Greek Womens' Mentality towards Fashion Brands and the Influence of Print Images

Abstract

This paper presents the findings on the meanings, viewpoints and opinions Greek women have in regards to foreign fashion brands. The focus was on fashion brands being used beyond utilitarian purposes, as a form of projection. A greater and wider knowledge was desired on the effectiveness of print images of fashion brand advertising and communication adopting a symbolic interactionist framework. A greater understanding of how Greek women ‘read’ fashion brands through the images in fashion magazine advertisements was intended. The research included two phases of data collection including semi-structured and open-ended interviews. Through the thematic analysis of data a ‘shared reality’ was found to exist through eight key themes identified. The themes were found to be relevant to three principles of social interactionism: self; meaning; and interaction, identified as ‘pillars’ under which emergent key themes ‘sit’. The research aimed at contributing to a greater understanding of the communication process taking place between Greek women and fashion brands they are exposed to in fashion magazines as was the interpretation of those images. Further, greater knowledge was offered in relation to how Greek women attach labels and categorise fashion brands. Overall, the research contributes to a wider understanding of the general mentality Greek women have towards fashion brands and how these women associate meanings to fashion brands.

Key words: Greek, brands, symbolism, meaning, views.
Introduction

A greater and more in-depth understanding was intended regarding the symbolic meanings Greek women attach to foreign fashion brands, their views and opinions towards them. Additionally, the discovery of those meanings being socially shaped, shared and created was intended. The interpretation of print images in advertisements placed in fashion magazines was of interest in order to achieve a greater understanding of the communication process between Greek women and fashion brands through those images.

Since fashion is a ‘cultural product’ (Moeran, 2006; 728) it was of interest to explore in-depth its importance in a more symbolic manner. Women are more involved with fashion clothing (Hourigan & Bougoure, 2012) and fashion was of interest in terms of how it is used by Greek women as research has shown clothes act in a symbolic manner through which identity is gained (Feinberg et al, 1992). Meanings can vary according to social context (Noesjirwan & Crawford, 1982).

Greek women displayed to place a ‘social value’ on fashion brands in regards to social standing, identity and ‘worth’ within society, displaying the influence of ‘value’ on behaviour (O’Cass, 2004).

Literature Review

Brands have symbolic meanings (Dichter, 1985; Phillips, 2009) and through ‘fashionable’ items consumers may feel part of a group, fulfilling social needs (Waide, 1987) and visibility of fashion clothing acts as a form of expression (Petrenko, 2015).

Attachment of symbolic meaning to brands creates a brand personality serving a symbolic function (Klink & Athaide, 2011) with goods used symbolically (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Leigh & Gabel, 1992). By exploring individuals’ self-concept, marketers have attempted to identify and discover purchasing decisions through brand symbolism attachment (Jamal & Goode, 2001). Clothes can act to serve emotional enhancement (Evans 1989) and purchasing choices are a form of expression, a key factor in the perceptions and judgement of others (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004). Clothes act as a code (McCracken & Roth, 1989) where individuals create messages (Auty & Elliot, 1998) with brands acting as ‘labels’, publicly displayed (Feinberg et al, 1992) used in order to make presences distinguishable (Piamphongsant & Mandhachitara, 2008) as symbolic consumption serves a communication function (Banister & Hogg, 2004).
Luxury brands are an example of brands used to display brand ownership while reflecting prestige (Husic & Cicic, 2009) as they are perceived to have symbolic value (Tynan et al., 2009) and display ‘power and status’ (Leibenstein, 1950). Individuals attempt in gaining identity by investing in them (Belk 1988). Luxury brands offer greater understanding on symbolic functions (Fionda & Moore, 2009; Dichter, 1960, 1985; Phillips, 2009) and the importance of store and service environment in shopping experience (Fionda & Moore, 2009) which shifts from utilitarian purposes into a lifestyle created by the brand (Kim & Ko, 2012).

‘Louis Vuitton’ for instance enables buyers to differentiate themselves (Hume & Mills, 2013) and symbolically extend the ‘self’ (Belk, 1988) as the visibility of the brand can affect perception in goods with cultural context playing a role in brand interpretation and consumer decision making process (Wilcox et al., 2008).

Purchasing counterfeit product aim at exhibiting ability to afford brands individuals cannot, aiming at displaying they belong to a specific social group or even as an extension of the ‘self’ (Eisend and Schuchert- Guler 2006).

Products may be purchased to 'show off' (Debicka, 2000; Elliot & Leonard, 2004) and hedonic consumption theories propose purchasing behaviour is linked to the symbolic meanings of the items through the ‘fantasies that products could arouse and/or fulfil’ (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982: 93).

Brand awareness can affect purchasing decisions and increase a brand’s market performance (Huang & Sarigollu, 2012) as brand status affects purchasing attitudes (Thanh, 2012).

Various brand characteristics are combined in creating unique brand associations (Phillips et al, 2014), differentiate products and create consumer identification (Schembri, 2009) from competitors. Brand personality serves a symbolic function (Klink & Athaide, 2011) as its characteristics directly influence its relationship with its owner (Fennis & Pruyn, 2007). Brand differentiation affects the way brands are perceived, e.g.: suitable for different individuals (Jiang et al, 2014) as brands attempt to create an image around themselves and create meanings for consumers (Elliot & Leonard, 2004; Elliot & Wattanasuan, 1998; Klein, 2005).

Marketing ‘as a body of knowledge, has always been concerned with understanding relationships between suppliers and customers’ (Veloutssou et al, 2002:433) creating a need to consider the implications involved within this communication process.

The Greek market is relatively small but found to have the ‘highest proportion of luxury branded items’ worldwide (Nielsen, 2008, cited in Perry
& Kyriakaki, 2014). The size and economic state of the country is out of harmony as luxury brand consumption is high. Research on Greek consumers’ perception of foreign fashion brands is minimal compared to the British market and is neglected in consumer identity studies compared to America (Karanika & Hogg, 2010).

Greece is influenced by the UK and USA (Hatzithomas et al, 2009) through great media exposure and Greek consumers prefer expensive foreign fashion brands over Greek ones displaying willingness towards their purchase (Riefler et al, 2012) as brands in fashion magazines are considered to 'always be in fashion' (Kamenidou et al, 2007).

