

Branding Burberry: Britishness, Heritage, Labour and Consumption

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I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sian Weston".

Sian Weston

In memory of my inspirational and stylish mother, Lyn Weston.

Special thanks to my supervisor Professor Beverley Skeggs for her unceasing encouragement and undimmed confidence in my work throughout the course of my research, and for making my time at Goldsmiths a pleasurable chapter of my professional life.

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Abstract

This thesis examines British fashion company Burberry, and how it moved from its semi-rural craft-based origins in the mid-19th Century, to become a successful, global luxury fashion brand in the 21st Century.

The thesis uses different methodological approaches including interviews with factory workers, archive materials, historical government documents, images from branding campaigns, and Internet responses in order to build a rich narrative starting from Burberry's beginning in 1856.

Changes to shifting retail and production landscapes, marketing, consumer demographics, and management structures are traced over a period of 150 years, and show how a company re-brand in 1997 generated structural contradictions within each of those areas, shaping its future both inside the company and externally.

Burberry's use of new technologies and social media in tandem with 'heritage' images and products shows how harnessing them together created new and lucrative global markets for the brand. Similarly, its long history is used to create an idealised 'old England' for the export market, particularly for consumers with a purely online relationship with the brand, though analysis of international and national markets reveals how contradictions in campaigns created outcomes that could not be predicted.

The company re-brand is used as a focus to examine how Burberry attracted young, British working-class consumers, and how that caused sections of the UK media and the general public to protest against those seen as 'bad' consumers, capable of damaging brand value. Equally, issues of class and ethnicity cut across the company, primarily in terms of 'whiteness', showing how

the brand has been used to further devalue the cultural capital of working class consumers and a single so-called ‘celebrity chav’.

The thesis shows how although Burberry positions itself within the luxury market, its meaning remains mobile, which is simultaneously precarious, contradictory and paradoxical.

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Introduction

In May 1998, I developed and co-delivered a five-week design project called 'World Cup 98', where I worked with a group of people that Arts Council England described as 'young people at risk of offending'. This culturally diverse group, comprising eighteen boys and two girls aged 14 to 16, designed and printed five-a-side football strips, played in a knock-out football tournament, and edited a specially-commissioned fanzine. I was curious about their dress as many of the boys proudly wore Burberry scarves, jackets and baseball caps that they steadfastly refused to remove, despite the hot and messy studio conditions.

This scenario was not, however, an unusual one, as my background as a specialist curator for fashion and textiles has brought me into contact with other marginalised groups whose interest in luxury clothing brands was a strong element of their identity formation. But the focus on Burberry as a group identity was new, and it became clear that this group used the Burberry 'Nova' check as a way of signalling a tacit connection to one another, despite the potentially adversarial scenario of competition in both the design stages, and the knock-out tournament: 'World Cup 98' successfully demonstrated a clear bond between Burberry wearers, however these consumers were far from the company's ideal target market, as they were from low-income, working-class families, a demographic that was socially distant from the upper class image of Burberry, and I tried to imagine how these young consumers had found their way to the brand.

My interest in Burberry and its connections to an apparent polarity of class and age remained, and when in 2006 the company announced the closure of its production plant in the Rhondda Valley, this added another layer of complexity to Burberry's story – one that involved industrial relations and brand

transparency, as press interest in the closure mounted, and the company was heavily scrutinised. That the plant was in Wales, homeland to both my mother and grandmother, both of whom used craft skills to make clothes and household textiles, tipped the balance for me, as this element formed a strong core of female pride, not only as a source of technical excellence, but one of thrift. Again, I tried to imagine the scenario, this time visualising what it meant for the largely female workforce in Treorchy to go from using complex craft skills to make high quality luxury garments, and how this might feel now they were no longer required, or paid, to make clothing and apparel, and had lost their livelihood.

These elements were underpinned by a long history of family connections to fashion and textiles, and indeed within my own education where my first degree was in embroidery and my studio practice examined class structure through dress and textiles. Later on, my studio work and critical theory examined consumption practices, and I became more interested in textiles as political objects - an area of investigation that I carried through as a curator at London Printworks Trust.

