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FASHION STYLE AND DESIGN: SYMBOLIC MEANING AESTHETIC VALUES

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ABSTRACT

In order to understand the underlying motives of a consumer's perceptions toward hoodies, the author deliberately selected the salient effects of four specific product cues for this research study – style/silhouette, colour, and applique/graphics, and text logo - which focus primarily on the design effects.

The qualitative method and visual stimuli were employed, and young female consumers from ages 21 to 26 years were recruited exclusively from the university campus. A semi-structured interview was employed to illuminate the underlying motivations for the purchase of hoodies, and numerous questions were developed to guide and direct the present research: (1) What constitutes within the consumer psychology when evaluating a hooded top? (2) What are the most important selective criteria? (3) What roles do the design elements play in the process of selection and evaluation of hooded tops? (4) What is the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic cues? Content analysis will be used to provide an objective and systematic procedure to code and evaluate the collected data and form the basis for interpretive analysis.

The results of the present study revealed that consumers' choice of hooded styles was closely related to their daily activities, situation of use and lifestyle. The colour cue (e.g., charcoal and black) played a significant role on wardrobe coordination, practicality and longevity. Oversized hoodies were less attractive than the fitted style, and wearers often used hoodies to define their identity. In addition to these findings, different design features (logo applique) carried different socio-cultural meanings to some informants. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the salient impact of various design cues and various product features. From the design standpoint, the appearance of a hoodie could determine a consumers' perceived values, communicate product advantages and elicit psychological responses (cognitive and affective) from the users. To summarize, the intention of this study is to provide current information and meaningful insights to the academic research community and fashion industry.

Keywords: hoodies, design elements, product attributes, consumer perceptions

1 INTRODUCTION

According to prior studies of cue utilization (Olson, 1972; Rahman et al., 2010), clothing consists of a plethora of attributes that serve as indicators of product quality to the consumer. Product cues have been dichotomized into two categories – intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic cues refer to those elements directly related to the physical product such as style, colour and fabric; and the change of these cues could alter the structure of that product. For example, if a fashion designer changed a garment's colour or fabric, the visual appearance would be altered. On the other hand, extrinsic cues refer to those elements not directly related to the physical product such as price, country of origin and brand name. Thus, changing the price of a product (e.g., markdown of unsold inventory) would not affect its structure or physical appearance. Previous studies suggest that consumers tend to concurrently use both intrinsic and extrinsic cues to evaluate and select a product to fulfill their needs and aspirations (Rahman et al., 2009). For example, a young consumer may look for a pair of

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moderate priced, boot-cut, stretched denim jeans for physical and psychological comfort.

Nevertheless, intrinsic cues are usually considered to be more reliable indicators of product quality than extrinsic cues (Rahman, 2010; Wu and Delong, 2006). For example, according to Forsythe et al. (1999), Korean consumers tended to rely heavily on intrinsic cues in the process of clothing evaluation than on the extrinsic such as price. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that the intrinsic properties of clothing may play a more critical role in product consumption than extrinsic cues. With this perspective, the current study was focused on the intrinsic product cues of the hooded garment known as a hoodie. There are several reasons why the hooded garment was selected for this study. First, this clothing style is widely accepted in different cultures, particularly among the young. Second, there is no empirical research examining how consumers perceive, evaluate and consume this particular fashion staple. Third, the meaning of hoodies have evolved over the years, therefore, it is worthwhile to gain a deeper understanding of the visual representation of hoodies in today's consumer culture.

2 OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of this study is to understand and examine consumer perception towards hooded tops or hoodies. There is ample evidence that young apparel consumers often select, evaluate and consume a product based on a wide array of attributes. They encompass sensory experience (e.g., aesthetic appeal, tactile feeling), functional usage (ease of use, protection, performance) and psychological value (congruity of self-image and lifestyle). Many apparel researchers (Jin et al. 2010; Rahman et al. 2009) have examined the impact of various product designs and attributes through a single-cue or multiple-cue format. Design, fashionability, and style deem to be particularly important for consumers when evaluating an apparel product and determining their ultimate choice (Forsythe et al. 1999; Swinker and Hines, 2006). In addition, consumers also use various product cues to identify and give meaning to a product (Green and Schoormans 2005). Although many scholars have extensively explored the meanings and values of clothing in the past, little research has focused on the relationships between product cues, design features, symbolic meanings, and situation of use.