Advertising’s primary concern is to 'match' brands to consumers (Cianfrone et al, 2006) although more complex processes are involved than simply targeting naïve consumers into buying items they do not need (Davis et al, 1991). The purpose of advertising is to gain a personality for the brand promoted (Meenaghan 1995) and increase brand awareness (Heckler et al, 2014) through the images created and developed (Meenaghan, 1995). Advertising aims at creating needs, promote the ‘ideal’ or ‘norm’ in lifestyle and physical appearance (Olson, 1995) by associating products with certain characteristics (e.g.; perfume to physical attractiveness). This has greatly been criticised as to create illusions and unrealistic beauty types (Meng & Pan, 2012) and sell values (Kilbourne, 2000).

Since culture is a strong determinant within a society (Debicka, 2000) advertisers often have to localise campaign messages (Seitz & Johar, 1993) as advertising acts as an education. Through it consumers are socialised and prepared (Petit and Zakon 1962) through the brand images created and developed (Meenaghan, 1995) and the meanings related to fashion (Auty & Elliot, 1998). Magazines have to align their images and values of brands to those of the brands they advertise and since fashion is concerned with new concepts, empirical research is common in such studies (Evans, 1989).

Experiences gained in magazine involvement may affect reactions to advertising (Malthouse et al, 2007) as consumers associated themselves with the products (Dichter, 1949). Images affect consumer loyalty in products like jeans (Wood, 2004) as they are considered a reflection of the consumer’s perceptions of brands (Ross & Harradine, 2010).

**Conceptual Framework**

Figure 1 presents the conceptual thinking, identifying the determinants perceived to shape the meanings, viewpoints and opinions of fashion magazine
advertising via a process of consumer interpretation. The framework derived from past research.

**Figure 1. The process of consumer interpretation of fashion brand magazine advertising**

Methodology

A qualitative methodological approach was adopted using a symbolic interactionist approach. The view of individuals experiencing constant adaptation to a social world (Jeon, 2004), made it a suitable lens for comprehending and expanding knowledge on Greek women in relation to foreign fashion brands. The approach contributes to the greater understanding of meaning attachment (Rahman, 2013) to fashion and the ‘world’ (Fine, 1993) constructed through interaction (Jussim, 1991).
Methods

The effectiveness of the questions and interview style in a pilot study, the research included two phases:

1) Phase One: 20 semi-structured interviews of 20-40 year old Greek women living in Athens, using a purposive sample with a snowball technique.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Type of questions</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Demographic</td>
<td>To identify any patterns</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Warm up</td>
<td>Identify the relationship between Greek women and fashion magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Used to discover the interactions with fashion magazines and their content</td>
<td>To gain more detailed accounts of views on fashion magazine advertisements and how they are ‘read’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Used to discover the participants’ views on fashion brands, their meaning and the way they are advertised in fashion magazines.</td>
<td>To gain more information on the meanings and symbolisms attached to advertised brands discovering which are shared.</td>
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</table>
| 5    | Using 20 fashion brands randomly picked from various Vogue issues (Greek edition) asking for each:  

Do you know it? What women wear it? How would you characterise a woman wearing this brand?

|                                                                 | Gain a more detailed, in depth account of specific symbolic attachments to foreign fashion brands and discover patterns in those meanings. |
The Thomas (2006) framework was used in order to ‘make sense’ of the vast amount of data collected. It was considered further data would provide an opportunity to illuminate on the influences of fashion magazines and discover how images within their advertisements are ‘read’. This intended to discover possible gaps in the gathered data in relation to the research aim. The more detailed, in-depth accounts of participants, where they would ‘tell the story’ behind their views, offering a better understanding on the background accountable for the symbolic meanings they attach to foreign fashion brands. Lastly, it was intended to discovering whether the ‘hints’ provided in Phase One were pertinent enough to be ‘key’ issues and develop a better understanding of how print images in advertisements are ‘read’.

2) Phase Two: 10 open-ended interviews, 30-35 year old Greek women living in Athens. As age in Phase One, did not appear be a determinant, the mean age was chosen using purposive sampling using a snowball technique.

Table 2. Phase Two interview design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Purpose of questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>To discover participants’ relationship to brands and dress style aiming at eliciting their views on brands and influences on their dress choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>To discover how print images in advertisements are ‘read’ using six anonymised advertisements from Vogue, Elle and Glamour (Greek editions), randomly picked, asking participants for each: ‘how do you feel? What is the essence that it brings out? What do you think it advertises? What brand do you think it is? What is the message you think this ad is trying to give? Reveal brand: ‘does your view of the specific advertisement change?’</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>To identify possible patterns through demographic questions</td>
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The Thomas (2006) framework was used again and upon completion, the findings from both phases were compared. The close study of the transcripts demonstrated patterns forming in a quite ‘vivid’ manner where the frequency of common responses resulted in the identification of key themes and their association to self, meaning and interaction.
Findings

Self, meaning and interaction, important principles in symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) were found highly relevant to the research, acting as 'pillars', accommodating the key themes identified. Table 3 presents the pillars and key themes relevant to them, all interrelated to each other.

Table 3. Key Themes and the Three Pillars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key theme</th>
<th>Pillars</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brains as symbols of self and socioeconomic status</td>
<td>X  X  X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body image and weight</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of the term 'brand' and its role in projection</td>
<td>X  X  X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared brand symbolism and brand copies</td>
<td>X  X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared viewpoints</td>
<td>X  X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising as a means of brand communication and its influences</td>
<td>x  X  X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared brand meaning, categorisation and coding</td>
<td>x  X  X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style influences</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
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The Three Pillars

1) Self

'Self', was found to be important as self-image play’s a big part in the way fashion brands and their advertisements are understood and evaluated. The ‘self’ is important in how Greek women understand, place and position themselves and others within their social group. Self-image can be associated to how fashion advertisements are ‘read’ and are related to studies on the ‘accepted’ or ‘ideal’, promoted by advertising.

Symbolic interactionist ideas on the social construction of reality are related in regards to how participants perceived their own and other women’s bodies, influenced by fashion advertising images.
2) **Meaning**

A shared understanding exists in the definition of 'brand' and fashion brand meanings, which differ according to the brand. Brand symbolism appears important when wearing fashion brands as brands are linked to certain symbolic meanings, overall linked to higher socioeconomic status.