However, it was during an oral history research project as part of my teaching qualification where I talked to my grandmother about lifelong learning that I came to understand the wealth of my family's involvement within textile craft. I knew that my grandmother had moved from Norway to Wales in the early 1920s and that she was the youngest child of twelve; I had been given many of her embroidered household textiles and woven blankets that to my teenage mind conjured an exquisite continental 'otherness', but what I didn't know was that she had been subjected to stringent immigration laws on entering the UK that meant that she had to report to the police on a weekly basis, and failure to do so could result in imprisonment. My grandmother had been taught craft skills, and particularly textile skills, by her mother and sisters, and had developed a

considerable ability at some of the finer embroidery work including Hardanger, a complex and beautiful all-white drawn thread technique. On moving to Wales, she was unable to understand the Welsh language, so used her textile skills in order to ease her integration into local women's groups where spoken language was less important than a dazzling craft skill, and craft became part of what I describe as her 'settlement' language. Even as her Welsh, and later on her English language skills improved, her status as a skilled craftsperson remained and her learning carried on into adult life.

My grandmother passed her skills on through her daughter (my mother), and they both spoke warmly about this special, women-only circle of excellence. My mother loved fashion from an early age, but living on a farm in rural Wales during the 1940s meant that, though far from impoverished, she lacked the financial means to buy clothes, but she also lacked access to fashionable clothing stores, so she started to make her own clothes using fabrics bought at the nearest local market in Cardigan. These were rare and special trips into 'town', and she spoke of her sense of excitement as they were being planned. She also spoke of her sense of pride at being able to make a high quality pencil skirt from a yard of fabric; equally, she marveled at her mother's ingenuity for making her school wear, and how she'd adapted some of them into clothes she eventually took to college. My mother was the very first person in her family to go onto higher education, and for her – even in the increasingly consumerist post-war era, this meant that her craft skill was intertwined with her intellectual capacity – and there was some pleasure in wearing expertly made clothes that were crafted at home.

More than twenty years after completing the oral history work with my mother and grandmother, two key elements emerged when I began to consider the closure of the Treorchy plant in parallel to my family's experience: one of 'fitting in', and one of thrift, and this led me to develop a curatorial project called 'Can

Craft Make You Happy?’, which was funded by the Crafts Council, and allowed me to travel to Wales to develop primary research materials with some of the former machinists at the Burberry plant in Treorchy

‘Can Craft Make You Happy?’ examined what it was like to make clothing and apparel for the luxury fashion industry, while being unable to be a consumer in that sector. It considered issues around women’s labour, a sense of ‘thrift’, social structures in the workplace, and the reality of losing a job in an area of high unemployment, and this research essentially informed the empirical elements of my thesis.

The footballing teens informed another large section of the thesis, that of the ‘bad’ consumer. In 1998, I found the students to be engaged and creative and, at the time my only questions focused on why they’d selected Burberry as their uniform of choice, as at the time we were still some six years away from the miniature moral panic by the UK media, which linked working class Burberry consumers to lawlessness.

These two real-life narratives formed the basis of my initial PhD enquiry, and over the course of my research, two further elements emerged, the nature of ‘British-ness’, and how Burberry utilize ‘heritage’. But these cannot be separated from either labour or consumption, and throughout this thesis I show how each of these elements link to one another.

Chapter one

Methodology

This thesis uses a range of methodologies that contribute to the increasingly interdisciplinary approach within social science, and also one that is in keeping with a rigorous interrogation of a single object. The methodologies I use help to build a rich narrative starting from Burberry's beginning in 1856, and include interviews with factory workers, an examination of archive materials and historical government documents, image analysis of Burberry adverts and branding campaigns, and consumer responses from online resources and social media platforms.

The text interrogates what Lash and Lury describe as 'the life course of an object' (2007: 16), which has seen the company move through key changes in retail dating back to the industrial revolution, through two World Wars, the Swinging Sixties, to what Olins (1978) describes as 'new trading communities' in the early 1970s, to the emergence of the information age in the late twentieth and early twenty first century. But more precisely, my research follows Burberry's transformation from family owned company into a fully-fledged global brand and cultural object.

The benefits of 'following the object' means that 'this does not privilege or focus exclusively on one moment in an object's life: its production, or its circulation in, for example, publicity and advertising, or its reception.' (Lash and Lury, 2007: 19) This has allowed me to take into account the changes that have happened around Burberry alongside changes the company has configured itself. And, following Appadurai's (1986) argument, it has exposed the social life around Burberry, both as a commodity and as a brand.