3 PRODUCT DESIGN AND ATTRIBUTES

I deliberately selected three specific design elements for this study including clothing style/silhouette, colour and logo applique/graphic in order to understand the salient impact of intrinsic product cues and the underlying motives of a consumer's perceptions toward hoodies. The reasons why these design elements were chosen are simply due to its relevancy and popularity for hooded garment.

3.1 CLOTHING STYLE AND SILHOUETTE

The term "style" can be defined as the garment's silhouette and structure (Miller et al., 2005). In a similar vein, Welters and Lillethun (2007, p. xxv) also describe clothing style as a "combination of silhouette, construction, fabric, and details that exist, and which thus can be used, over time." Sproles (1981) suggested that silhouette might be considered as the most influential evaluative cue for clothing purchases, and one of the critical attributes of apparel design. However, another study (Eckman, 1997) indicated that silhouette plays a relatively less significant role than design details when it comes to clothing evaluation.

Regardless of the significance of garment silhouette, several prior studies clearly indicate that clothing style, design details and colour play an important part in the consumers' apparel evaluations and purchasing decisions (Forsyth et al., 1999; Kawabata and Rabolt, 1999; Taylor and Cosenza, 2002). For example,

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Kawabata and Rabolt (1999) found that American students tended to pay more attention to style/design and colour when they shopped for fashionable clothing items.

In order to understand this complex relationship among various intrinsic cues of the hoodie, a number of visual stimuli were developed for this study.

3.2 COLOUR

Colour is often considered the most appealing design element, and the strongest visual feature, for many consumer products including clothing (Bevlin 1997; Rasband 2001). Colour hue, brightness, and saturation could affect consumers' perceptions, physiological reactions, emotional responses and/or their behavioural intentions (Valdez and Mehrabian, 1994). A few studies (Chu and Rahman 2012; Lee and Barnes 1990; Middlestadt 1990) have shown that a product's colour cue may greatly influence consumers' purchasing decisions. Although colour has been considered to be one of the important evaluative cues, the desirability and associative meanings of colour may vary from product to product. Several studies show that consumers may choose specific colours for certain product types – e.g. black for formal suiting and blue for denim jeans (Holmes and Buchanan, 1984; Whitfield and Wiltshire, 1983). In other words, colour may carry different meanings in different product categories.

For this study, in order to understand the salient impact of colour variance and distinctiveness, both basic/ordinary and trendy/fashionable colours were deliberately selected for this study. It is reasonable to suggest that if clothing can be used in multiple contexts they are more likely to be perceived as "complementarities" (Koukova et al. 2012). Such garments could offer flexibility and reduce difficulty in making choices. For example, neutral coloured clothing is relatively more versatile and complementary than fashion colours as they can offer greater opportunities to mix and match with different garments and to accommodate different usage situations (Chu and Rahman, 2012).

3.3 LOGO

A well-designed or effective logo can evoke positive affect, generate associative meaning, lead to quicker name recognition and stimulate brand memory (Kohli et al. 2002; Vatorella, 1990). Logo consists of content and style (Kohli et al. 2002), with content often referring to text/typeface and graphic representation whereas style points to the presentation and arrangement of all the content elements. In many cases, altering or manipulating logo content and style can dramatically change its meaning. For example, the Hilton hotel chain changed its original logo to a script typeface in order to portray an image of friendliness (Spaeth 1999). In addition, some studies (Henderson et al. 2003; Schmitt and Simonson, 1997; Zhang et al., 2006) revealed that consumers (particularly in Asian cultures) often perceived a round-shaped logo as softness, harmony and femininity, and angular-shaped logos as conflict, dynamism and masculinity.

According to numerous studies (Childers and Jass 2003; McCarthy and Mothersbaugh 2002), typeface design clearly affects the readability of a logo, brand memorability and a consumers' perceived value of a product. Handwritten type is generally perceived as more organic than machine-made type, and a study conducted by Henderson et al. (2004) found that natural script typefaces create more reassuring and pleasing responses.

With this perspective, it would be meaningful and worthwhile to examine the salient impact of different logo designs, as well as their relationships to clothing style. For example, does logo design play a critical role on clothing choice?

