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Dedicated Follower of Fashion

Secondhand Vintage Fashion, Celebrity Culture and Fashion Svengalis: Strategies for Branding and Development

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10.1 Introduction

The growth of vintage luxury fashion has its origins in the hedonistic inspired time frame of the 1960s, 1965 to be precise. The fashionistas of London's Portobello Road saw a business opportunity to sell retro-inspired secondhand clothes associated with military regalia, striped blazers and related Beatnik fashion paraphernalia, resulting in the birth of vintage fashion. Whilst pre-owned/secondhand clothes have been traded throughout the centuries, the 1960s with its musical backdrop saw an increased growth in vintage apparel, predominately the ownership of the youth generation and in some cases a subconscious

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counter-response to the conservative fashion beliefs of their parents' generation, which was ruled by a conservative fashion order.

The secondhand luxury and vintage fashion market have become increasingly commercialised. Vintage clothing has been popularised through contemporary culture as media and celebrated icons dress in attire that reflects their identity and sense of self. This is illustrated in the take-up of secondhand vintage clothing by popular media stars including television presenters, actors, singers and musicians, with the likes of Julia Roberts, Renee Zellweger, Rihanna, Lily Allen, Taylor Swift and Kirstie Allsopp, all acting as devotees of the vintage fashion genre.

Whilst many consumers attempt to replicate the appearance of their idols, this has subsequently resulted in developing demand for the secondhand clothing market. Indeed, many outlets across the globe focusing specifically on the vintage and secondhand market have seen a growth in both patronage and sales in recent years. Cities and locations that have become synonymous with this market where demand from consumer savvy individuals is high, with emphasis upon the consumption of vintage apparel that is somewhat different yet reassuringly endorsed by the great and the good of stage and screen. We must also not forget how the chronology of time and its relationship with place and fashion has impacted greatly on society, with seminal time zones of the twentieth century acting as timely reminders of opulence, grace and innovation in design. Several key decades of the twentieth century encapsulate this perfectly. Examples include Berlin in the 1930s (art deco and Bauhaus), Paris in the 1950s (Dior), London in the 1960s (Beatles, Twiggy and the mini dress) and New York 1970/80s (disco and studio 54).

The chapter will review how popular culture has positioned secondhand and luxury vintage fashion as a reputable marketplace. In doing so, the chapter will present two case studies. One related to Affleck's Palace, Manchester, and the other Camden Market, London. Both cases illustrate how urban modernity associated with place and the specific locations where secondhand and vintage emporiums are based has reinvigorated those cities. The chapter will identify those strategies that have been successful in establishing these destinations as key providers of secondhand vintage fashion and use this as a platform to rejuvenate and enhance other locations.

10.2 Vintage Luxury Fashion Through Time

From a chronological perspective, history is littered with examples of trade that existed between merchants, trading in garments. A number of noteworthy time frames exist, firstly and during the Roman Empire, both the toga and the tunica were popular within male circles associated with those of status and nobility, and often, these clothes would be made by servants and worn as a symbol of status and social standing and also for practical functionality. During the Middle Ages, clothes merchants engaged in manufacturing and distribution based on a simple import/export model. Many of these merchants used draper's shops to showcase their wares which were predominately purchased by the wealthy of the day. In common with the Roman time frame, clothes possessed a high degree of functionality (i.e. to keep the wearer dry and free from the elements) and at the same time to present the individual as being socially mobile and cash rich. During the seventeenth century, it was not uncommon for landed gentry to use clothes as part payment for their servants' duties, and often, servants would receive secondhand clothes from their master which would be worn by the servant. It can be argued that this marked the development of the *hand me down* market with servants happy to wear clothes that were no longer needed by their master. During the early parts of the twentieth century, pre-owned clothing was distributed through junk shops, often facilitated through immigrant communities. Many of the ragmen in New York during this time frame would have been Jewish and Italian migrants, in some cases fleeing persecution from Europe and settling in North America and finding employment in buying and selling secondhand clothes.

