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Editorial

Introduction to the Special Issue of the 3rd International Colloquium on Design, Branding and Marketing.

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Abstract

Following the inaugural *1st International Colloquium on Global Design and Marketing* that took place in 2011, the organisers wrote that 'Notwithstanding the centrality of design to the practical world of marketing, … empirical studies of design issues are rare in marketing journals' (Melewar, Dennis and Kent, 2014, p2241 citing (e.g.) Bloch, 2011; and Luchs & Swan, 2011). Since then, iterations of the Colloquium with associated journal special issues and books have been addressing this issue and developing the new sub-discipline of design | branding | marketing. This special issue of the *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* contains a set of four articles that were selected after several rounds of evaluations and were presented during the *3rd International Colloquium on Design, Branding and Marketing*. The symposium was hosted by Bournemouth University from 5-6 April 2017. The articles cover topics that deal with retail design, retail strategy, and adoption of innovation and retail education, while contributing to the theoretical perspectives of design, branding and marketing.

Introduction to the Special Issue

The relationship between branding and marketing is well established (Mesher, 2010), however where does design fit within these two concepts? In the early 70s, Kotler (1973) extended the marketing concept in service environments by including the role of atmosphere, highlighting the influence of sensorial perception on a customer's feelings and emotions. At the same time research has identified the strong role that design plays in the development of a brand. All the visual elements around the brand, like the name, the symbol, and the design have all contributed in the success of it (Doyle, 1995). Furthermore, the majority of the studies in brand and corporate identity have discussed the importance of visual integrity to communicate a brand (Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006). Considering all these elements, we can understand the importance design plays in creating successful brands and designing effective marketing strategies. The Colloquium on Design, Branding and Marketing is the academic community's endeavour to set the theoretical foundations for the research area and to help practitioners addressing pressing issues.

The articles included in this Special Issue were presented at the *3rd International Colloquium on Design, Branding and Marketing*, which was hosted by Bournemouth University in April 2017. The International Colloquium on Design, Branding and Marketing was established to explore aspects of potentially integrative theory and praxis, relative to research methodologies and methods; the aim being to cross the

perceived boundaries between marketing and design and develop further dialogue relative to complementary approaches in these areas. This includes the promotion of academic work of merit concerning the development and promotion of branding and identity, promotion, product development, retail design, online and multimedia consumer engagement.

The 2017 colloquium aimed particularly to focus on aspects around the creative process relating to branding, marketing and design, exploring potential or actual interdisciplinary connections between research, practice and teaching to inform the orientation of marketing and design professional practice and teaching curricula.

Some key questions that were explored in the colloquium were:

- Are creativity and innovation engendered outlooks and tools used and shared to achieve optimal outputs within and between the areas of design, branding and marketing practice and theory?
- How does creative thinking and innovation influence design, branding, and marketing practice, research and the teaching curriculum?
- To what extent are visual imagery and other sensory symbolic factors incorporated to good effect within local and global communities, and to what extent do mobile and e-marketing solutions contribute?
- How do creative design management strategies become successfully adopted and incorporated into marketing and branding practices and teaching curricula?

Following the symposium, authors further developed their research and this special issue includes the best papers that were received.

The articles of the Special Issue

The first article, "Store of the future: Towards a (re) invention and (re) imagination of physical store space in an omnichannel context" by Bethan Alexander and Marta Blazquez Cano describes the physical retail store of the future, while being part of an omnichannel retail strategy. The authors undertook a carefully selective literature review on omnichannel retailing, the impact of digitalisation and customer experience and concluded that customer experiences have become an important aspect of omnichannel retailing, where the physical store environment offers space for interactivity, socialization and communications. Consequently, understanding how the future physical store will look and identifying the factors of the physical retail environment, which will positively contribute to a better customer experience, is of great importance. The article uses qualitative empirical research utilising 20 semi-structured industry interviews to develop a theoretical model, named Experiential Store Futures. The model describes the approach of slow retail, as the best practice for customer experience, which includes four typologies namely storytelling; fluid; digital zones; and community centre. The model serves as a framework for practitioners designing their future environments.

In the second article, "Designing retail – Unravelling coping strategies through emphatic interviewing owner managers", Signe Mørk Madsen and Ann Petermans, explore how retail designers can develop a plan for retailers that will identify inconsistencies in the design of their stores. The authors use the method of emphatic in-depth interview with participants of the retail industry of central Jutland in Denmark. Using thematic analysis, a number of coping strategies were identified which were split into the following five themes: common context, retail design layer, retailer, consumer and navigator. The findings provide a thematic map that retail

designers can use to assist retailers in creating a sound retail concept. The article provides a significant contribution to retail design theory by linking retail design to the strategic process and contributing to the understanding of the role of emotion in the client – consultant relationship.

In the third article, "Investigating the link between innovation and mainstream adoption: How to identify consumer trends", Carol Cloughton provides a framework to assess the adoption of an innovation by mainstream markets. After an extensive literature review the author concludes that current literature does not adequately address what methods are available to identify new consumer trends in the retail industry. The case study method is applied for the Incredible Edibles (IE) community initiative in West Yorkshire. The specific case is chosen as the context to study the impact of horticulture in the UK. To study this, the author conducts six semi-structured interviews with members of IE and uses thematic analysis to identify categories and themes. The following themes were identified: escapism, well-being, security, ownership and community, which demonstrate the motivations for new consumer groups to adopt innovation. The author then designs a framework from previous established theories and the above findings on the impact of innovation. The paper contributes to the evolution of business models in retail by providing strong customer research that will lead to the creation of value driven products.

The last article, "A holistic competence framework for (future) retail design and retail design education" by Katelijn Quartier, Stephanie Claes and Jan Vanrie explores the competences that the future retail designer should possess. The authors identify that the retail design scene is changing rapidly. This highlights the need for studying the phenomena and providing educational models that can assist practitioners' educational needs. Using a prior theoretical framework of competences, the authors use the method of semi-structured interviews on 20 experts with different disciplinary background from Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany and conclude that eight core competencies namely research, design, socio-cultural sciences, branding, marketing & strategy, omnichannel & digital, communication and organization & management are suitable. The authors highlight that one specific aspect is that the future retail designer is still expected to have spatial design skills. Furthermore, the designer should be eager to learn and should keep an open mind since the practice of retail design is characterized by multidisciplinary teamwork. This work makes a significant contribution to educational practice in the design of the teaching curricula.

Future Research Agenda

It is evident that the scholarly community of design, branding and marketing is trying to set the theoretical foundations for this interdisciplinary area. As was demonstrated in the presentations and informal discussions during the symposium, retailing seems to be an area where these three concepts interlink and there is a wide area of contribution to be made to both theory and practice. Retail design contributes in turning retail stores into brand names (Petermans and Kent, 2107). The retail space can create a brand experience for the customer that communicates the messages the brand wants to deliver. An important area for future research will be to identify all the visual identity forms that will contribute to the ideal communication of these messages with customers. Furthermore, as we are in the early stages of setting the theoretical foundations of this interdisciplinary research focus, it is of utmost importance to highlight the need for empirical validation of the theoretical

frameworks that have already been introduced (Melewar, Dennis and Kent, 2014; Bloch, 2011; and Luchs & Swan, 2011). In line with this, future research should focus on using quantitative research to empirically establish theories.

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