A large proportion of my research falls between what Jenss (2016) describes as 'high fashion' and its elite connotations, and everyday fashion practices using

'ordinary' or 'humble' clothes, as my primary focus is on the un-changing, super-recognizable Nova check (now re-marketed as the 'Haymarket' check), seen on innumerable versions of the trench coat, scarf, handbag, and umbrella, but also on the baseball cap and zippered jacket, all of which are unaffected by seasonal change.

Burberry isn't ubiquitous, as Woodward (2007) argues blue jeans are, nor is it extraordinary; it isn't 'rarely worn', but it can be described as 'special' clothing saved for particular occasions, which poses something of a dilemma, as Woodward points out

'Among fashion's defining features are its ephemerality and its 'mutability' (Wilson, 1985: 58), which as a consequence, makes it difficult to grasp. Scholars of fashion are then faced with the methodological challenge of trying to research something that is perceived as immaterial and continually changing.' (2016: 42)

The vast majority of Burberry products are not ephemeral, nor does the brand continually change however the context within which it is seen is highly 'mutable', and this impacts how the brand is perceived within the public domain. For example, Daniel Miller argues that 'stuff' such as clothes, 'conceive these primarily as signs or symbols that 'represent', for example, the status of the wearer.' (Jenss, 2016: 22) and so methods to unearth 'the status of the wearer' need to be context specific '...as the garment cannot be analyzed separately from the wearer'. (Woodward, 2016: 53)

I have examined Burberry as an object of material culture however this throws up some methodological challenges, as Jenss argues

'Understanding fashion as a form of material culture has methodological implications: it involves not only the examination of fashion and dress as material objects, or through object-based research, [but it also involves the exploration of material practices, for example what people do with material things, what things do with people, and how they relate to each other]' (2016: 21-22)

As much of my research involves class and gender, these form substantial elements of material practices, for example, the use of 'luxury' garments by working class consumers, an issue I examine through public comments on social media.

To better understand Burberry in a holistic sense, I have divided the text into distinct but interlocking areas: street interviews and social research, textual analysis, oral history, archive research, and image deconstruction.

Street interviews

The early years of my empirical research were characterized by largely unsuccessful attempts to interview Burberry wearers through two long-winded approaches. The first method was to place specially designed postcards in shop windows in Lewisham, Greenwich, Deptford, and Brixton; I chose these locations as I was familiar with the geographic areas, and I was in close proximity to respondents who either lived or worked in these areas (and which is why I chose not to advertise in Loot or on Gumtree). The sites were in places where Burberry advertised one of their signature fragrances (Burberry Brit) primarily on JC Decaux bus shelters, and they were also in areas of mixed local economies, where working class residential areas were bordered by middle class homes. However the email and phone responses I received (which were few in number) didn't tell me much about the consumer, and respondents were reluctant to meet in person, rendering the measures I'd taken to be in close

geographical proximity null and void.

Following this was an attempt to interview people wearing Burberry, which took the form of street interviews where I spoke to and photographed consumers, using the remaining hand-produced postcards as a way of introducing myself. This stage of research was conducted over a month-long period in Lewisham's Riverdale shopping centre, and in the streets around Burberry's flagship store in London's Mayfair. I chose these sites as I imagined they would give me a 'balanced' picture of working-class consumption alongside choices of an economic elite, however the people I stopped to speak to in Lewisham were mainly middle class consumers or school age children who couldn't be interviewed without parental support, and in Mayfair the interviews I conducted were primarily with tourists visiting the city. None of the interviewees were interested (nor perhaps believed in the credibility) of my offer to stage an exhibition of their images as a reward for their participation.

Although both methods were somewhat unproductive, I had succeeded in locating consumers who were happy to answer my questions, which initially focused on the life history of their garments, for example I asked about their first Burberry purchase: where was it bought, and who bought it? Did they have particular memories wearing it? What attracted them to Burberry? What qualities did they think it projected, and did they, as Judith Williamson (1978) argues 'see themselves' in the brand? Did they plan to buy more? Did their friends, family or colleagues wear Burberry? Though Sophie Woodward argues that 'adopting life history interviews proved a useful strategy in getting people to talk' (2016: 51), I found that this method was constricted by time, and a sense of awkwardness by the person being interviewed as my inexperience at interviewing meant that the questions were exactly laid out in advance, and didn't allow for any divergence into other, potentially more exciting areas of investigation, nor for any interactions with other like-minded consumers.