10.3 Contemporary Culture and Vintage Fashion

Changing fashion tastes are bound by popular trends, political changes and cultural shifts in society, and these have all influenced the growth of the vintage fashion market. Firstly, the simple economics of secondhand clothing are plain to see. In times of austerity, people have sought alternative ways of limiting their expenditure on luxury items whilst still seeking a bargain (Ferraro et al. 2016). Though this has not

necessarily been the prime reason for the growth of the vintage secondhand clothing market. Indeed, the rise of low-cost fashion stores such as Primark and supermarket fashion lines have been a substitute for reducing personal fashion expenditure. There has therefore been a cultural shift from the post-war years when flea markets and jumble sales were ever popular in attracting the economically challenged consumer.

Secondly, from an ethical and cultural standpoint, it can be argued that the purchase of secondhand clothing is a niche counterculture in reaction to the system (Fletcher and Tham 2015). It can be viewed as a response to the consumerist and unsustainability of modern life. When exploring the motivations for secondhand purchasing, Ferraro et al. (2016) argue that culturally one of these motivators can be a reaction to the system. A system that comprises consumption, waste and exploitation. The fast fashion phenomenon which is 'characterized by shorter life cycles, quicker response production, faster distribution, more erratic customer preferences and impulsive purchasing' (Choy et al. 2009) has resulted in negative consumerist associations. The disposable nature of fast fashion generates a reaction amongst those who wish to be perceived differently, extolling the virtues of ethical behaviour and anti-capitalism. Indeed, secondhand clothing can be seen as counter to fast fashion where the latest catwalk items are rapidly reproduced for mass-market consumption (McNeill and Moore 2015). Such an approach has been criticised as exploiting developing economies and workers, producing clothing under poor conditions (Clark 2008). Though the irony of wearing secondhand clothing from luxury fashion outlets, which potentially have followed these features, cannot be ignored. Through the acquisition of vintage clothing, Veenstra and Kuipers (2013, p. 356), therefore, state, 'individuals compensate 'dislocation' – caused by a fast-changing society – by invoking the past'.

Thirdly, for the individual, vintage fashion is the creation of identity and self-expression. It becomes a meaning-making process about your beliefs and your identity. As Botticello (2014, p. 112) contends, 'fashion is not about perpetual acquisition of the new, but is instead a continual and processual affirmation of an individual's sense of self as she responds to life's shifts and changes'. In this respect, vintage clothing becomes an expression of a person's individuality (DeLong et al. 2005)—a step away from

the mass production and consumption of homogeneous fashion apparel. The consumption of vintage fashion can actually be a retro step to times, periods and memories that are perceived to be preferable to a person's current existence (Botticello 2014). However, vintage clothing is often mixed with modern fashion to resemble a hybrid look, thus transforming the past into the present and making it new (Botticello 2014). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the vintage fashion market where the modern and kitsch collude. DeLong et al. (2005) propose this as a cultural commodisation, 'involving a cultural shaping in its change in status through a process of withdrawal from one setting and rebirth into another setting' (p. 26). It is also viewed that the actual sale, purchase and consumption of vintage attire play out as a performance in its own right (Peters 2014).

Fourthly, the experience of vintage fashion purchasing can be, in itself, a liberating experience (McRobbie 1989). Rummaging through the different garments looking for items to wear brings a sense of uniqueness and distinctiveness to the shopping encounter. This is contrary to modern consumerism of searching through racks of the same clothing types in high-street stores. The vintage shopping experience becomes 'an addictive and thrilling adventure' (DeLong et al. 2005, p. 24). Indeed, the purchase of vintage clothing becomes highly charged emotionally bringing about a sense of endeavour and achievement with a time that has past. In this respect, the experience of vintage clothes shopping could arguably be viewed as a form of ritualistic behaviour. The notion of collective effervescence (Durkheim 2001) comes into play here, where the binding of shared beliefs, values and opinions (Shilling and Mellor 1998) manifests themselves through the purchase and adorning of vintage fashion.

