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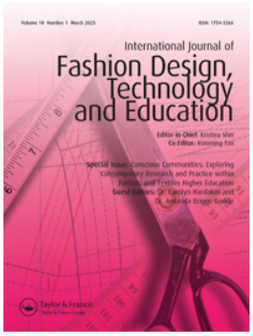

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Immersive innovations for the communication of heritage, handcraft and sustainability

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ABSTRACT

Textile and fashion brands convey core values through marketing, and in slow-fashion heritage brands this often includes skilled craftsmanship, authenticity, sustainability, and provenance. As industry digitalisation continues, brands are employing immersive technologies – virtual (VR) or augmented (AR) reality – however there is scarce evidence of these being used to communicate craftsmanship or provenance. To explore this potential, survey participants were shown immersive and traditional marketing content and perceptions of brand image were sought. The immersive content elicited new brand associations compared with the traditional content, which may be desirable if targeting a younger or more fashion-forward demographic. However, the immersive content was less effective at inspiring participants to make a purchase, with many participants overwhelmed by the virtual environment. The research concludes that effective immersive content should incorporate a streamlined representation of brand identity and core values, utilising an accessible platform while the adoption of VR headsets remains limited.

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Immersive technologies; heritage fashion; brand image; fashion marketing; brand identity

1. Introduction

Textile and fashion brands build brand identities founded on their core values and they seek to communicate these values in a coherent way through their various marketing channels. Technological innovations and industry digitalisation continue to provide fresh ways to connect with customers in digital environments, including through social media interactions (Godey et al., 2016), games, apps, and other platforms, bringing brands and their products into the digital lives of their customers (Choi, Ko, & Kim, 2016; Wilson, Macleod, & Hogarth, 2021). Through these communications and interactions, brands aim to resonate with their existing customer base and seek to connect with new customers to inspire purchases and build brand loyalty.

Building a strong brand identity is key to developing enduring relationships with customers (Scussel & Demo, 2019) and models such as Kapferer's (2012) Brand Identity Prism help brands to understand and communicate their identity effectively. Representing brand identity as a hexagonal model, it features six facets: *physique* (the physical aspects of the brand such as shape and colour of their products or a flagship product); *personality* (the character of the brand and the way in which it speaks about its products); *culture* (the ideological underpinnings of the brand); *relationship* (the way the brand delivers services and relates to its customers); *reflection* (how the customer is reflected in the brand); and *self-image* (the inner attitude customers have towards the brand) (Kapferer, 2012, p. 99). Taken together, the prism (see Figure 1) facets represent a picture of who the brand is, and coherent communication of this identity is the hallmark of effective marketing.

Additionally, customers' attitudes towards a brand are critical, and there have been several studies conducted to measure and categorise these attitudes or relationships. One of the best-known models is Keller's Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) pyramid (see Figure 2), which shows brands how to build strong foundations from brand identity upwards, starting with *salience*, the most important first stage of brand identity that ensures the brand is recognisable (brand awareness), remembered and understood; through *performance* and *imagery* (brand meaning); *judgements* and *feelings,* where customers may become advocates or detractors of the brand depending on brand response; to the ultimate level, *resonance*, which signifies a strong

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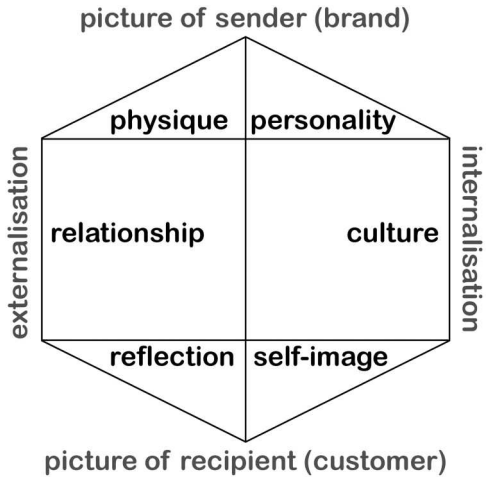

Figure 1. Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (author's own, adapted from Kapferer, 2012, p. 99).

consumer–brand relationship (Keller, 2019). These theoretical models also provide a means by which the effectiveness of marketing content and the strength of key brand messages may be measured.