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4 USAGE SITUATION

According to Belk (1974), any study of buyer behaviour that ignores situational factors is unlikely to prove reliable results. It is reasonable to suggest that wearers may use the same garment differently for dissimilar situational contexts, as they often make choices that are most appropriate to a specific circumstance. For example, there is a tendency to choose dark-coloured denim jeans rather than light-coloured or distressed jeans for semi-formal dining settings. Many prior studies on appearance impression formations report that appropriate attire for a given circumstance yield positive or favorable interpretative inferences. The appropriate usage of clothing can construct an individual's image and also enhance one's physical and psychological comfort (Hsu and Burns, 2002). Thus, appropriateness of use is closely related to the variance in behaviour to the individual as well as to the situation/occasion. In other words, a consumer's perception of clothing is not merely associated with product attributes, but is also linked to situational and usage appropriateness. However, there has been little research devoted to the topic of usage situation. To fill the gap of our knowledge, it would be meaningful to investigate how the aforementioned elements (product cues, product choice and appropriateness of use) are integrated to provide further information to fashion designers regarding consumers' evaluation and consumption of hoodies.

5 METHODOLOGY

Many prior apparel studies are quantitative survey-based studies (e.g., Swinker and Hines 2006; Rahman et al., 2010; Rahman 20011) that primarily rely on respondent memory. Studies have clearly shown that surveys and questionnaires cannot capture the richness of consumers' affections, psychological states, and socio-cultural changes (Strauss and Corbin 1990). They also do not shed much light on consumer perception and interactivity of our current research topic of hoodies.

Therefore, qualitative research methods were adopted for this present study as they allow for a more in-depth study of the when, why, and how consumers think, feel and behave (Montemurro and Gillen 2013). Through in-depth interviews, researchers can extensively explore any unexpected or unknown personal thoughts and phenomena.

Young female consumers from 21 to 26 years of age were recruited exclusively from the university campus for this research study. This particular demographic was solicited because of their relatively greater sensitivity to clothing cues than their male counterparts (Auty and Elliott, 1998). In addition, they often use symbolic and self-expressive products such as clothing to build their identity. All the informants were expected to have current or recent experiences with purchasing and/or wearing hooded tops/hoodies. Semi-structured interviews were employed to illuminate their underlying motivations for buying hoodies, and numerous questions were developed to guide and direct the present research: (1) What constitute within the consumer's mind when evaluating a hooded top? (2) What are the most important selection criteria? (3) What roles do the design elements play in the process of selection and evaluation of hooded tops? (4) What are the impacts of intrinsic and extrinsic cues? (5) What is the link or correlation between concrete and abstract attributes? Open-ended questions were used throughout the interviews to gain a deeper understanding of consumer thoughts, actions and behaviors. Content analysis was used to provide an objective and systematic procedure to code and evaluate the collected data and form the basis for interpretive analysis. Through content analysis, themes were identified from the data, and the procedure as described by Zimmer and Golden (1988) was adopted and followed for this study.

In regard to the coding process, two encoders (one male and one female) thoroughly read through the interview transcripts numerous times, together discussed the possibilities of interpreting data, and then each encoder

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independently identified and coded the recurring attributes. They then placed them into general categories according to their similar characteristics. To avoid misrepresentation of the data by multiple responses, if several words and phrases used by an informant belonged to the same category, they would be considered as single response. In the cases of disagreement between judges, both again re-read the data, intensively discussed and reconciled their differences, and then made a final decision.

6 FINDINGS

The results of present study revealed that consumers' choice of hooded styles was closely related to their daily activities, lifestyle and situation of use. Colour cues (e.g., black and charcoal) played a significant role on wardrobe coordination, practicality and longevity. Oversized hoodies were less attractive than the fitted style and full-zip was more popular than pullovers. Wearers often used hoodie to define their private space.

In total, 18 females were recruited through direct referral and snowball sampling and ranged in age from 21 to 26 years, and the mean age was 22.2 years old. The reasons for selecting this specific age group were: (1) sizable population, (2) convenience sampling, and (3) young people are generally more receptive to the hoodie style. This sample consists of 16 students and 2 full-time workers, as shown in Table 1. Twelve students out of 16 are employed part-time. The body mass index of all informants were normal, except informant 14 and 17 would be considered as underweight (BMI: below 18.5).