Fashion research within a sociological framework has many precedents, and unlike my own person-to-person interviews, ‘Fashion Map’ (2001), a long-term empirical research project at Nottingham Trent University, successfully documented fashion as it was produced and presented on the street. Fashion Map has been described as a ‘mass observation’ project, however its aim of documenting fashion in terms of how individuals or groups manage to differentiate themselves from the mainstream differed from my objective of singling out consumers wearing one particular brand as a form of collective identity.

The ‘wardrobe inventory’ has been viewed as a legitimate method of gaining access to what is essentially a private and intimate site, and certainly Frédéric Le Play’s (1862) ‘Instruction sur le méthode d’observation’ (which Diana Crane (2000) details in ‘Fashion and its Social Agendas’) shows how he used multiple teams of people to make inventories of working class and middle class men’s and women’s wardrobes in rural and urban France during the nineteenth century, carefully detailing individual items and cost. Le Play’s intent mirrors my own, as he sought to identify any gender or class differences in consumer choice and behavior of these groups, however his focus on the urban and rural took his research in different direction.

Though Jenss argues that research has moved away from these binary forms of thinking that ‘have been at the heart of the history of fashion in euro-modernity’ (2016: 3), there is still a need to examine the fashion practices of working class and middle class consumers, and to consider gendered consumer practices. For example, in Sophie Woodward’s (2007) ethnographic study, she focuses on how women choose clothes in ‘Why Women Wear What They Wear’, and shows a more inclusive approach to wardrobe analysis. Woodward’s study sees the sociologist observing women as they dress, in private at home, starting with a ‘wardrobe interview’, however unlike Le Play, she invited interaction and a

narrative or ‘life story’ about each item, asking participants to “tell me about it” (2016: 46), rendering the ‘wardrobe story’ as a more balanced and equitable account.

Emily Spivack’s wornstories.com (2010) examines the role of fashion in everyday lives and memories, however she doesn’t explicitly distinguish gender, and her site moves between features on more mundane clothing items including t-shirts, knitwear, boots, socks and sweatshirts, to privileging the extraordinary, for example a custom-made outfit for an artist showing at the Whitney Biennale.

Though all of these case studies offer creative and engaging methodologies, none of these research projects had the strict focus of a single brand, which left me to develop a hybrid multi-disciplinary approach.

Social Research

My attempts at fieldwork were abandoned in favour of textual analysis where an examination into online commentaries on bulletin boards and via social media proved to be far more useful as they gave me a strong platform on which to build an image of contemporary consumerism with a specific focus on Burberry. Though ethnographers argue that ‘being there’, face-to-face with research subjects is the ideal methodological approach I found that using online resources gave me access to a wide range and greater number of consumers, which meant that the scale of my research could be widened, while still keeping a focus on Burberry.

The sites I chose ranged from consumer review platforms (for example reviewcentre.com), online hate-speech forums e.g. chavscum.co.uk, to those representing authority figures, including policespecials.com. I also included comments by high profile pro-fox hunting figure Isaac Ferry on the Real Countryside Alliance site (realca.co.uk) because of Ferry’s connection

to Burberry, when he worked as a model for the brand during their 150th anniversary celebrations.

Some sites came into my sightline after an internet search using key words ‘hate Burberry’, including secularcafe.org, which aims to provide a ‘support forum for secular lifestyles and issues’ and to stimulate ‘intellectual debate and discussion forums on politics, world events, human rights, philosophy and morality’. Despite the site’s noble aims, the comments with a focus on Burberry descended into hate-speech, and were characteristic of the negative and class-based discussions elsewhere on the Internet.

On a more positive note, searching for ‘love Burberry’ gave me consumer comments from Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Google+, Pinterest, YouTube, The Sartorialist, and from Burberry’s own social networking campaign, ‘Burberry with Love’. This gave me access to a primarily young network of global consumers who ‘elaborated’ the brand via their interwoven stories surrounding the models, the gifts, the music, and the images chosen by Burberry.

The beauty of comments from online sources is that they are unprompted by the interviewer, and in some cases, for example on chavscum.co.uk and the realca.co.uk, they are unregulated and un-edited, as the sites don’t have an appointed moderator. This methodology allowed me to examine materials within the public domain over a wide range of sites, and meant that my own agenda and focus of my questions didn’t get in the way of consumer comments, allowing the findings to lead the research.