In the case of slow-fashion heritage brands, their core values are generally centred around tradition, authenticity, quality – described as a utilitarian motive by Halwani (2020), skilled craftsmanship, handcraft, sustainability (Wilson et al., 2021) and distinguished provenance. Most seek to build a strong brand identity around these key attributes. Their values set them apart from cheaper, mass-produced fast-fashion brands and are key messages pushed through brand marketing materials. Brands do this in a myriad of ways, for example; Boccardi, Ciappei, Zollo, and Laudano (2016) describe 'mythopoesis' – the creation of a myth through repetitive narrative – as a key way fashion brands communicate their heritage and authenticity; Salvatore Ferragamo has its own 'corporate museum as an identity medium to express its corporate and heritage brand values' (Iannone & Izzo, 2017, p. 163); Harris Tweed Hebrides, the brand studied in this research, 'seek exciting partnerships … to increase brand equity' (Wilson et al., 2021, p. 62), while focusing on the story of how their product is crafted rather than the finished aesthetic.

A heritage brand is described as one which has 'a positioning and value proposition based on its heritage … [defining] brand heritage as a dimension of a brand's identity found in its track record, longevity, core values, use of symbols and particularly in an organisational belief that its history is important' (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007, p. 4). Given this description, heritage brands would be expected to encounter challenges if they wish to both grow their sales and attract new customers, while also keeping their existing customer base happy and reflecting on what they have done in the past. In his article on managing brands for the long term, Keller describes this as a trade-off companies face between 'their marketing efforts to attract new customers versus their efforts to retain existing ones' (Keller, 1999, p. 116). He continues: 'The marketing challenge in acquiring new customers, however, lies in making a brand seem relevant to customers from sometimes vastly different generations, cohort groups, and lifestyles. This challenge is exacerbated when the brand has strong personality or user image associations that tie the brand to one particular consumer group' (Keller, 1999, p. 116). Some brands achieve this through collaborations, tapping into the new customer base of their collaboration partner. A pertinent example of this is seen in the brand chosen as the subject for this research. Harris Tweed Hebrides collaborated with urban luxury brand Stone Island, which brought their story to a new audience that may otherwise have been difficult to reach (Wilson et al., 2021).

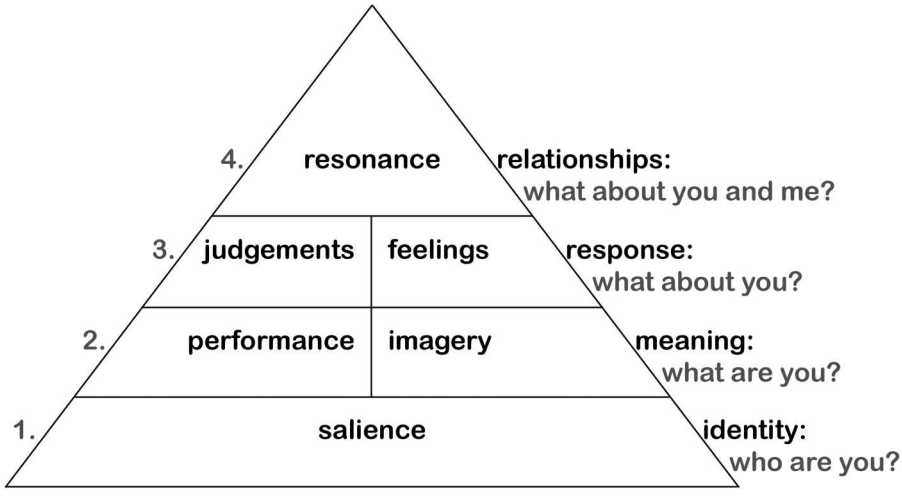

Figure 2. Keller's Consumer-Based Brand Equity Pyramid (author's own, adapted from Keller, 2019, p. 108).

Harris Tweed is acknowledged as a heritage brand (Pedersen & Peach, 2018; Serdari, 2018), evidenced by over 150 years of production and the oldest British trademark in continuous use (Wilson et al., 2021), the Harris Tweed Orb (see Figure 3). It is the only textile to be protected by an Act of Parliament, the 1993 Harris Tweed Act, which stipulates that the cloth must be made from virgin Cheviot wool, with all dyeing and spinning processes taking place on Scotland's Hebridean isles and the weaving completed by island-based independent weavers on non-power treadle looms in their homes. The Harris Tweed Authority (HTA) protects, promotes, and regulates the Harris Tweed brand, certifying each bale as authentic by stamping the iconic Orb logo onto the finished fabric (Platman, 2011; Wilson et al., 2021; Young & Martin, 2017).

There is a misconception that the terms heritage and history are interchangeable. Morley and McMahon argue that heritage is 'representative of the emotional response [brands] originally developed in their customer' (2011, p. 1) and suggest that 'luxury heritage brands can effectively position themselves in the contemporary marketplace by separating heritage from history to incorporate innovative strategies that will appeal to consumer needs of today and tomorrow' (Morley & McMahon, 2011, p. 2). The authors cite examples of luxury fashion brands embracing technology and developing successful digital strategies which communicate the brand story to a new customer base while maintaining the essential components of the brand. They also suggest that the modern consumer is 'experientially-driven' (aligning with Choi et al.'s 2016 research into brand value co-creation encounters) and that creating digital experiences can deepen relationships with this new breed of consumer.