10.4 Celebrity Culture and Vintage Fashion

The chronology of fashion design and its relationship with music has many reference points, most notably one can view seminal time frames of the mid-twentieth century, notably the 1950s with the evolution of Rock'n'Roll. Of particular interest here was the Teddy Boy movement which evolved and was patronised by young men of the day following a

style of clothing as advocated by the dandies in the Edwardian period, a style which tailors of Savile Row had attempted to reintroduce in Britain post-World War II. Not only did the Teddy Boy style have its own fashion reference points in terms of shoes (crape shoes, aka brothel creepers), hairstyle, jacket, trousers and bootlace tie, but also in some cases created a tribe-like mentality, with young men of the time engaging in violence with non-devotees of the Teddy Boy movement. Whilst there had been many teen/youth groups with their own dress codes in Britain during the nineteenth century, one could argue that the Teddy Boy movement was the first youth tribe/movement to differentiate themselves from other teenagers, of the day. By example, the US film Blackboard Jungle created mayhem when shown in the UK for the first time (Elephant and Castle, south London circa 1956) with teenage Teddy Boy tyrants rioting, slashing seats and causing general anarchy (albeit in a mid-1950s style, probably tame by today's standards). Other youth movements that followed a particular fashion style was the pseudo-academic Beatnik movement that advocated the pleasures of a beat generation of the 1950s to mid-1960s, often caricatured by the black beret and polo neck jumper. The movement was predominately associated with beat poetry, a particular dress sense and the literature works of John Kerouac, whose philosophical output heavily influenced the early works of Bob Dylan and the Beatles. Fischer (2015) notes how The Beatles cleverly interweaved vintage fashion with mainstream pop culture in their representation on the cover of the Sgt Pepper album.

The Mods (modernity) and Rockers of the 1960s continued this fashion tribe mentality, advocating different dress style based on music, the rockers styling black leathers and greased back hair, in contrast with the mods who with their parker coat, Ben Sherman shirts and mopeds (Vespa or Lambretta). Whilst both groups shared a common like of music (clearly not the same sounds), their hatred of one another was clear to see, with regularly fights breaking out between mods and rockers, the seminal time frame of May 1964 saw mods and rockers meeting and fighting in the seaside towns, of Margate, Brighton and Clacton in an attempt to prove their physical superiority and musical prowess (later to be framed in celluloid, in the 1979 film Quadrophenia).

Moving forward in time, the music scenes of punk, new wave and grunge all have associations with vintage clothing wear. The 1980s band

The Smiths were characteristic with selective classic attire, and DeLong et al. (2005) note the vintage clothing styles of alternative grunge bands such as Nirvana and Pearl Jam in the 1990s, which gave impetus to a generation of young fans desiring the same image. Furthermore, vintage fashion associations with popular music cut across genres. Indeed, Fischer (2015) highlights the Grammy-winning rappers Macklemore and Ryan Lewis and their rap song 'Thrift Shop'—a rap song that celebrates the culture of secondhand shopping and vintage clothing.

Through wearing vintage fashion, renowned personalities seek the style of pensioner chic. A notion famously coined by fashion luminary and designer, Wayne Hemmingway (Woods 2002), to describe a counterculture to elitist designer fashion wear. Others such as McRobbie (1988) use the terminology 'anachronistic dressing' (McRobbie 1988 cited from Fischer 2015). Words to describe secondhand clothing such as retro or vintage often provide a linguistic contest behind meaning and association. Though many attach the meaning with recognition of authenticity. Veenstra and Kuipers (2013, p. 362) contend, 'vintage communicates and expresses a longing for an authentic identity that is informed by a sense of nostalgia'. Though this message has to be understood by the audience/receiver viewing the attire (Gregson et al. 2001 in Veenstra and Kuipers 2013).

In this respect, it could be argued that celebrity culture attempts to communicate particular values to its chosen markets. Economically, at a personal level, celebrities may have moved away from needing inexpensive items, but secondhand clothing reflects a meaning, which needs to be communicated to the wider public. Obviously, this can come into conflict when secondhand attire clashes or is not compatible with the message of sponsors or corporate backers.