It demonstrated that Burberry consumers are able to articulate their feelings – how the brand makes them feel special or noticeable, or how it induces envy amongst their friends, families or neighbours. The negative comments demonstrate the widespread ‘sameness’ of criticism: that working class

consumption of the brand brings it into disrepute, and that working class women wearing the brand are widely viewed as ‘tasteless’.

This methodology also helped me to unearth several case studies including loyal Burberry fan, Legs from Leeds, a working class woman who buys the brand for herself and her two grandsons as a way of ‘distinguishing’ herself and her family within her neighbourhood. Legs from Leeds is candid about her life and her feelings towards Burberry, and it is unlikely that this would have happened within an interview, as I would have shied away from asking questions about some of the highly personal issues she brings to the surface during her recommendation of the brand on reviewcentre.com. Similarly, the character of ‘Oldfart’, who also appears on the Review Centre site, and who challenges Legs from Leeds, but does so from a position of anonymity, which frees him to write without care of consequence and enables him to fully engage with his anger. Though it may have been possible for this type of exchange to occur within, for example, a focus group setting, the level of Oldfart’s vitriol was perhaps more pronounced, as he was anonymous.

The exposure of Isaac Ferry would have been difficult to achieve without the aid of online commentary, as access to him is highly restricted, however his private email message un-masks his personal feelings towards anti-hunt campaigners, and has become a trophy for The Real Countryside Alliance.

Oral History

Oral history, or the re-telling of stories was an important methodological element within my empirical research, especially in connection to interviews and conversations with some of the former Burberry machinists. Here, the face-to-face interview took on an important ethnographical role that couldn’t have been replicated in any other way, but it too presented a number of challenges, not least talking to people about loss.

Christina Moon's (2016) ethnography uncovers what the fashion industry would look like if it were described through the narratives, social relationships, and practices of fashion workers, and though it took place in New York and involved workers who had migrated from China and Korea, there are links to my own research in Wales, particularly amongst manual workers. Moon acknowledges that undertaking face-to-face interviews necessitates 'all sorts of awkward and intimidating interactions and encounters' (2016: 69), where the researcher has to acknowledge their own subjective position, and where 'data collection' takes on a more personal quality. Moon also acknowledges the 'muddy' conditions of fieldwork, and she questions how methodology would guide her though 'the fragmented pieces of 'data' presented by people, their non-linear stories, the scattering of their memories and various social histories, narratives that I would collect in the most haphazard ways'. (2016: 70)

This sense of 'fragmentation' is also found in Natalya Buckel's (2013) 'Feedsack Fashion' essay, where she documents collective memories of home-sewn fashions within working class communities in Ashe County, North Carolina in depression-era America. Buckel argues that oral history interviews brought a new depth to her research work:

'Personal recollections reveal attitudes about dress that cannot be gained through object-based research and provide a narrative through which to explore broader social and cultural forms.' (2013: 144)

Though Moon (2016) and Buckel (2013) find that the oral history interview is an effective method of digging deep, and Sandino argues that interviews seem to 'offer insights or stories unavailable by other means. In tandem with oral history, which also seeks to uncover hidden, marginalized aspects of the past, the interview appears to privilege firsthand narratives and experience.' (2013: 1) However, the interview also presents some challenges, and questions of

subjectivity can arise as personal connections sometimes lead researchers to their subjects. Moon describes her findings as showing ‘not objective systems or totalities, but particular viewings, personal implications and entanglements of my own and of the subjects I spent time with.’ (2016: 80) This can be seen as problematic, however Sandino confronts this paradox and argues that

‘Nevertheless, fidelity and subjectivity should be seen as complementary rather than as oppositional because subjectivity is the means by which individuals express their own sense of themselves in history.’ (Portelli, 1991: ix, cited in Sandino, 2013: 7)

My research methods relied a great deal on relationships, some of my own and others that were developed over the course of my research. The GMB union was my initial source of information, and they became important gatekeepers to my primary sources, former Burberry employees in Treorchy. The GMB engineered my first meeting with the employees in March 2008, when they invited me to a reunion marking one year since the plant at Treorchy had been shut down. My invitation to the event was last minute and unexpected, but the event effectively opened the door to some of the key individuals involved in the protests against the plant closure, and it was here that GMB organizer Mervyn Burnett introduced me to Joan Young, a former Shop Steward and machinist at the Burberry plant.