3) **Interaction**

Shared viewpoints are born through social interaction, interaction with print images in advertisements and interaction with fashion brands. A rich amount of data emerged in regards to the role of interaction in sharing a 'reality' related to brand meanings, categorisation and coding of fashion brands and their wearers.

Advertising acts as a means of communication and influence and style is influenced through social 'norms', concepts of the 'accepted' and 'appropriateness' when dressing up, displaying a command of social conduct and social standards of the 'acceptable' or 'appropriate'.

*The Key Themes:*

**Brands as Symbols of Self and Socioeconomic Status**

A sense of social fulfilment is gained through fashion brands suggesting brands act as social tools, offering or inferring social status. Specific symbolic meanings are attached to specific fashion brands commonly perceiving specific brands to be associated to certain individuals reflecting a certain socioeconomic status or profession, e.g.: 'X' brand for a doctor, lawyer and 'upper class'. This supports the notion of consumption being a result of status or means to portray status (O’Cass & Frost, 2002).

Even so, it was acknowledged individuals can overspend on credit cards for brands they cannot afford and with minor exceptions, fashion brand wearers were seen to do so in order to show off, attract attention and display their socioeconomic status and social dimensions.

Luxury or expensive brands were expressed to display 'good taste' or 'superiority' in comparison to cheaper ones as 'you get what you pay for' with a tendency in believing such brands influence employment prospects:

‘instantly the other person looks and says ‘he has money’ and it influences them a lot’
Branded fashion items were commonly seen as attractive or tasteful, while non-branded items were not. Foreign fashion brands were considered to have better quality than Greek. An awareness and shared knowledge of certain fashion brands was apparent, e.g.: ‘Louis Vuitton’, frequently mentioned to refer to expensive, quality brands.

Shared and common viewpoints suggest social interaction influences meaning creation and attachment to brands. This is displayed in the common references of how others see brands and how society has taught them to understand fashion brands. Although women wearing fashion brands were perceived negatively, participants acknowledged they do so in order to project a certain image understanding they do so to gain status, although supporting they should not have to do this.

Dress style for different occasions might hold implications for 'acceptable' spending on fashion items as certain brands were perceived suitable for specific social situations:

‘I try to dress youthfully on the one hand but appropriately for each occasion I attend, where I am, with whom’.

Although no specific brands were mentioned to be associated with lower socio-economic classes, cheaper fashion brands were not mentioned when talking about 'brands' and socio-economic status:

‘You can’t always follow fashion and when you aren’t in that upper, higher class, and are lower to middle, you step back’.

Specific language and words were used to attach meanings to brands and connotations of words emerged as a way of sharing meaning in relation to fashion. A tendency to speak as outsiders was apparent when commenting on fashion trends, excluding themselves as being affected.

Body Image and Weight

Weight appeared to be a big issue for Greek women determining dress choice, style and self-value in terms of size, rather than health:

‘when I lose weight it (dress style) does change. I feel more comfortable, wear more colours, I may buy a dress, a skirt, that I think may suit me, while when I’m heavier, I don’t feel like shopping’
'A piece of clothing cannot be worn by someone who’s 50kg and another whose 90kg' [Interviewer]: Why? ‘It loses its beauty’.

Advertising was expressed to promote ‘role models’ where Greek women try to look like the models and overall views were overwhelmingly negative. Occasionally, the wider social impacts were mentioned, supporting shops sell clothes for slimmer women, of an ‘accepted’ style promoted by the fashion industry. The fashion industry and advertisements were seen to have negative effects as:

‘It doesn’t take into account the average Greek woman because the average Greek woman isn’t 1.90cm and 45kg – no way!

A ‘Replay’ advertisement (Phase Two) used, displayed how weight was expressed in many different ways but all related to the model’s figure comparing it to theirs. It is demonstrated at this point, how fashion advertisement images can make women feel self-conscious as models appeared to prompt participants’ self-reflection.

Participants raised the issue of women dwelling on the possible negative aspects of her figure, weight or size if her perception of her body shape fails to resemble the models.

Participants believed the advertisement attempted to create links between the product and the image of the wearer:

‘Put on these jeans and look like that’

suggesting the intended message aimed at creating a desire to try to look like the model linking fashion items and female identity (concept of ‘femininity’):

‘because the jeans are skinny, they bring out femininity’ (Participant10).

‘Brand’ And Its Role In Projection

Language plays an important part, displayed in how ‘brand’ has a specific, shared meaning, referring to ‘eponyma’ clothes, (known, expensive or luxury brands) with only 2 participants asking for clarification. The findings support the relevance of symbolic interactionism by the similar and common use of the term, displaying the importance of language and how it is shared. Language is important in effective communication within social groups and references to certain brands reinforced the meaning of the term.
Brands were seen to act as social tools used to 'show off' and 'project'.

‘Louis Vuitton’ was frequently mentioned to be a brand purchased in order to stand out in their social group as brand ownership in general was identified to infer status or success:

‘Inside me, I know it doesn’t mean anything, but we all want to have a known brand in our wardrobe’.

Responses such as this, suggest internal psychological conflicts within the participant. Although admitting ‘inside’ her the item does not mean anything at the same time desires a known brand in her collection, a view clashing with a previous response of brands bought only with a purpose to ‘get noticed’.

Brands act as social tools purely for social or psychological reasons, perceived to be purchased for social projection. The importance of brand symbolism was highlighted frequently, relating to the brand's utility and functional value. Greek women understand others based on their brand choices as fashion brands act as markers of the wearer’s socioeconomic status with an apparent tendency to perceive higher socioeconomic status positive and aspirational with fashion brands also a tool in assessing or 'reading' socioeconomic status.

A fashion brand can be a force, strong enough, to create conflict between personal feelings and consumption patterns and wearing brands was expressed to be a result of:

‘...placed in our minds that we'll look better, be better’.

Branded items were implied to have meanings to others if they generate positive or admirable attention with similar sentiments associating fashion brands and status and brands being status symbols. Women purchasing brands they cannot afford were seen as: ‘pretentious’, aiming at displaying a certain economic status, seen to purchase brands for symbolic rather than utilitarian purposes, self-expression and fulfilment of symbolic needs (Bhat & Reddy, 1998) through the brand’s meaning. Language used in relation to the term 'style' was frequently used to clearly it refers to their personal style they wanted to project, a term different to dress style.
Shared Brand Symbolism and Brand Copies

Meanings and symbolism are attached to fashion brands with the belief the brand name rather than the actual product sells, displayed particularly when referring to handbags. Brand visibility was considered important as:

‘If there was no label on the bag they would never buy it’

Brands act as markers of status, most vividly displayed in the view of shared understanding of brand meaning and symbolism of brand copies. Very strong views were expressed on what fake brands represent to them, commonly using negative terms and attitudes towards their wearers. Even in cases the copy was identical or unnoticeable to the original brand, it was perceived to relate to lower status and taste, unacceptable to wear even if the wearer belonged to the socioeconomic group initially thought to wear the original.