Figure 3. The Harris Tweed® Orb.

As Industry 4.0 technologies continue to transform the production, manufacture and distribution of fashion and textiles (Bertola & Teunissen, 2018), digitalisation in all areas of life continues apace in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, which radically changed consumer behaviour. Effective omni-channel marketing in particular is seen as critical for brands to master now that consumers are engaging with multiple channels in their shopping and buying journeys (Cabigiosu, 2020; Son, Bae, & Kim, 2021). Given this focus on digital transformation, brands are looking to employ newer technologies in order to engage with consumers.

Previous research found that fashion brands have been making use of immersive technology in the form of virtual (VR) or augmented (AR) reality, in three ways (Cross, Steed, & Jiang, 2021). Firstly, brands create virtual stores, virtual changing rooms, or virtual try-on experiences to afford customers a sense of what the product is like without access to the real physical item. Brands can do this through use of customisable avatars, body scanning and AR tracking technologies, some of which allow the virtual product to be overlayed onto the real environment or allow the customer to enter a virtual environment to try on products. Secondly, brands show products virtually, for example through virtual fashion shows, the use of 3D modelling, and gaming technologies such as Fortnite and Avakin Life (the latter claiming to be the first in the gaming industry to have its own fashion team). An example of virtual fashion product is the high-end fashion brand Balenciaga's collaboration with gaming platform Fortnite, which made available virtual products within the game and real products in Balenciaga stores. Thirdly, fashion brands engage in their customers' social lives, for example, an AR app by Burberry, which allowed users to download Burberry Nova check frames and artist-created doodles to add to their own photographs and share via social media, facilitating an interesting mix of user-generated and brand-generated content.

Of particular interest is the potential for immersive technology to replicate (or enhance) the experience of being in the brand store or wearing the brand's product. If the brand can devise an authentic experience and tap into the emotions of the consumer through their marketing, they can forge a deeper connection and inspire purchase and brand loyalty. An example of this was discussed by De Gauquier, Brengman, Willems, and Van Kerrebroeck (2019), who examined the effect of VR advertising on brand personality (anthropomorphising the brands and attributing to them human-like personality traits). They found that 'VR communications strategies can be particularly interesting for experience brands, such as apparel brands, due to the fact that

the creation of imagery is a key driver for such brands to achieve consumer recognition and interest' (De Gauquier et al., 2019, p. 236). An outdoor apparel brand was used as a test subject and the research found that VR advertising contributed more effectively than 2D advertising to multiple elements of Brand Personality dimensions.

Brands such as Michael Kors and Gucci have used AR technologies to enable customers to virtually try on sunglasses and trainers via their mobile phones, Louis Vuitton collaborated with Dr Helen Papagiannis to create a mixed reality experience in their store windows, and Chanel created an Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven virtual makeup experience that allows users to select a lipstick colour that matches any image of the user's choice (Mok, 2022). While there are numerous examples of fashion and textile brands using immersive technologies to engage with consumers, there is little evidence of it being used to communicate craftsmanship or provenance. This suggests 'a missed opportunity in using human–computer interactions to communicate culture and place and in re-humanising the making of clothing in the minds of contemporary consumers' (Cross et al., 2021, p. 489). As noted by the UK Government's Environmental Audit Commission in its 2019 Fixing Fashion report, 'we do not see the faces of the people who make our clothes' (p. 23) anymore – we have become removed from that process by offshore mass manufacture. Immersive technology may be a means to reconnect the customer with how clothing is made, where it is made, and who it is made by, encouraging alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 12 aim of responsible consumption (UN, 2015). As Gen Z consumers become an important target segment for the fashion industry (Cho, Kim-Vick, & Yu, 2021), brands must effectively communicate their USP through effective marketing, demonstrating their uniqueness and authentically conveying their sustainability credentials, while also generating experiences and participating in increasingly digital lives.