10.5 Affleck's Palace, Manchester

Affleck's Palace (AP) is located in the Northern Quarter in Manchester, England; the building contains a number of independent retailers who predominately sell secondhand apparel/vintage fashion items. The building itself was originally owned by Affleck & Brown in the 1860s, trading in drapery; with the decline in shopping post-war 1945,

economic trading was problematic and the building was sold to the Debenhams group in 1950. Trading was good during 1960, but with the advent of additional retail outlets in Manchester, the store closed in 1973.

AP opened in 1981, the brainchild of James and Elaine Walsh, the business model offered traders a user-friendly location for selling goods, with affordable rents and appropriate length contracts to entrepreneurs wishing to tip their toes into a new business venture. A hallmark of which was the easy business rent terms, which allowed traders to rent shop space on a weekly basis, with none of the traditional red tape and contractual problems that often face many early career retailers.

Running parallel to AP success and popularity was the early 1990s independent music scene, which cemented AP in the consciousness of the young indie/alternative shopper. The Manchester music scene (AKA Manchester) saw bands associated with the location (in this case Manchester) experience a meteoric rise in fame, on the alternative music scene. The 1990s North West alternative music scene was characterised by low melodic vocals accompanied by bass and simple guitar chord structures. Such a sound became known as the Manchester sound, and with it, a subculture developed based on clothes, image and dance; luminaries such as The Stone Roses, Inspiral Carpets, The Happy Mondays, Northside and The Pelican Feather Jackets were at the vanguard of this musical movement. By associating itself with a particular musical genre and dress sense associated with an urban location, AP place has been cemented itself in musical retail history.

10.6 Camden Markets, London

Camden Markets are based in Camden Town, London. The market represents a collection of stores, bazaars and shops and originated in the early 1970s from a simple crafts market (https://www.camdenmarket.com, 2017). This has since grown to become arguably the largest market in London. The town now hosts markets including Camden Lock, Buck Street and Inverness Street. Teddy Sagi, the founder of Market Tech Holdings, has acquired a number of the sites where the markets are located with plans for redevelopment and change (The Independent 2013). The market is

the fourth largest London attraction with an estimated footfall of 100,000 people (Londontopia 2017).

Camden itself has developed a reputation with its cult music associations. The infamous Dingwalls dance hall housed acts including The Clash, The Sex Pistols and Blonde through to the modern era with bands such as Mumford and Sons and the Foo Fighters (https://www.camdenmarket.com, 2017). The Electric Ballroom on Camden High Street is another venue that epitomises music culture in the town. The venue has a legacy with cult bands including Joy Division, The Smiths and Blur, to name a few, all having performed there.

A number of leading designers began their trade in Camden with, for example, the previously mentioned Wayne Hemingway who started trading vintage fashion there in the 1980s. More recently, branded vintage outlets such as Collectif also began as a stall in Camden. Other vintage outlets including the likes of Modfather's which sells vintage fashion from the mod and skinhead years are also frequented by famous musicians such as the Gallagher brothers and Paul Weller.

The popularity of rag markets in Camden Market has blurred the boundaries between high fashion and street style (Fischer 2015). Indeed, when fused with music, vintage fashion in this context develops cult associations and a legacy of historical memory. This memory is embedded in the heritage of the area resulting in reticence to change in some instances (The Guardian 2016). At various times, vintage fashion and music have collectively, and independently, re-engineered the Camden Marketplace. Davies (2013) notes how Camden went through a decline period during the 1980s before being rejuvenated through the indie music scene in the 1990s.

10.7 Secondhand Vintage Fashion as a Platform to Rejuvenate and Enhance Locations

The retail of secondhand clothing has become global multi-million-dollar business with an established supply chain (Mhango and Niehm 2005). Yet the fashion industry consists predominately of SMEs

(Malem 2008) and nowhere is this more apparent than with vintage fashion retailers. With this in mind, it is not unusual for towns and cities to consider the sale of vintage fashion and merchandise as a means to rejuvenate their locations. The aforementioned case study examples illustrate the synergy between fashion and popular culture and the impact this has had on the image of the place. With the secondhand market being redefined as attractive to consumers (Ferraro et al. 2016), locations should consider a number of strategies for the development of vintage secondhand fashion.