Wearing fakes was partly objected to as it confused ‘reading’ the wearer’s social status. A copy was seen incapable of living up to the associations of genuine brands (‘quality’ and ‘good’). Wearing them was seen as an ‘illegitimate’ way through which wearers place themselves on specific social categories, a pretentious attitude and attempt to appear something unreflective of reality. Wearers were perceived as ‘fake’, even ‘impostors’, creating misconceptions and projecting inauthentic images of their socioeconomic status (associated to Eisend & Schuchert-Guler 2006). Complex views on the relationship between fashion style and brands appeared as participants expressed individuals do not need to spend a lot of money to dress smartly (and were indifferent to spending a lot of money to wear brands) but would not buy a copy as it is fake and others could find out. Genuine fashion brands were expressed positively, considered ‘good’ and chosen to wear on special occasions.

A clear display on the importance of projection in social interaction was displayed in responses such as:

‘It would bother me if they told me. Of course, if I had bought it, I would be aware of it, but still I would mind… so I avoid doing so’.

The participant was more worried of ‘getting caught’ wearing copies rather wearing them.

Overall, social interaction was discovered to be important for the ‘self’ and the way Greek women understand themselves through it:
'A copy it will show... visually and ...ok... in my mind. Even if it doesn’t show I will know it’s a copy’.

Even when others could not tell, in her mind, copies represented something quite negative, suggesting deeper issues to those of quality. Such issues appeared to originate from the participants’ environment with certain views as a result of social interaction, which might reflect how beliefs have been shaped by others:

‘If I decide to buy something, e.g.: ‘Louis Vuitton’, I’ll buy the original. Yes, I’ll spend half my salary on it but, if not, I’m not going to buy something fake! I don’t want to show off something that isn’t authentic’.

Issues around authenticity and the ‘self’ were discovered by the frequent use of ‘show off’, proposing an intentional attempt of status display, implying a conscious process of self-projection. Participants repeatedly expressed Greek women use fashion brands to display what they are or their socioeconomic status. Although ‘show off’ was used in a negative tone when speaking of others, a tendency to use the same term to explain their intention in purchasing brands was used. ‘Showing off’, displayed high relevance in relation to projection, even though participants often denying their desire to 'show off' themselves. This was contradictory to their apparent consumption and views towards fashion brands, linked to beliefs of fashion brands able to make statements. Genuine brands are important in projecting status with purchasing motivated solely in displaying possessions to others.

Copies were seen as an attempt to appear something unreflective. Participants failed to realise (or acknowledge) spending money they haven’t got on a item, does indeed display the same behaviour they criticise as the item is not truly 'affordable' to them. They therefore act in a similar manner to the one they criticise as ‘fake’, attempting to appear something unreflective. When the participant above was probed, admitted she was doing so, expanding:

‘but the person seeing you doesn’t know you have spent half your salary’

suggesting a greater interest in how Greek women project themselves to others than being true to their personal values (e.g.: being a fake is negative).
Shared Viewpoints

Shared viewpoints and understanding of ‘reality’ exist, regarding fashion brands and their worth with a general mentality concerning brands and their wearers. The frequency of similar, identical or synonymous terms in responses revealed a specific mentality towards fashion brands and a shared interpretation system used in 'filtering' brands. This was apparent when describing women who might wear different brands (Phase One). 'Gucci' and 'Armani' for example, displayed high levels of consensus in the descriptors attached to them, suggesting shared thinking, language and strength in brand association and meaning.

Media appeared to have a strong influence although perceived by participants to have only a general one. They failed to realise (or admit) the level to which they were affected, suggesting they could be affected subconsciously, failing to realise they belong to the group they criticise. Meanings are attached to advertisements through the use of the same language often using specific vocabulary, displayed in ‘good’ or ‘nice’ used in a similar manner when referring to brands. These terms were interpreted in the same way, displaying common attitudes e.g.: frequently using ‘psonio’.

Common language supports the idea of language being a form of communication in social interaction, responsible for creating definitions and understanding the ‘self’, others and objects. This was apparent by the descriptors used and attached to fashion brands and the vivid similarities identified in views relating to brand wearers.

Socially-shared symbolisms of fashion brands and the use of ‘fashionable’ items in order to fulfil social needs were discovered as brands and wearers were labelled and categorised in a specific manner. They expressed to do this on a conscious level as wearing 'X' fashion brand is intentionally chosen to projects something to others. Brands were perceived to act as symbols providing hints on the wearer’s socioeconomic status associating fashion brands to wealth.

Advertising as a Means of Brand Communication and its Influences

Fashion advertising influences brand choice and the models within them, were seen to make individuals crave the clothes they wear and promote certain lifestyles and body shapes. Participants acknowledged that advertising has negative effects as it brainwashes, but at the same time expressed fashion brands are important to Greek women, although they themselves were not keen on fashion brands.
Participants expressed the Greek culture and society to be filled with individuals obsessed with fashion brands as it is an important part in a Greek woman’s life. Contradictions were highly noticeable throughout, as the importance of brands in the participants’ life displayed in their attitudes, appeared to be the same as those they criticised. This was commonly displayed in the participants’ references to women wearing brands as: ‘psonares’ and perceiving brands negatively, but when a participant was asked about ‘Burberry’ (Phase One), she smiled, softened the tone of her voice replying: 'my favourite'. This suggests ability to distinguish and differentiate between brands and could be argued that brand knowledge is required in order to have a favourite brand.

Phase Two, offered a deeper understanding on the ‘reading’ of fashion brands, revealing the common use of words when describing advertisements. Even when there was a lack of overall consensus, there was a visible level of agreement in connotations. In the ‘Monsoon’ advertisement used, participants overall failed to understanding what brand was being advertised (even from those who had purchased it in the past), an issue regarding effectiveness levels in the communication between brands and consumers. The shared views expressed towards the brands and advertisement, were commonly negative for similar reasons, with the advertisement commonly seen unsuitable. This displayed a faulty communication process between the brand and the consumer:

‘Don’t think it is a brand for the Greek audience...,
... ‘the colours are not bright’.