2. Methodology

This research was conducted as part of Augmented Fashion (AF), an AHRC/UKRI funded project which is an interdisciplinary research project with academic and industry partners from fashion, textiles, and computing science disciplines in both the UK and China. It employs an interpretive research paradigm, given that the study of fashion predominantly concerns the understanding of meanings and values (Barnard, 2014) and recognising fashion as an embodied practice located in specific times and places (Jenss, 2016). Utilising a qualitative methodology, an exploratory survey was devised to compare consumer reactions to both traditional and immersive marketing content (Figure 4), to record perceptions of brand image. The traditional video content used was the Harris Tweed Hebrides (HTH) Fabric of Fashion story, aimed at HTH's B2B customers, as well as end-customers of traditional tweed products. The video is one-minute long and combines multimedia elements such as text, narration, image, and music. The video shows the beautiful landscapes of HTH's Outer Hebrides location, key processes in the mill and the authentication of the finished fabric by the HTA. The immersive content is a 3D virtual world created by artist Dr John Walter who produced a UK–China landscape which echoes real places in both countries but plays with scale, pattern and texture, incorporating elements of Harris Tweed iconography, history and sustainability. Both the traditional and immersive content showed the Harris Tweed logo, short scenes of the tweed being made and landscape/place-based imagery; neither showed any garments or fashion products.

Jisc Online Surveys tool was used to build and administer the questionnaire. Opening questions sought to determine the participant's interest in and attitude towards fashion and clothing (Figure 5), followed by demographic information including age, gender, and location.

Participants were then questioned about their interest in tweed fabric and any existing knowledge of Harris Tweed. They were invited to watch the traditional video content then asked a series of open questions about their general impression of the brand, who they thought the target customer was and what the brand's core principles might be. Several key literature sources informed the development of the questionnaire, including Keller's (2019) CBBE model, which demonstrated how to build brand equity towards the top level – brand *resonance* – where customers are in a positive relationship with, and advocate for the brand. Additionally, Kapferer's (2012) Brand Identity Prism shaped the questions relating to brand identity, asking respondents to consider the brand in terms of its: *physical characteristics, personality, culture, reflection*, and *self-image*. Finally, as a focus of the AF project is sustainability, Kim and Oh's (2020) sustainable keyword associations were adapted for use as pre-defined choices within the questionnaire (Figure 6).

Participants were then invited to view the immersive content and asked the same set of questions to enable comparison of the responses to each piece of content. There were two main types of participants: those with

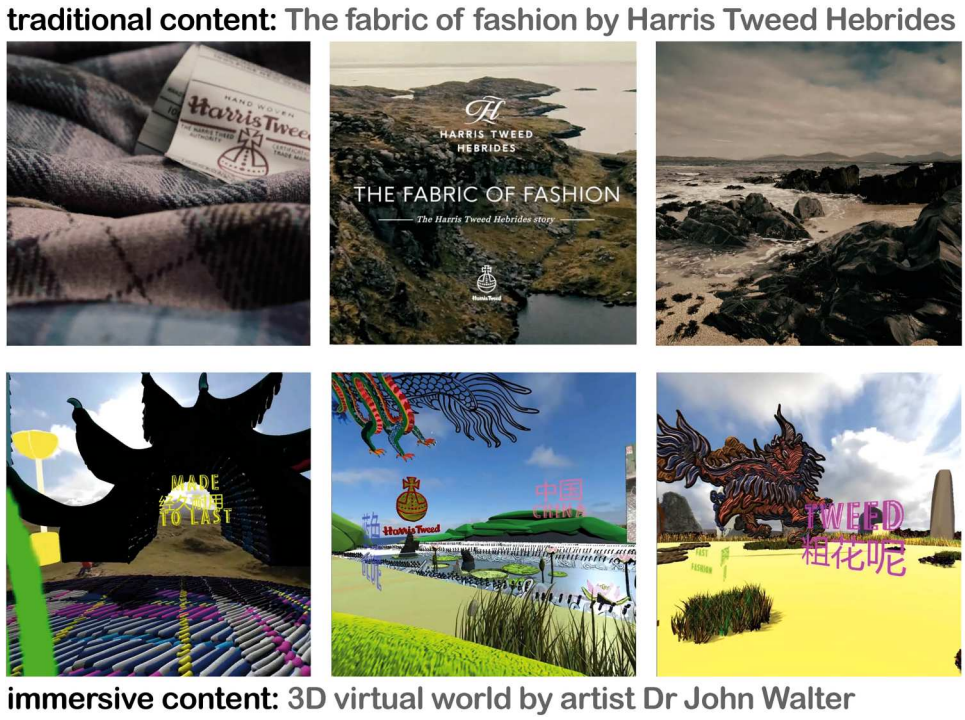

Figure 4. Screenshots of traditional video content versus immersive content.

access to the VR headsets and those without. Those with access watched the second video as a 3D immersive virtual rendering. Those without access to the technology required for the immersive environment were still able to complete the questionnaire by viewing the second piece of content as a regular 2D video. The 3D immersive content was shown as a recorded walk-through, ensuring all participants saw the same content, whether 2D or 3D. While the full immersive experience was preferred, a key finding from this research was that the technology is not yet readily available to all and tools such as headsets for VR viewing are not commonly available. Indeed, for most participants, this was the first time they had used a headset to view a virtual world. Therefore, responses from those who viewed either the 2D or the 3D immersive experience were considered for the purposes of the research.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) was used to code the data gathered from the open questions. Keywords from the participants' qualitative responses were input into NVivo qualitative data analysis software and used to generate word clouds, visualising themes in the responses. Separate word clouds were created for the traditional and immersive content, enabling comparison.