Firstly, the brand equity of the location has to be considered. The extent to which vintage fashion buyers and consumers recognise the location over other places should be considered. Affleck's Palace and Camden Market have developed their brand equity over time, cultivating their stock alongside celebrity culture. They have, over time, developed a strong brand identity associated with music and vintage fashion. However, with both these examples, their development has been organic in style growing from a collection of smaller outlets. The locations have consisted of a hybrid of outlets that have fused a sense of individuality and style. This has what has made them so popular with markets that wish to express the same values. Alongside this, these places have cultivated a music scene that has played hand in hand with the vintage fashion market. Music personalities have visited the outlets associated with the vintage fashion, further developing brand equity in the location.

Secondly, the positioning of the location is of importance. Through the sale of vintage fashion, the location should consider the values it is attempting to express. As has already been mentioned, vintage denotes a higher sense of prestige (Ferraro et al. 2016). This has a knock on effect to the outlet and location where the item is being sold, thus acting as a means of differentiation from other places. Furthermore, Cervellon et al. (2012, p. 970) argue 'eco-consciousness is related to the intention to purchase secondhand pieces through the mediating effect of bargain hunting'. Locations should consider the extent to which an eco-philosophy is part of their overall retail planning strategy and what they wish to communicate to a target market.

Thirdly, the location should be clear about the target markets it is seeking to attract. Targeting consumers who are connected to music and

vintage fashion may require initiatives where live music is also promoted in the location. The power of personality cannot be underestimated. Music personalities act as opinion leaders to others and can drive consumers to the area and the individual outlets. In addition, celebrity culture develops a sense of prestige and credibility to the location that would otherwise be challenging to cultivate. Locations should also consider the motivations and purchasing behaviour of target markets. As nostalgia is believed to be a key factor in the purchase of vintage fashion (Cervellon et al. 2012), outlets may wish to consider making use of radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology and tagging of items to associate memories with the merchandise (Ferraro et al. 2016). These can be further linked to the musical heritage of the area relating vintage apparel to bygone pop culture.

10.8 Conclusion

Whilst the long-term trends associated with fashion reinventing itself over the years and the continual demand by the consumers forever more elaborate fashion concepts, the industry itself is probably being overburdened and challenged by its end-user. For vintage fashion to fully appreciate its self-worth, mass consumers must recognise it not as a quirky alternative to the mainstream, but as an appropriately positioned and respected alternative. Indeed, if we are to view the evolution of fashion and benchmark it against other forms of social evolution, vintage fashion has the potential to eclipse all other forms of fashion genre. Take for example its green, moral and ethical standing that advocates the recycling of clothes that appear to be old hat (pardon the pun) and at the end of their product life cycle, the economic benefits that see additional revenues being created from their sale and the social benefits that society can display in donating such garments to worthwhile causes. Comparisons can be drawn here with the early steps of the green retail movement that saw consumers changing their purchase habits for products whose green credentials advocated a more caring socially responsible mindset/ethical purchase behaviour. For vintage fashion to truly arrive at the catwalk of acceptability, its moral

and ethical characteristics need to be more positively advocated by the great and the good within the social and media collective. In the same way that Morrissey did for bespectacled clad teenage hearing aid wearers of the 1980s, vintage fashion needs a social champion to take it to the next stage of evolution, or will this be its demise; vintage fashion one could argue is a wonderful secret; its style and characteristics are themselves known only to the user/wearer; and its respectability and beauty are in the fact that it is simple, unchanged and not yet fully exploited by those who in society, who might want to make it the mainstream norm. For vintage fashion to become the norm would see its whole social ethos change from one of reuse and rewind to possibly one of exploit and accessories, lets share the secret, as custodians of fashion history, vintage fashion deserves to be shared, albeit in the confines of those who value its creation and love its simplicity and underexposure.

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