Participants failed to match the advertisement to the fashion brand image with a confusion appeared towards what was being advertised.

A ‘Miss Sixty’ advertisement, also displayed shared perceptions quite vividly, with high levels of positive feedback. The brand was perceived positively in Phase One (Part 5) as was the advertisement (Phase Two prior to revealing the brand). The brand was commonly described as: ‘youthful’ with high levels of awareness and the advertisement appeared to effectively communicate with the consumer through the apparent shared views of participants when guessing correctly what was being advertised.

Other advertisements such as ‘UGG’, displayed a difficulty in guessing the price range of the item advertised, commonly expressed price could range from very cheap to very expensive, failing to recognise the brand. Only upon revealing the brand participants were able to make a guess on the price, displaying how items alone do not have symbolic meanings and only when the
brand is known an attempt in attaching a price is made. A tendency was
displayed in how shared views regarding pricing cannot be effectively provided
by the advertisement alone, proposing brands in advertisements are ‘read’ in
combination to participants processing brand names, symbolism and meaning,
and their own experiences. All of these factors serve different purposes but
work together when ‘reading’ the brand, resulting in the formation of brand
perceptions which influence the level of effectiveness in brand communication
regarding consumption choice.

A ‘Replay’ jeans advertisement used, also displayed failing or mistaking
brand identification as all participants replied instinctively, almost reflex-like,
‘Diesel’ upon seeing the advertisement, before being asked. This displayed
something made them associate the image to ‘Diesel’ and upon revealing the
brand, participants expressed that all jeans’ brands are the same, without
clarifying their immediate response. This raises issues of brand differentiation
and level of difficulty in distinguishing between brands of certain fashion
items.

Participants commonly stated they did not particularly purchase brands
although they appeared to have exceptional high levels of brand awareness
considering brands they knew to be of greater quality to those they did not.
Specific advertisement images were linked to specific lifestyles and views
towards wearers projecting status through brands seemed to influence
advertisement interpretation. The 'Louis Vuitton' advertisement, displayed how
views appeared to exclusively reflect the ‘reading’ of fashion brands as tools
for projecting socioeconomic status. This was due to the essence of luxury and
wealth expressed to be experienced and the relevance of self in interpreting the
advertisement:

‘it refers to the type of kind of rich women the type...rich more high
society.....
...refers to a really specific audience, a classic rich woman from the
suburbs’.

The advertisement was perceived to belong to a ‘good’ brand (expensive
and of high quality). When guessing the brand, brands such as 'Chanel' were
mentioned displaying a categorisation process where brands are grouped
together into similar categories. 'Ralph Lauren' for example, was described and
discussed in the same manner and context, categorized similarly to 'Louis
Vuitton' seen as: ‘classy’, ‘elegant’ and ‘sophisticated’. This displayed shared
views and opinions towards the symbolic meanings of certain brands and their
advertisements as even when failing to guess correctly, the ‘Ralph Lauren’
advertisement was expressed to not belong to a brand like ‘Replay’ but to a fashion house.

Although advertisements were perceived to ‘brainwash’, the images within them were taken seriously and while fashion media exposes images of thin women, participants did not seem to relate how they could be influenced. Instead, they distanced themselves and spoke of other women being affected. Overall participants appeared to be affected more when exposed to advertisements of consumable and disposable goods e.g.: make-up, as it was seen more easily accessible compared to clothes (in effort and affordability). Power of advertising over purchasing decisions was displayed as Greek women are open to persuasion from print advertising as it is perceived to be more persuasive in making them go and see the product advertised, as it often offers more product information. Participants admitted to purchasing or going to see an item after exposed to its advertisement at some point:

'I see a new foundation 'L’Oréal’ has brought out, and I’ll say, oh, this according to its presentation and projection covers my needs so let’s go and buy it'....

Media influences fashion brand recognition, subconsciously in some instances, as it was clearly reported that brand advertising influences consumers:

‘placing it in my head as a known brand, so I recognise it when...not all brands but some I can recognise, let’s say, with my eyes closed by seeing an item or logo or just a shape...or a colour, so it refers me to the brand..' 

References of 'good' and 'bad' in advertising, brings forward issues on perceptions regarding the acceptability or appropriateness of products which are perceived through advertising.

Shared Brand Meaning, Categorisation and Coding

Attachment of symbolic meaning to brands and the brand coding process are inter-linked. ‘Coding’ is a system, resulting from the shared views held towards the meaning of ‘brand’ and the common meanings attached to fashion brands. Codes enable effective communication in interaction providing a clear, shared understanding and use of terminology deriving from the language and context used when referring to brands.

The shared views, perceptions, understanding and identification Greek women have of others when wearing specific fashion brands, reflect how the
coding system functions and emerges. This system is used to differentiate between the symbolic meanings of fashion brands and their wearers, and effectively communicate when interacting as effective interaction is an outcome of shared language associated with fashion brand meaning.

The ‘codes’ serve various purposes such as facilitate the effective communication and inform why Greek women use a categorisation process. This became clear in how ‘age’ slightly affects brand awareness (a couple of cases) and does not appear to have any specific influence on perception or the descriptors attached to brands. Identical or synonymous terms were used to describe specific fashion brands and the fashion industry, commonly linking high price to quality. Once again, participants contradicted themselves:

‘by wearing them women have self-confidence to approach someone or could be pretentious’...‘...the older I get, the more I want to buy something good if I can’ (‘good’ meaning expensive).

Strong views and obvious knowledge of fashion brands were displayed further, as participants (Phase One) were instantly able to articulate opinions about them, with few exceptions. Although the 20 brands used were foreign, brand awareness levels were so high, some were commonly thought to be Greek! Voicing perceptions was effortless, displayed in the attachment of symbolic meaning to fashion brands and the ‘coding process’ shared which leads to brands and wearers being categorised.

Coding portrays a shared ‘reality’ through which mutual understanding is developed and acts as a means of communication in brand and wearer categorisation, facilitated by the ‘codes’ created. Wearers were categorised into different typologies and there was a tendency to categorize brands by various criteria, as references to specific brands (without being asked) were offered as examples of specific situations.