3. Results

Thirty-eight responses were gathered from a mix of computing students, fashion management students (university and college), and fashion and textile design students, with twenty-seven identifying as female, ten male and one gender non-conforming. This represents a purposive, key informant sample (Marshall, 1996), deemed important to the fashion and/or technology focus of the research. The participants fall into the age bracket of the contemporary consumer, identified as Generation Z in current literature (Francis & Hoefel, 2018), with the majority being born in the period between 1996 and 2012. Most respondents were familiar with tweed fabric (34), however most did not wear tweed (27), with twenty-one stating they had not bought any items before. Despite this, there was a good level of familiarity with the Harris Tweed brand (27).

Of the sample, twenty-six were 'very interested' in fashion; nine were 'interested'; one was 'neutral'; one 'not that interested'; and one 'not interested at all'. When asked about their attitude towards fashion and clothing, over 50% indicated that they like to be 'innovative … and seek something different'; nine respondents like to 'update their wardrobes with fashion trends'; and seven 'just shop when they need a specific item of clothing'. Thus, the majority of respondents align with the Innovator, Early Adopter and Early Majority categories of Rogers's (1983) Diffusion of Innovation theory, demonstrating that the respondents were more fashion forward than the average clothing consumer.

There was a good level of *salience* (the first level of Keller's CBBE model) evident from the responses to

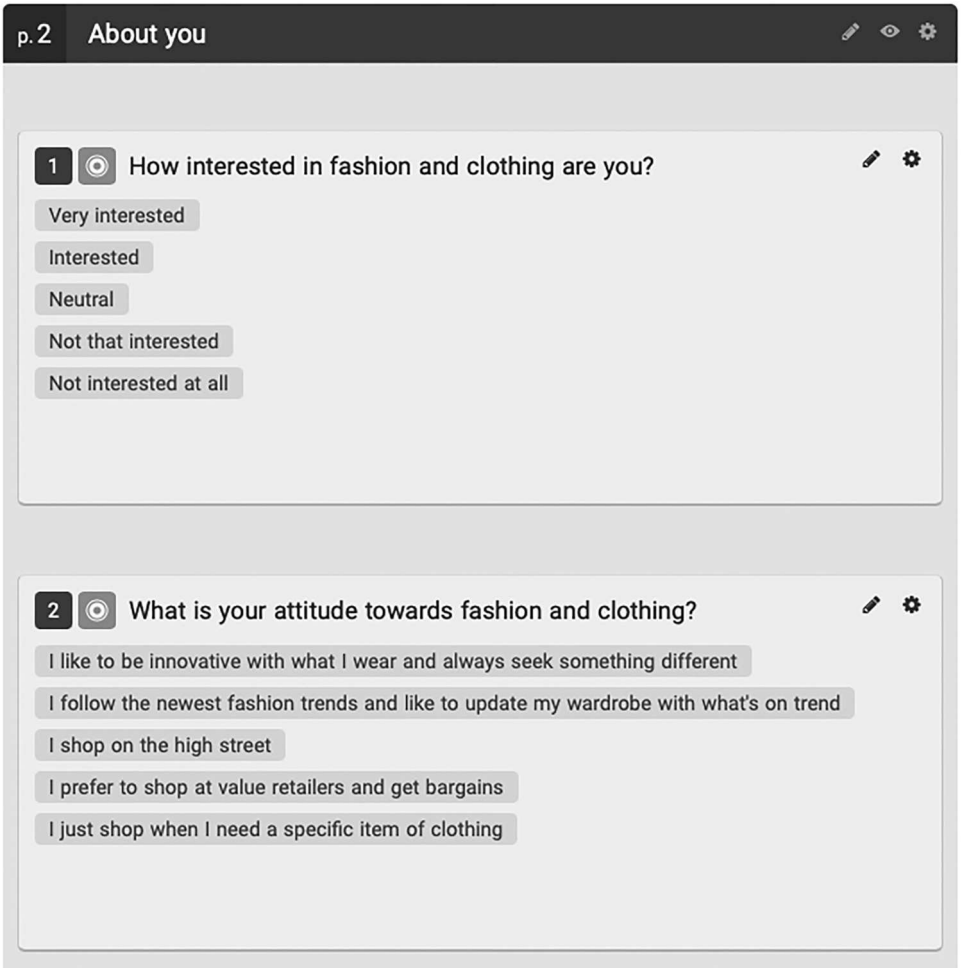

Figure 5. About You section of questionnaire.

the traditional video. One respondent found the traditional video 'quite slow' but felt that it 'presents an authentic portrayal of the brand's identity'. Most respondents liked the video for its sense of nature, landscape and heritage, with another respondent stating, 'I know of the brand already and I think that the video might have positively changed my opinion on it', indicating *feelings and judgement* (the third level of the CBBE model). Overall, the traditional content saw the brand judged as 'traditional', with 'heritage' recognised (see Figure 7).