Cod e	Ag e	Occupational Status	Full/Part-time Employme nt	Annual Income	Body Type	Heigh t	Weigh t	BMI
1	21	Undergradua te student	Intern Part-time	Less than \$10,00 0	Hourglass	5'7"	125 lbs	19.6
2	22	Undergradua te student	None	N/A	Petite/curvy	5'4"	115 lbs	19.7
3	23	Undergradua te student	None	N/A	Pear shaped/ athletic	5'6"	136 lbs	21.9
4	24	Undergradua te student	Campus job	\$1,600	Muscular/petite	5'2"	113 lbs	20.7
5	22	Undergradua te student	Hostess Part-time	\$6,000	Athletic/peti te	5'6"	130 lbs	21.0
6	22	Undergradua te student	Freelance job	N/A	Slender and muscular	5'9"	125 lbs	18.5
7	21	Undergradua te student	Server Part-time	\$20,00 0- \$35,00	Average/muscular	5'10"	164 lbs	23.5

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8	21	Undergraduate student	Summer intern	Less than \$3,000	Athletic	6'	175 lbs	23.7
9	26	Full-time worker	-	\$42,000	Athletic/average	5'7"	143 lbs	22.4
10	22	Full-time worker	Technical Designer	\$25,000-30,000	Hourglass	5'3"	113 lbs	20.0
11	22	Undergraduate student	Part-time	N/A	Hourglass	5'6"	145 lbs	23.4
12	22	Undergraduate student	Part-time	\$8,000	Petite	5'3"	120 lbs	21.3
13	24	Undergraduate student	Hostess Part-time	\$20,000	Athletic	5'5"	137 lbs	22.8
14	20	Undergraduate student	Hostess Part-time	-	Skinny	5'8"	110 lbs	16.7 *
15	22	Undergraduate student	Hostess Part-time	\$10,000	Average/athletic	5'6"	150 lbs	24.2
16	21	Undergraduate student	Cashier Part-time	-	-	5'4"	128 lbs	22.0
17	24	Undergraduate student	-	N/A	Slender	5'8"	120 lbs	18.2 *
18	22	Undergraduate student	Server Part-time	\$15,000-\$20,000	Slim	5'7"	125 lbs	19.6

TABLE 1 - INFORMANT PROFILE
*BMI: <18.5 = underweight

The vast majority of informants liked wearing hoodies ($n=16$; 88.8%) - with eight informants wearing a hoodie 3 to 4 times a week and only one person reporting that she wore them every day. However, two informants (11.2%) expressed that they wore them only occasionally. On average, each informant owned about 9 or 10 hoodies. Clearly, this type of clothing is popular among the young.

6.1 COLOUR CUE

As shown in Figure 1, two sets of colours were selected for this study including basic colours (3, 5, 8, 13 and 14) and fashion colours (1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12). All of the fashion colours were selected from the Pantone colour forecast by two fashion professors. Our research findings indicated that most of

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the informants preferred the 'charcoal' colour as their first choice (n=6) for hoodies, followed by 'black' (n=3), and two fashion colours -'living coral' (n=2) and 'purple orchid' (n=2) as their next choices (as indicated in Table 2).