Certain social situations and surroundings were considered factors in certain brands being the ‘norm’ for everyday use, as environment in upbringing or work was seen to influence individuals. Reasons for wearing brands were connected to different types of women, age groups and socio-economic status:

‘in high class it is compulsory (to wear foreign brands), in middle class they may like them and in the lower class because they want to project’.

Women wearing brands believed to have ‘economic flexibility’ and were placed in a different group to non-brand wearers. Symbolisms attached to individuals wearing particular brands were mentioned but was also emphasised that brands do not necessarily reveal the actual socioeconomic status due to using credit cards or wearing copies. Brands tended to be grouped in relation
to: their target groups, prestige and socioeconomic status, sex appeal and femininity versus 'conservative' and masculine.

The same or similar terms (expressions of mentally-held 'codes') were used to describe wearers and brands, e.g.: ‘Burberry’ was commonly seen as: ‘elegant’ with different categories (not mutually exclusive) of fashion brand wearers.

When different brands were described in a similar manner, it suggests participants placed them under the same category e.g.: 'X' brand is like 'Y' brand, 'they are in the same category'.

Style Influences

Style was talked about in two ways: its creation and projection as a personalised style and the way they dress. Style was expressed to be wearing clothes which suited them and felt comfortable in, physically and mentally. Although friends, family and work were expressed to not influence clothing choice, participants acknowledged they could not dress as they wished at work or special events when asked. Time and a place acts as a determinant for certain dress style, depending on the situation, with a shared understanding apparent in what is 'appropriate' or dressing appropriately. This is an indicator of how dress sense is influenced by environment and social factors and not solely based on personal taste or personality.

Weight and body image was also displayed to influence dress style but could not be explored in depth due to acknowledged potential sensitive ethical issues. Thin bodies were considered better for dressing up as clothes look better on thin bodies and weight ‘ideals’ and ‘norms’ appeared to be important. Weight determined most of the participants’ purchasing choices which depended on what ‘suits’ them, failing to define the criteria in deciding this. However, some individuals spontaneously referred to how their weight has affected their style:

'I have been influenced by pregnancy, it changed my body a lot and can’t yet control it. I can’t find the rhythms I once had of my body and this annoys me a little and because of that I don’t want to see it in the mirror and therefore I wear longer clothes, more baggy top’.

Style was also associated to money, associating fashion brands to socioeconomic status. Although participants stated that in general are not influenced by others and have their own style, it was suggested there to be potential influences, mainly external such as society and social conventions; peer groups; and advertising which did indeed influence them.
Discussion

Symbolic interactionism as a lens assisted, rather than ‘shaped’ the findings. Kamenidou et al. (2007) contributed to the research focus and the research can be seen to build on Kamenidou et al. (2007) and towards Greek women’s understanding of foreign fashion brands. This gains a more in-depth knowledge of opinions held and the effectiveness of fashion advertising.

The findings were found to be relevant to literature and theory not initially considered such as Goffman (1959), particularly in understanding notions of ‘acceptable’ and ‘norm’ in dressing accordingly and the socially constructed ‘reality’ to fashion brands with a common understanding regarding suitability to according in relation situations. ‘Coding’ and categorising emerged as a relevant issue by the labelling of brands and wearers with a common understanding in regards to how Greek women ‘presented’ themselves in different social situations.

Figure 1 was revisited as it was displayed it could be expanded upon. Specifically, greater and more detailed understanding was gained regarding the process consumers go through in order to interpret images exposed to in print advertisements within fashion magazines. The interviews provided clues to the existence of a process shown to be far more complex and socially-defined than the simple sense-making initially considered (Figure 1) based on 'hunches' and past researchers. Figure 6 presents the proposed process individuals go through emerging from the findings with the new addition in bold letters.
The stimulus plays a part in a more complicated process than create brand awareness or act as a means of information as initially considered. It is linked to the reader’s familiarity levels with an advertisement of specific, named brands and brands categorised as ‘similar’ within a choice set of brands. Additionally, it influences individuals through the images it projects, acting as a ‘code’ transmitter. Images act in various ways through which brands are communicated offering great information such as brand identity. It influences at a similar level to ‘internal’ and ‘external’ influences but as a concept is placed on its own, as it follows marketing strategies and is part of a communication process planned between the product or service and the consumer. It attempts effective communication regardless or independent of
the influences and is a separate type of influence as it is not socially or
individually-controlled. Although it could be debated to be an external
influence, it is not socially created, as its outcome is and in the context of the
research, it is perceived to be a means of communication Greek women are
exposed to.

**The Influences**

The influences are considered instrumental in how fashion brands are
‘read’, acting as the first stage participants go through/face. They inform
individuals by exposing them to images where messages within fashion brands
and media are received. Both influences have an impact, following initial
exposure to fashion brands, shaping the ‘reading’ of the stimulus. The
influences are the starting point, where all of the information is achieved.
Whether this is created through the social group, self-perception or experience,
they are all influential in their own unique way and combined, affect the way
fashion brands are ‘read’ or understood.

**External Influences**

Social interaction and interaction with advertising images influence how
fashion brands are understood and ‘read’ through advertising practices.
Through social interaction, individuals achieve a sense of acceptability of
fashion brands and concepts of ‘norm’, ‘ideal’ and shared reality in general is
discovered regarding fashion brands, shaping shared understanding.
Understanding such social norms impacts fashion brand perception while
the stimulus shapes norms and ideals, in the same way those are created
through interaction. The social ‘norms’ created through interaction and the
‘stimulus’ are equally important, and although the processes differ, their effects
are equally significant as the stimulus has a relatively strong influence. This is
displayed particularly in weight and body shape issues, revealed by the thin
‘ideal’ in female body shape, considered to be promoted by fashion advertising
which significantly impacts what is considered attractive or beautiful, in
relation to this medium.

The key themes support the notion of interaction and images acting as
external influences, although initially not expected to have such significance in
shaping fashion brand meaning or weight being a focal point in relation to the
models in fashion advertising. Size was revealed to be an issue concerning
body image, e.g., thinness of the model and weight being linked to ‘thinness’.
An overall attitude exists with weight determining dress choice as there is a
shared understanding of being unable to wear what they liked because of their weight. This is relevant to how social values and norms play a part in how body shape and image is understood, related to literature on ethical issues, associated to advertised images targeting women and the negative effects advertising has, by creating ideals of beauty.