The responses to the immersive content were more mixed. While some 'liked how [it] showed the brand's story in a creative and interesting way' and felt that the immersive content 'gave a new perspective of the brand … makes the brand feel more modern … ', there was some negativity towards the immersive piece. One found it 'too busy and unfocused' another 'absolutely hated [it] … I have no idea what the brand is being represented', another did not think it 'aligns with [the brand's] identity' and finally one questioned the professionalism of the piece, evidencing stronger negative *feelings and judgement* compared with viewing the traditional content. While some respondents commented that the immersive content was 'interesting' and 'modern', a lowered sense of prestige or luxury was evident, suggesting less *salience* was achieved. (see Figure 8).

When asked how they felt about the products on offer from the brand, one respondent stated they felt 'drawn to' the products but others stated they 'don't like them', they are 'not personally a fan of any of their products', they are 'not my style' and they are 'old fashioned'. This links to level three of Keller's CBBE model, *feelings and judgement,* and with the *self-image* element of Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (i.e. how a customer might see themselves in the brand), reinforcing earlier findings that these contemporary consumers do not tend to wear tweed. In addition, participants struggled to identify the products offered in the immersive content. This theme was elucidated by fifteen respondents, who found the content 'confusing' or were not sure what was being

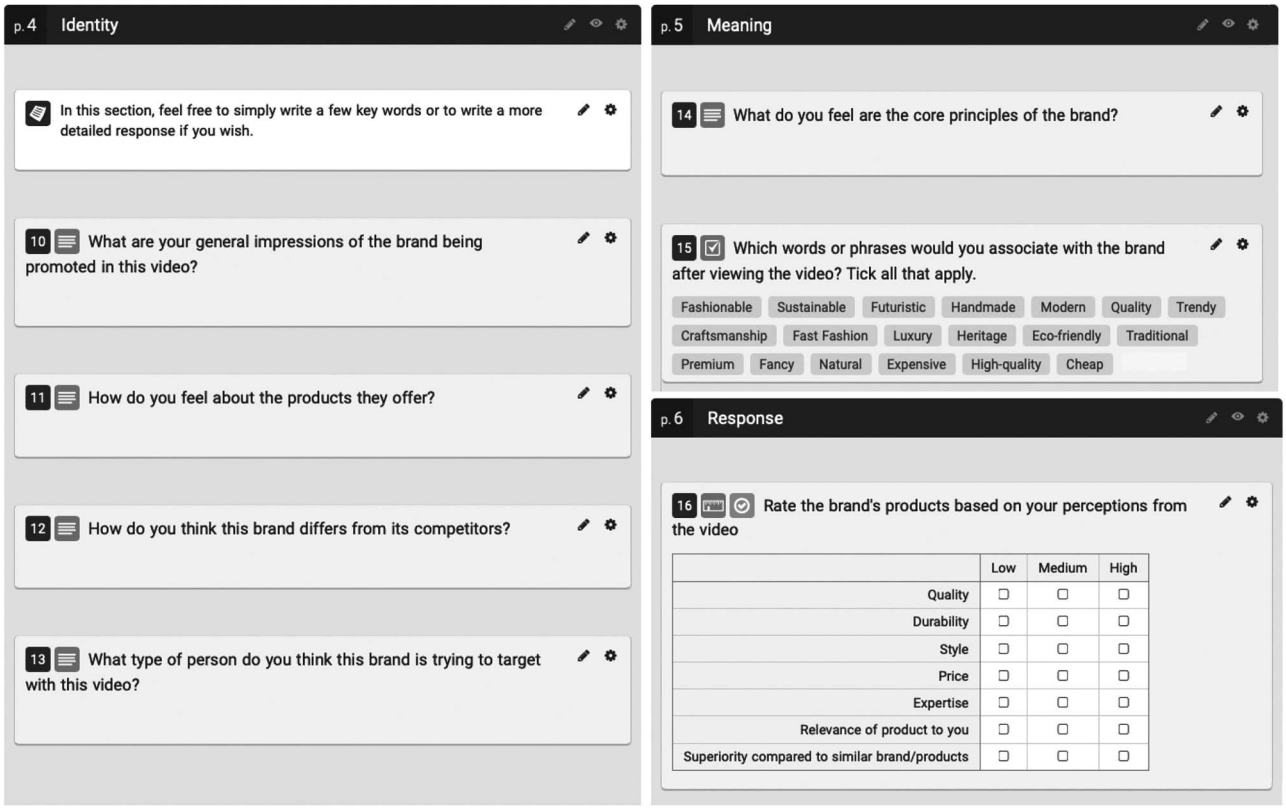

Figure 6. Identity, Meaning and Response sections of questionnaire.