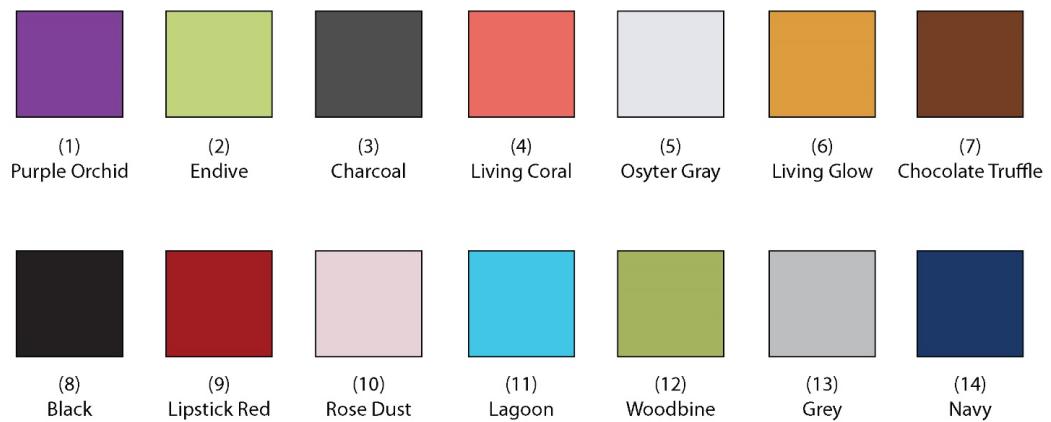


FIGURE 1 – COLOUR PALETTE

Colour Frequency Count	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Total Count of Top 3 Choices
Charcoal	n=6	n=1	n=1	n=8
Black	n=3	n=2	n=2	n=7
Living Coral	n=2	n=3	n=2	n=7
Purple Orchid	n=2	-	n=3	n=5
Oyster Grey	n=2	n=1	-	n=3
Navy	n=1	n=4	n=2	n=7
Lagoon	n=1	-	n=3	n=4
Endive	n=1	-	n=1	n=2
Grey	-	n=4	n=2	n=6
Lipstick Red	-	n=2	-	n=2
Woodbine	-	n=1	-	n=1
Rose Dust	-	-	n=1	n=1
Living Glow	-	-	n=1	n=1

TABLE 2 – COLOUR PREFERENCE OF HOODIE

There are several reasons why some informants preferred basic colours such as 'charcoal', 'black' and 'navy'; while others preferred fashion colours such as 'living coral' and 'purple orchid.'

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6.2 BASIC COLOUR FOR FUNCTIONAL PURPOSES

The preference for dark coloured hoodies by several informants was primarily due to its function and practicality - (1) easy to coordinate with other garments (2) complimentary to wearer's complexion, (3) ease of care and (4) longer lifespan.

"...Because I enjoy wearing dark colors. Because most of my clothes are already dark so I want to go for something that matches. Something that compliments my outfit. So obviously if my closet it already dark. Not that I'm saying that light colors wouldn't go with it. It's just my complexion doesn't go with yellow". [Informant 7]

"...Because I like wearing dark colors rather than bright colors. They get less dirty. They last longer than a white or light hoodie. You don't have to wash them as much. And I think I look better in darker colors personally". [Informant 9]

"...I wear a lot of darker colors they match everything. I like the coral but I wouldn't wear that in a hoodie. I think it's sellable, I really like that color. It's quite this season. Yeah, and I can't wear bright colors, they don't look good on my skin tone." [Informant 10]

6.3 FASHION COLOUR FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS

According to the findings, several informants chose fashion colours to brighten up their lives and elevate a sense of happiness. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that colours are linked to the psychological state of consumer behaviour. As De Klerk and Lubbe (2006) asserted that colour can be used to arouse consumers' emotions and pleasure during consumption. In an unrelated color use context, another study reports that a dental office often painted in blue helped to allay patient fears (Costigan, 1984). With such perspective, it is not difficult to understand why some informants selected fashion colours such as 'living coral' and 'purple orchid' for their hoodies.

"...Um, they're [living coral, purple orchid and lagoon] bright and fun and usually when you're wearing a hoodie it's a good time and the bright colors kind of make you happy". [Informant 5]

"...Living coral for me personally is just a really nice color and that I'm attracted to and I think looks good on people. I think it's really nice to have a bright colour in your wardrobe especially if you're wearing it to relax around the house. It is refreshing!" [Informant 6]

6.4 CLOTHING STYLE AND SILHOUETTE

According to the market information when this study was conducted, three hooded styles (one loose-fitted and 2 semi-fitted) were designed and developed by the researcher for this study (as shown in Figure 2). These three styles are similar (e.g., front zip opening and drawstring) except for some minor variations such as the pocket style, topstitching, seams and width of rib cuff/waistband. The results indicate that many informants (n=10) cited style 3 as their first choice, followed by style 2 and 1 (presented in Table 3). Clearly, the loose-fitted hoodie was not their favourite choice, as only 3 informants selected this style as their first choice.