**Internal Influences**

Internal influences displayed to be determinants in self-image, meaning and familiarity. They were considered internal influences as they emerged from self-perception, as Greek women evaluate themselves by comparing what they look like to what they ‘should’ look. They value themselves in terms of their self-image and its ‘acceptability’ within their social group (e.g.: weight, size and body image). Although acceptability of the social group is considered an external influence, self-image was perceived in relation to how Greek women see themselves and how that influences a shared ‘reality’ in their society.

Participants distanced themselves from their social group supporting their self-image not being influenced by external factors, although shown they were indeed influenced and not subjective in how they ‘see’ themselves and their self-image. Internal factors influence Greek women when attaching meanings to fashion brands but are less significant than external influences in regards to the aim of the research. Weight and body image play a greater role than initially considered in influencing views in terms of dressing up and media influences which stem from fashion advertisements in magazines.

The way their body looks is of greater importance to Greek women than the suitability of an item in regards to their age, as weight and body image affects dress style and purchasing decisions. They wear certain clothes only when slimmer, as certain types of clothes were thought to look better on ‘thin’ bodies with a common understanding of clothes looking better and being more suitable for thin rather than fit bodies. Participants were only interested in being thin and none was concerned about being healthy or fit. This can be related to symbolic interactionism and the shared meanings and symbolism which are created through social interaction while constructing concepts of the accepted, ‘ideal’ and attractive body type. Also, self-description can be related to how the stimulus and social interaction affects individuals. Self-image is linked to projection and reflection displayed in the notion Greek women have, that in order to be accepted or desired within their social group, a certain body type or image is mandatory, including societal acceptance.

Advertising alone displayed to be more influential in reinforcing existing brand knowledge rather than create knowledge for inexperienced brands. This
was apparent when participants openly compared and contrasted advertisements (Phase Two) to their experiences and familiarity with the named brands, with a tendency to 'reject' advertisements when 'mismatching' them to the actual brand.

‘Reading’ The Fashion Brand

Individuals ‘read’ fashion brands and this stage acts as a way of decoding information offered in the stimulus. The influences and images contribute to how individuals make sense of brands and decode the information exposed to, in order to form views, opinions and meanings. Readers interpret information about fashion brands which can be seen relevant to literature on advertising creating ‘values’ (e.g.: Meenaghan, 1995). This is seen 'in action' in the reactions to the advertisements (Phase Two) as participants offered the clues they used when attempting to guess the advertised brand, its projected message and suitability to them, revealing how cultural meanings stem from the individual’s world (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998) and how consumers are ‘socialised’ (Petit & Zakon, 1962) through this.

Meaning Attachment

The stimulus and influences contribute in creating meanings, developed in the process of understanding fashion brands and the ways social meaning is attached to them. The influences affect the process in various ways and through meaning attachment, Greek women understand a brand’s social status, power and social utility. This can be linked to symbolic interactionism and studies on the symbolic meanings of brands (e.g.: Phillips, 2009) and the fulfilment of symbolic needs (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). Creation of brand identity is not carried out here, but is completed in the stimulus, shaping brand identity and the external influences affecting identity. Interaction creates shared understanding of foreign fashion brands and their meaning. Consistency in shared meanings exists in the general meaning of fashion brands and in very specific ideas and mentality of specific brands (linked to Piamphongsant & Mandhachitara, 2008). Brands act as a non-verbal language, through which individuals can be understood and consumers feel part of a society while fulfilling social needs (Waide, 1987).

With respect to the specific symbolic meanings of foreign fashion brands, consumers go through a stage creating ‘codes’ in order to categorise fashion brands according to their meanings.
Categorisation and Coding

Fashion brands are categorised in relation to the symbolic meaning attached to them, considered in relation to the overall mentality, understanding or perceptions of them. Certain words were adopted in categorising while discussing fashion brands. The words were used as ‘codes’ in communication with brands and wearers ‘labelled’ or discriminated against (relevant to Blummer, 1969 and Elliot & Leonard, 2004). This can build on a greater understanding on the symbolic meanings attached to brands and their use as ‘social tools’ as fashion brands are categorised in terms of ‘value’ and ‘power’.

A process which pre-exists, results in the ‘coding’, categorisation and placement of fashion brands in specific categories depending on various factors.

Coding and categorising are inter-related, with ‘codes’ acting as specific symbolic meanings and words attached to brands, assisting the brands’ placement in specific categories. This is commonly done in relation to the brands’ suitability to individuals of a specific socioeconomic status. Brands and their wearers are placed in specific groups by the same criteria, providing support for studies such as Laroche et al (1986). The ‘codes’ are related to the meanings attached to fashion brands and the associations made in perceiving different fashion brands similarly and placing them in the same category. Fashion brands are seen to be used in order to project (via their symbolic meanings) serving purposes other than utilitarian, supporting their role as social tools. This relates to hedonic and symbolic consumption as brands do act in such a manner.

Greek women displayed two types of projection: intentional, through which they attempt to show something to others (regardless of it being reflective of current socioeconomic status) and reflective, which enables an understanding of the wearers’ socioeconomic status. These findings can relate to Goffman’s (1959) views on stereotyping against individuals due to their appearance and dress style to depend on different social situations. This was seen vividly in the present research and although Goffman’s writings date back to the 1950’s, his stance on individuals adapting themselves accordingly to what they want to present themselves as, is relevant to the contemporary Greek society. Projection is a key theme, as Greek women appeared to present their socioeconomic status or identify others’.

Goffman’s notion of ‘performers’, ‘moulded and modified to fit into the understanding and expectations of society’ (Goffman, 1959:44) can relate to the shared understanding of fashion brands and their wearers in terms of ‘suitability’ of self-presentation in specific occasions by wearing specific
brands. Goffman’s proposition on ‘material wealth’ associated to social class as materials act as status symbols, can be seen highly relevant. This is displayed in the tendency of Greek women in expressing this view (in relation to fashion brands), identifying the wearers’ socioeconomic status through the brands worn.