represented. One noted that 'since there was so much going on', they 'didn't concentrate as much on the products'. Another noted that the immersive content was more focused on 'the tech side of the presentation rather than the product itself'. This shows that the immersive content lacked coherence in level one *salience* and level two *imagery* of Keller's CBBE model, and these aspects would need to be strengthened in order to effectively market the brand.

Respondents were able to pick up on key USPs within the traditional content, for example, one identified 'the fact that Harris Tweed can only be produced in the Hebrides', another noted the focus on 'authenticity' and others mentioned the Harris Tweed Act/HTA. Several respondents described the brand as 'strong' and 'well-defined', having 'heritage' and a 'story'. Only two respondents mentioned sustainability, although several other responses alluded to the slow fashion movement in terms of local sourcing and production, small-batch production and high quality (Lynas, 2010). Nine respondents mentioned locality/location (the Scottish place of manufacture, island location etc) as a USP. Just three respondents mentioned the product being handmade; this is a key USP of the brand, suggesting

Figure 7. Impressions of brand based on traditional content.

Figure 8. Impressions of brand based on immersive content.

this needs to be made more explicit within the brand's marketing messages.

Four respondents picked up on the sustainability messages embedded within the immersive content, suggesting messaging on this increasingly important aspect needed to be more explicit. Respondents identified the Harris Tweed Hebrides brand as more innovative than its competitors after watching the immersive content, using words such as 'modern', 'future-orientated' and 'futuristic', which had not appeared at all after watching the traditional content. Some felt this was 'admirable' as the brand was 'trying to broaden [it's] image' and 'moving with the times'. This suggests the immersive content changed the *picture of sender* in terms of *physique* and *personality* in Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism. Overall, the respondents were less sure about the brand in relation to competitors after watching the virtual video, with several 'not sure' and 'I don't know' responses, highlighting the importance of consistent brand image when exploring new media. In an indication of how disparate the two pieces of content were in terms of tone and approach, one respondent said, 'this brand has a lot of guts for putting out something so bizarre'.

The questionnaire also prompted participants to consider the type of person the brand was trying to target. The immersive content elicited fewer themes from the respondents, with twenty-one describing the target customer as 'younger' (see Figure 9), a significant change from the responses to the traditional video. This seems to place the use of immersive technologies firmly towards a more contemporary audience and this is reflected in the terminology used. One respondent identified the target customer as 'gamers', with several other respondents describing the target customer as 'techy' or 'tech-savvy'. Another speculated that 'possibly the Chinese consumer is more used to immersive content'.

In contrast, when describing the traditional content, respondents felt that the target customer had 'good economic status' and were an older clientele (sixteen respondents described the target customer as 'older', 'mature' or 'middle aged'). In addition to identifying the target customer as older and wealthier (see Figure 10), the traditional content elicited responses which suggested a quality-focused and caring customer. Six identified that the target customer appreciates high quality and seven that they are interested in traditional products. On the theme of caring, respondents commented that the target customer would seem to be 'someone who cares about where their clothes are made', or a person who 'cares a lot about sustainability and quality', and lastly that they would be 'someone that cares deeply for handcrafted and traditionally made fabrics'. Thus, the traditional content clearly conveyed a set of values to the viewer (the *culture* element of the Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism). Similar themes emerged from the question about the core principles of the brand; the traditional content elicited core principles of tradition (8), craftsmanship (9), heritage (9) and quality (21), with the modifier 'high' often being used before 'quality' (see Figure 11).

Locality/location was represented in the responses with one respondent noting that 'everything was kept in Scotland' and another noting the 'importance of where it is made'. Pleasingly, 'tradition' and 'craftsmanship' also emerged in the responses after the immersive content was watched, along with a new key theme: 'futuristic' (see Figure 12). For example, one respondent felt that the brand's principles were 'taking it into the future', and another described it as 'future-facing'. One respondent compared the two pieces of content in their response to this question, noting that the immersive content 'echoes the same principles' as the traditional content, but 'with a slight twist towards a more modern way of working'. However, they go on

Figure 9. Type of person the brand is targeting with immersive content.

Figure 10. Type of person the brand is targeting with traditional video content.

