

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND PROCESSES WITHIN FASHION BRANDS

Nordic Brands as case studies for successful communication strategies

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ABSTRACT

The study conducted intends to demonstrate to what extent Nordic fashion brands are positioning themselves in the market and the way they are assuming a leading position in a globalized market through the adoption of personalized communication strategies.

Through the analyses of the differentiation concepts and the “country of origin” effect we have conducted an empiric study of these brands, whose market recognition has been crescent in recent years.

We intend to show that these brands are differentiation themselves from the competitors by the adoption of well integrated communication strategies reinforce by the promotion of a Scandinavian heritage.

Through successful communication languages, clear positioning and international expansion, these brands are transforming the “Nordic” term into a major key asset, due to its favourable perceived brand attributes and region’s strength.

Studied brands were: Acne, By Malege Birger and Designers Remix Collection.

The gathered data allowed us to develop a data base of brand analyses, one that is built upon 3 main directions: brand character, emotional territory and communication registry.

KEYWORDS: Fashion, Communication, Differentiation, Branding

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication, as we know it from Barthes and his “Fashion System”, holds its premises on the written word. However, fashion communication is not based solely on the written word but also in the translation of concepts.¹ Fashion is built upon several signs to which we attribute a meaning² and most of the times we are not attentive enough to their connotation or to their subjective quality.

Nordic fashion brands have been, these latest times, object of a high level of growth and notoriety in the market, due to its aesthetic proposals and market strategies. With this in mind, this study intends to answer the following questions:

- What are the communication elements that are used by these brands, that define them and makes them differentiated?
- In what ways can we identify a coherent and total integration of products, colour tones, point of sale, communication supports; that enhances and reinforces the brands concept?
- Ultimately we have analysed these results, using the definitions of brand character, emotional territory and communication registry, as a way of establishing a common ground and to demonstrate a national identity of the selected brands.

2. METODOLOGY

To begin the study, we have selected an array of communication supports – digital and print - and elements that are used by these brands. After a thorough analyses, comparisons and contradictions were noted down to provide a common ground basis.

The selected brands were: Acne Jeans, By Malene Birger and Designers Remix Collection. This study was put together around the concepts of: brand character, emotional territory and communication registry.

Brand character is related top the way the brand positions itself in the mind of consumers, through the uses of its communication elements.

Emotional territory intends to characterize the way it expresses itself through these elements and the personality it holds in itself.

Communication registry demonstrates the brand speech towards the consumer, the communication language it holds and provides.

3. CONCEPTUALIZATION

ACNE JEANS

Through the study of the brand supports, the following core values were identified: simplicity/ modernity/ urban character/ comfort / style.

Colour tones (Product wise): The colour palettes used in the collections reflect the purity and urban style of the brand. There is very strong base made up of neutral tones, gently touched by the use of bright and vivid colour accents, defining the season. The collection is based on this neutral and easy to mix shades.

Communication elements: For both collections - Acne Jeans and Acne Collection, the communication campaigns are built on monochromatic tones and in imagery with barely any accessory and without targeting specific sceneries or locations. Emphasis is placed on the models pose – informal, strong and remarkable and in the aesthetic proposals of the clothing.

The brands website reflects the direct and clear communication that the brands intends to establish with its audience: easy to browse, neutral colours, no animation effects or any elements of distraction – reinforcing the simplicity and clarity of information.

Points of sale can also be identity as a clear vision of the utilitarian and functional character of the brand – limited accessories, monochromatic tones and a clean product display, easily accessed by the consumer. The stores have a strong presence of the colour white, taking advantage of lighting and pure environments.

We have put together the 3 vectors of study of the brand in the following terms:

Brand character: A young, urban, independent and slightly punctuated with sensuality.

Emotional territory: The brand intends to express itself as a confident, strong and holding a distinct and genuine personal trail.

Communication registry: Focus is given to lifestyle, simplicity, minimalism and individual registry of personal expression.

BY MALENE BIRGER

The core values of the brand were: sensuality/ strong connection to its roots/ elegance/ dare/ sophistication.

Colour tones (Product wise): The colour palettes used reflect a dual direction for colours: neutral and functional tones as basis and the conjunction of strong and remarkable colours as contrasts. A strong presence of colours originated from ethnical and distinct cultural inspirations.

Communication elements: By looking at an historic of the communication campaigns, we can establish a common denominator: the use of strong images, secure poses and combinations that reflect sophistication and daring attitudes. The fact that they use barely any scenery helps to accentuate the differentiation aspects of the garments.

The brand website is a strong proof of the sensual and strong character of the brand with the use of black and white images with strong contrasts. These dual tones arrive as almost clinic, providing full focus on the product.

As for the 3 vectors of study we have come up with the following conclusions:

Brand character: An adult, independent and liberal brand.

Emotional territory: The brand intends to position as a confident brand, secure and with a high level of self esteem.

Communication registry: Its speech is based on a metaphorical registry, enhancing differentiation and impact.

DESIGNERS REMIX COLLECTION

The core values identified were: sensuality/ dare/ femininity/ difference/ distinction

Colour tones (Product wise): The colour palettes identified have a strong emphasis of neutral and soft colours. There is a base of a simple and easy coloration that are punctuated by the insertion of soft and light tones – in subtle degradations.

Communication elements: The communication campaigns are mainly black and white, with strong presence of product instead of the model. Although they use sceneries as a complement of the image, these acquire a metaphorical character interacting with the visual composition and with the product. The results are highly classified and impacting images, due to an almost clinical control of the composition lines of the image.

The website reflects a direct and easy browsing system, with the use of clean and functional menus. The information appears in a structured and organized display method, in an almost geometric organization of the contents. The fact that there are no animations supports the simplicity of the communication.

The points of sale are structured on monochromatic tones, with the use of wide and functional store environments, focusing on the product on not on decoration. The product is placed with no distractions and not allowing multiple references of each piece – intended to gain importance.

We have put together the 3 vectors of study of the brand:

Brand character: A sophisticated, urban and independent brand where the differentiation elements of the product extend to an unpredictable character of the brand.

Emotional territory: The brand intends to express itself as a confident one, daring and at the same time with an emotional accentuated background.

Communication registry: The brand communicates with elements of simplicity and minimalism, creating at the same time a distance and an impact on the consumer.

4. CONCLUSION

The brands personality, in the eyes of the consumer, is usually well identifiable through total and integrated communication processes that allow it to be sustainable and consistent.

Brands communication is crucial in the way that a brand exists only when it is well communicated. Kapferer says that a brand is an entity of speech; it exists only through communication, it is necessary that it acquires some language terms, in order to be identifiable and recognizable.³

The strategic definition of the multidimensional elements of brand differentiation for the universe of fashion brands holds its premises in the way these same elements are communicated and integrated to the consumer.

In the case of these Nordic Fashion Brands that were studied – and yet it is a concept that we can extend to others provenience from the same geographic background – we can identify the use of common brand denominators that makes them consistent and easily positioned in the mind of the consumers, and ones that allow for a direct communication with their target.

These brands have adopted strong and clear strategies of differentiation, adjustable and directly connected to the brands inner characteristics, creating a strong identity for themselves and ultimately for the country they originate from.

5. REFERENCES

¹ [Barthes], *The Fashion System*, University of California Press, 1983

² [Barthes], *The Fashion System*, p.263

³ [Aaker], D. A. (1991). *'Managing brand equity'*. New York: The Free Press