufacturers and retailers, that deal with diverse retail strategies and contexts. As will be outlined below, the consistency of fashion brand experiences across different retailers and within diverse retail settings can induce consumers to generate holistic responses and other positive shopping behaviors. Consequently, practitioners and academics have argued that the creation of compelling shopping experiences across multiple environments and along and beyond the entire path-to-purchase is a key challenge for maintaining and reinforcing a certain brand image (Ganesan et al., 2009; Shankar et al., 2011). Driven in part by this intense industry interest, academic researchers have developed fruitful areas for more comprehensive and holistic approaches to customer experience management, generating new perspectives on the integration between branding and retailing principles.

The purpose of this chapter is to review and provide some context for and interpretation of this endeavor. The goal is to highlight what has been learned, from an academic perspective, in the process of studying customer experience management and fashion brands, as well as what gaps still exist. Although emphasis is placed on research published in the last decade, previous noteworthy studies are discussed. More specifically, we concentrate on the interaction between shopping experiences, fashion brands, and contemporary retail scenarios, and we integrate the marketing and the consumer's perspective on consumption experiences. The objective of this chapter is to present an explanation of successful – and unsuccessful – fashion brand experiences across various brand contexts, and to enable brand manufacturers and retailers to view the experience process from a more holistic and harmonious perspective. The authors of the current work will conceptually explore the meaning of fashion brand experience in controlled and less-controlled retail settings and discuss consumer responses to brand and retail strategies from a co-creation viewpoint.

We begin by reviewing the fundamentals of experiential marketing in terms of some conceptual foundations and value co-creation issues. Next, we examine customer experience fundamentals and present the marketing perspective as well as the consumer's sphere of the experience. Third, we discuss branding and retailing challenges in today's business landscape and focus on consumer relationships with brands and the pivotal role of retailers. Fourth, we conceptualize the fashion brand image as well as the retail issues in the formation of fashion brand images. Fifth, we discuss the integration of the two perspectives and suggest how optimal brand strategies can emerge in the fashion industry. Then, we turn to a consideration of brands in the fashion and luxury industry. Finally, the chapter concludes by offering some summary observations and identifying relevant implications for academics and practitioners to form new perspectives on fashion brands in the challenging retail landscape.

EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING FOUNDATIONS

Before considering how brand experience has been conceptualized in the marketing literature, it is useful to first define what experiential marketing is. The experiential perspective of consumption experiences originates from Holbrook and Hirschmann (1982), who proposed the hedonic approach to consumer behavior. In their pioneering work, experiential consumption includes the flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun in which consumer's processes are sub-conscious and private in nature. That is, while consumers may frequently make rational choices during the decision-making process, they are just as frequently driven by emotions because consumption experiences involve contexts, aesthetics, emotions, and symbolic aspects.

A key contribution to experiential marketing comes from the work of Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Schmitt (1999). According to the former, experiential marketing is about taking the essence of a product

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