Meanings act as communication ‘codes’, resulting in a categorisation process. The creation and attachment of symbolisms to fashion brands is displayed, to a great extent and more importantly meanings are used as labels which are placed on fashion brands and their wearers. The labels which act as ‘codes’, used for effective communication, as these ‘codes’ fundamentally represent a brand’s unique symbolic meaning, how these meanings are shared, and their use as a key tool in effective communication in social interaction. Mead’s (1934) theory of projection can relate to the findings. The findings can strengthen the symbolic interactionist approach in regards to how individuals understand themselves, others and objects (namely fashion brands) through interaction and the creation of symbolisms through language. Fashion brand ‘coding’ proposes the importance of language as a means of communication and the shared reality within the coding process, suggests a need in labelling both fashion brands and their wearer in explicit terms.

Utility comes second for Greek women as they commonly perceive expensive brands as ‘good’, a common notion when evaluating an item’s worth, insinuating fashion brands must be of good quality because they are expensive.

Certain fashion brands were attached to certain meaning which others were not, which supports the idea of a categorisation process of fashion brands and wearers. Most significantly, the relation of the findings to symbolic interactionism are discovered, displayed in the attachment of symbolisms to fashion brands lending support to the use of the methodology and methods chosen.

Formation of Views and Opinions

The attachment of symbolic meanings to fashion brands leads to a creation of ‘codes’ acting as a ‘labelling’ system. This is demonstrated in how Greek women need to label fashion brands and their wearers, in order to make sense of, and position them within their social group. The Labels which act as ‘codes’, enable efficient communication through shared language, (commonly non-verbal) and use of the same words and context.

The meanings, labels and ‘codes’ are then used categories brands, acting as a component in forming views and opinions towards fashion brands and
their wearer which can be related to symbolic interactionist theory of fashion acting as language (Blumer, 1969) through which Greek women communicate non-verbally. Additionally, it is vividly demonstrated, how symbolic interactionism (as a framework), assists in gaining a wider understanding of the interaction between consumers and fashion brands in the way labels are attached to fashion brands. Brand differentiation and categorisation are indicators of how Greek women distinguish between fashion brands and label them.

This process occurs in various ways involving a more complex process, including many determinants when categorising and ‘coding’ due to the meanings attached which result from a complex thinking process, influenced by social interaction and the stimulus. The process exists in the way fashion brands are perceived (of high quality or not) and is also a result of a mutual and common shared symbolic meaning attached to fashion brands.

Categorisation mainly concerns factors such as price, intention to project quality, prestige and suitability to socioeconomic status and profession (e.g. a lawyer needs to dress smartly) relating to Goffman’s (1959: 40) identical example. These findings are suggested to build on the idea of dressing ‘accordingly’ depending on the social situation. Furthermore, categorisation which takes place in interaction, depends on the brands worn, as through it wearers can be understood, identified, perceived and described. Greek women ‘read’ both the fashion brands and the wearers (also proposed by Elliot and Leonard 2004 and Kamenidou et al 2007).

The categorisation process appears to exist due to the stimulus and influences, all of which impact individuals in various ways. The influences are responsible for individuals’ perceptions of fashion brands, contributing to the formation of symbolic meanings of brands and wearers. This is followed by a brand categorisation placement through labelling and coding resulting to the use of fashion brands as projection tools. This displays how brands are used to project either intentionally or reflectively by Greek women.

**Outcome: Mind-Sets towards Fashion Brands**

This ‘stage’ is the outcome of the previous ‘stages’. Greater knowledge on the overall mentality of Greek women towards foreign fashion brands and the way it is formed can be offered. The results of the previous ‘stages’ can be displayed, which are the general views and opinions of Greek women and the shared reality that exists.

A socially-created culture exists around foreign fashion brands, displayed in the similar mind-set towards fashion brands and frequent references to what
others think, suggesting the contribution of interaction in forming a socially shared view. A specific culture is created where a certain mind-set and attitude towards fashion brands exists and the relationships created between individuals and brands, relevant to consumerism and the meanings attached to fashion brands by consumers. Hedonic and symbolic brand consumptions is apparent with ‘brand’ referring to expensive, known and luxury fashion brands. A social culture created, differing from the traditional culture or religious values, where an understanding of fashion brand meaning is shared. Brand community research (e.g.: Schembri, 2009) regarding the building of social and cultural relationships can be seen relevant to the culture created by Greek women, as it is suggested the culture around fashion brands inevitably affects brand consumption.

Lastly, this ‘stage’ offers further exploration of the Kamenidou et al (2007) findings, builds on the greater understanding of Greek women in terms of why and how they perceive and feel about foreign fashion brands.

Conclusion

The value of the research contributes towards a better understanding of the Greek female consumer, building on existing research in regards to the more effective communication of foreign fashion brands through print fashion magazine advertisements. Overall, a specific culture and ‘reality’ exists in regards to foreign fashion brands and their wearers with fashion brands acting as a language, commonly, non-verbal.

‘Brand’ is used to refer to expensive, known and luxury fashion brands with specific symbolic meanings attached to fashion brands, displaying the importance of language within a society. Brands are considered to act as social tools and means for intentional projection as well as being a reflection of the wearer’s actual state. Greek women commonly contradicted themselves appearing to have double standards, as they appeared to adopt the same behaviour towards fashion brands as the one they criticise others for. The specific and common words and terms used and the symbolic meanings attached to fashion brands, are a form of communication through which fashion brands are understood. This displayed how fashion brands serve social situations as it was expressed fashion brands matter to the individual’s social group.

A specific mentality and mind-set exists towards foreign fashion brands and their wearers, with fashion brands associated to wealthy women of a certain socioeconomic status. Brands are seen to serve social situations as they matter to the individual’s social group and even when negative feelings were displayed towards, a consensus in views was present. Counterfeit products were seen to be of inferior quality, commonly seeing their wearers as ‘fake’
and pretentious as they are an attempt to appear something that is unreflective of the wearer’s socio-economic status.

Greek women’s relationship to fashion magazines relates to social factors and social interaction, making further contribution on fashion brand and fashion brand perception research of Greek women. Advertising is perceived to set standards and was displayed to influence purchasing decisions significantly.

Weight was found to be a key determinant for dress style, purchasing decisions and perception of self-image. This provides a greater understanding on how print fashion images are ‘read’ building on existing research on the effects of images in fashion advertising.

It is suggested that consumers go through process which affects and influences their perceptions of fashion brands, wearers and images within print fashion advertising. A number of ‘stages’ are involved in this process were individuals are exposed to various influences which result in forming a view, meanings and opinions towards fashion brands.

References