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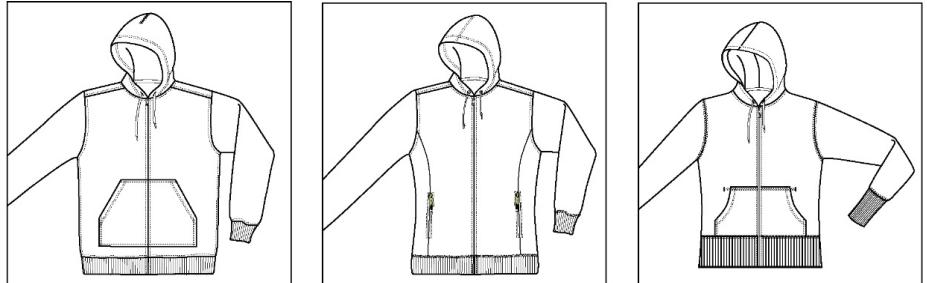
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1.

2.

3.

FIGURE 2 – THREE DIFFERENT HOODED STYLES

Frequency Count	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice
Style 1	n=3	n=8	n=7
Style 2	n=5	n=6	n=7
Style 3	n=10	n=4	n=4

TABLE 3 – STYLE/SILHOUETTE REFERENCE OF HODDIE

Some informants preferred style 2 and 3 because of the fitted silhouette and the design features. For example:

"...Well I love the zipper pockets of style 2, so convenient when you're just running to the grocery store and you just zip your stuff in, it's just so comfortable. And on style 3, I'm a big fan of the cuffs. ... Definitely like the zip pockets of style 2, I like the detailing of the extra panel under the armpit and it looks like it has all the features I'm looking for in a hoodie. And it looks nice, comfortable and feminine". [Informant 6]

A few informants also stated that they seldom use the pockets. For example:

"...I do like the kangaroo pockets but to be honest I don't really use the pockets that much". [Informant 2]

"...No, I don't store anything in there I just find it comfortable to put your hands in there". [Informant 18]

6.5 LOGO DESIGN

In terms of logo design, our researcher designed and developed four logos in different typefaces, as shown in Figure 3. The majority of the informants (n=10) chose Design 1 as their first choice, followed by 3, 4 and 2 (see Table 4).

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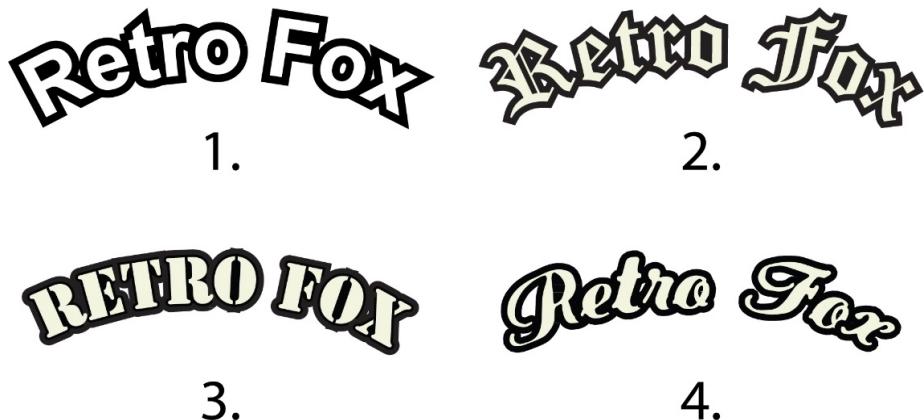


FIGURE 3 – THREE DIFFERENT LOGO APPLIQUES

Frequency Count	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Fourth Choice
Design 1	n=10	n=1	n=4	n=4
Design 2	n=2	n=1	n=2	n=12
Design 3	n=3	n=9	n=4	n=2
Design 4	n=3	n=7	n=8	n=0

TABLE 4 - PREFERENCE OF LOGO DESIGN

There are several reasons why many informants preferred Design 1 over the other 3 designs.

- (1) The plain logo is without any negative connotation or associative meanings. For example, informant 2 stated, "Number two is way too ghetto. That's probably so politically incorrect but it's just too ghetto-fab. It looks like it belongs on a pink velour tracksuit." Another informant [2] said, "I don't like design 2 ... just don't like that medieval type font."
- (2) The design is clean, bold and legible.
- (3) The logo is modern and not dated.