Figure 11. Core principles of the brand based on traditional content.

to note that the immersive content 'feels slightly forced' and at odds with the brand, suggesting the *physique* (Kapferer, 2012) of the brand lacked *salience* (Keller, 2019). Again, there was less certainty in the responses to the immersive content, with several respondents stating that they were 'not sure', 'confused' or 'had absolutely no idea' what the brand's core principles were.

There was a marked difference in the language used to describe the brand depending on which piece of content had just been viewed. For example, one respondent commented on the 'sense of unity between different nations and cultures (Scotland and China)' and another noted the theme of 'connecting countries' cultures' in the immersive content. This is in contrast to the very Scottish focus of the responses to the traditional content, suggesting the brand could focus more upon communicating its global credentials and international connections as it expands into new markets.

Having watched the traditional content, the words that most respondents agreed on when asked to select which words or phrases they associated with the brand were 'traditional' (32), 'quality' (30), 'heritage' (29) and 'handmade' (29). It is interesting to note that these were words the participants had already used extensively in their responses to earlier open questions, highlighting that the traditional content did indeed communicate the key brand associations. After watching the immersive content, the words that most respondents agreed upon were 'futuristic' (26), 'high-quality' (15), 'modern' (15), and 'trendy' (15), with 'heritage' and 'traditional' both gaining 14 responses, indicating the immersive content did also communicate key brand associations such as heritage, tradition, and high quality, but to a lesser extent. Again, overall there was less certainty in the participant responses, however the immersive content did elicit new brand associations (futuristic, modernity, and being more fashionable and trend-led), which may well be desirable associations if targeting a younger demographic.

Figure 12. Core principles of the brand based on immersive content.

Finally, a key finding was that both formats encouraged purchase. Seven respondents indicated the immersive content had inspired them to make a purchase from this brand or to look for this type of fashion next time they shopped (+9 maybe), compared with eight after watching the traditional content (+13 maybe), making the traditional content slightly more effective as a marketing tool. Both formats suggest a move towards the top level of Keller's CBBE model, *resonance*, by the respondents, with some inspired to purchase after watching the content. It is unclear whether the immersive content was less effective because the respondents did not enjoy the format or whether the content was, in the words of one participant, 'too bizarre'.

4. Discussion and conclusion

This research contributes to the literature on brand management in the context of traditional fashion and textile brands in an emergent era of immersive technology adoption for branding and marketing activities. The results suggest that brands using immersive technologies can be viewed as more modern, futuristic and fashion-forward by a contemporary audience, even in the absence of actual product being shown (see Figures 8 and 12). This could prove useful for traditional and heritage fashion and textile brands seeking to attract new customers, identified as a key challenge for heritage brands by Keller (1999). HTH's existing video content elicits a clear *picture of sender* (as a traditional and high-quality brand) and in turn, a clear *picture of recipient* as a mature and wealthy consumer (Kapferer, 2012), however the immersive content, while giving a much less clear *picture of sender*, did significantly alter the *picture of recipient* to that of a younger, less traditional and

more fashionable consumer. Importantly, this research sample of contemporary consumers did not see themselves as purchasers or wearers of tweed but having been exposed to the brand via both the traditional and the immersive content, some respondents did indicate intention to purchase. This highlights the importance of brand exposure to new audiences, regardless of format.

An increasingly important element of Harris Tweed's identity is its slow fashion credentials. In a time of societal and governmental concern regarding the impact of the fashion and textile industry on the environment (Environmental Audit Committee, 2019; United Nations, 2015), there is a growing interest in sustainability by fashion consumers. A key finding from this research suggests that brand messaging about sustainability could be more explicit, as it did not emerge as a strong theme in the responses to either the traditional or the immersive content.

The fantastical virtual world created for the Augmented Fashion project was challenging for some respondents, and an unintended finding of the research is that the use of VR headsets is still niche, therefore the next step proposed is to create a virtual Harris Tweed experience using webVR as an immersive, yet accessible platform. The challenge is to provide a more coherent (or *salient*) representation of the brand's imagery (Keller, 2019), to communicate the brand's *physique* and *personality* (Kapferer, 2012) more fully, while retaining a sense of innovation and modernity and capitalising on the participatory and engaging aspects offered by immersive technologies. Using a webVR platform should help to overcome one of the limitations of this study, whereby not all respondents were able to view the immersive content via a headset, thus missing out on a fully immersive experience. Another limitation of this research was the small sample size, which was restricted due to Covid restrictions and the availability of headsets, support to use them and the willingness of participants to use them. Future studies should seek to engage with a larger sample, while being cognisant of the interpretive paradigm that seeks rich and thick data, rather than aspiring to generalisation.

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