"...Um, number 1 stands out more. It's bold and easier to read. The other ones are harder to read and hard to make out". [Informant 5]

"...I like a bold, clean, graphic font [Design 1]. I think it's more so our time and not as dated but it's kind of heavy and obnoxious". [Informant 12]

"...Um I like things that are clean and simple so number one is clearly the most basic font. I hate number two. it just looks very gaudy and ornate. Three looks like a stencil. And four I don't really know what it is". [Informant 14]

7 APPROPRIATENESS AND USAGE SITUATION

Many informants reported that they wore hoodies all year round. However, several informants said they only wore a hoodie in certain situations due to its social appropriateness and functionality.

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'...I don't wear hoodies all the time, more in relaxing or work out times usually. ... I wouldn't wear it for dinner". [Informant 6]

"...Yes, I wear hoodies if it were for school and athletic purposes. I would only wear it on casual, casual affairs. ... Maybe I would wear one if it was cold for warmth purposes, or if I were going to the gym but I wouldn't wear it for anything else". [Informant 12]

"...I generally wear a hoodie. I would wear them going out at night, inside when the air conditioning is on, in a restaurant if I was cold, things like that. Umm, if it were raining outside I don't like to wear hats all the time so weather permitting, yeah". [Informant 13]

In addition to these findings, some informants stated that different hoodie brands or styles might carry different socio-cultural meanings. For example:

"...It depends on the hoodie ... like the big, giant Ekco hoodies, I definitely associate with gangsters and the ghetto in Coburgh. So that's the oversized. Then the one's from Lululemon is a select group of people. Like a lot of active people that are into yoga or dance. There is different styles for different types of people". [Informant 16]

"...Yes. Well if you're wearing big, oversized "G-Unit" hoodies then you're a gangster. If you have every kind of Lululemon hoodie you're either a student or you're some 20-30 some-odd mother who works out at the gym all the time. And if you're wearing a velour hoodie that's got "Baby Phat" written across the front then you're a little "Prosta-tot." The worst are those rhinestone-embellished hoodies". [Informant 10]

8 CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

It is evident that hoodies do not merely provide physical comfort to their wearers, but the complex interplay of style choice with many factors including the style, silhouette, design features and usage situations - offer psychological comfort. For example, logos with certain typefaces (e.g., tattoo, graffiti) and an oversized fit may associate with certain subcultural groups such as hip-hop culture, gangsters, and/or rappers. According to our findings, most of the informants did not wear oversized hoodies, as many preferred fitted hoodies to build their identity (e.g., femininity) and casual lifestyle.

In order to successfully capture the young consumer market, fashion designers and manufacturers should pay attention to the changing needs and aspirations of today's consumers. Designers should investigate and strive for a better understanding of what design features (colour, fit, style, silhouette) can be used to enhance aesthetic appeal, improve utilitarian values and create longer usage lifespan of their product. In addition, designers should develop tools and methods to monitor and anticipate changes in this fast-moving environment. For example, online co-design tools and interactivity could be important to gain a deeper understanding of consumer psychology prior to prototype design and development. The intention of this exploratory study is to provide current information and meaningful insights to the academic research community and fashion industry.

In terms of future research, further testing and validation are needed in other cities or regions. Studies of the consumers' online activities should be included for this demographic segment. In addition, a comparative study of both designer's and consumer's viewpoints could be useful.

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Fashion Style and Design: Symbolic Meaning Aesthetic Values

Osmud Rahman

The current study has a few shortcomings as many studies have. First, the sample size could be relatively small as compared to other studies (e.g., Rahman, 2012). Second, the focus on female young consumers (21-26 years) may limit the generalizability of the results. Our focal stimuli (hoodie) is more relevant to the younger demographic groups, and it would be useful to compare different fashion products, gender, and age groups within and across cities. Thus, there is a need for replication of this study using different geographic locations, genders and wider range of age groups. Research studies on product design and consumer behaviour are necessary to be further explored in greater depth - including the congruity of product image and consumer self-image; users' experience within different sociocultural contexts; and the evolution of product design. In addition, a longitudinal study could be interesting and meaningful to understand how consumers' preferences change over time, and how the product designers and developers correspond with their changing needs and aspirations.

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