Joan’s introduction to the town that weekend left a lasting impression on me, and was itself a classic case of a ‘personal and subjective viewing’ arrived at through someone I spent time with. Nonetheless, her exhaustive dialogue as we traversed the small town resembled a kind of ‘witnessing’, the type that is more usually associated with a war crimes tribunal, or as Sandino puts it, ‘the ‘testimony’ here refers to the representation of what has been lost or has vanished’ (2013: 2), which in this case was Joan’s description of what the

Burberry closure meant to her, her former colleagues, and to the town itself.

Over the summer of 2008, I went back to Treorchy and interviewed three more former employees, using a set of twelve Burberry advertisements dating from World War One and up to 'The Beat Goes On' advertising campaign from Spring-Summer 2008, as a basis for our initial conversations. These interviews were smoother than my attempts in Lewisham and Mayfair, as they took place in some comfort indoors; they were pre-arranged to suit the interviewee, and were digitally recorded. I spoke to the women about the portfolio of Burberry images, and if they felt any connection between their former jobs and the narratives laid out in the advertisements. There was some recognition of the older images, and two of the machinists recalled being asked to make mock-ups of clothing worn by 'an Artic explorer' for an exhibition 'somewhere', however they couldn't recall the job in more detail as it was simply an instruction from management.

Most felt unconnected to the newer images, including those dating from the 150th anniversary of the company in 2006, though they triggered a certain recognition as they had been displayed on the factory site, however any recognition had been a learned process as most of the women I spoke to didn't initially recognize Kate Moss, or indeed any of the other high profile models in the campaign. Moss in particular attracted criticism, and one machinist argued that Burberry 'had paid out all that money, and she had money anyway'. Other feelings of frustration emerged as a result of this particular methodology, including an overriding feeling that the brand operated on a 'different wavelength' and didn't appear to think along the same lines as a majority of the workforce, which though typical for any large organization, particularly a fashion company, nonetheless highlights the disparity between brand image and the skilled labour behind the label.

I also asked questions about their time at the factory, their starting age, what sections they worked in, and what they were employed to do. We discussed regime changes, firstly after sister company Polikoff pulled out of the Treorchy plant and Burberry formerly took over in the late 1980s, and secondly as a result of incoming CEO, Angela Ahrendts in 2006, who, despite her status at the top of the company, was highly visible to the workforce situated at the bottom. In this instance, the interview provided ‘the circumstance and opportunity for retrospective reflection, and as a means of closing the gap between the self-that-was, the current speaking self, and the projected self.’ (Sandino, 2013: 3) Historians argue that one cannot talk about history while it is happening, so the ‘retrospective reflection’ of undertaking an oral history interview that took into account the past, the present, and the future, became a form of ‘testimony’. As Sandino eloquently argues

‘Interviewees know more about their lives than does the interviewer, and through their use of descriptive passages, narrators ‘construct’ stories in order to represent the past. They too become historians, not just in terms of their recollection of past events in order to feed the historian [but as creators of meaning about those events]’ (2013: 11)

In addition to ‘creating meaning’ from the closure, the interviews also helped draw out more positive feelings, and all of the women I spoke to acknowledged, sometimes grudgingly, that they felt more assertive and in control, and that the struggle to keep the plant open had made them stand up for themselves and break out of their usual reticence.

These conversations became the basis for an application to the Crafts Council’s ‘Spark Plug’ curator award, which funded Research and Development for innovative curatorial initiatives, and I was awarded funding to develop ‘Can Craft Make You Happy?’ specifically with former Burberry employees. As part of this

project, I intended to run three embroidery workshops, and considered hiring the Parc & Dare Working Men's Institute in Treorchy, as this was considered an appropriate setting for 'learning', for example most evening classes were run from there, and it was home to the local amateur dramatic group. However, I decided instead to approach Joan Young to ask if she would consider hosting the sessions at her house. The lack of an 'institutional' context, and certainly a less overtly masculine setting allowed the women the feel more relaxed and less like they were being formally interviewed: the familiar domestic setting, and the collective activity for 'Can Craft Make You Happy?' encouraged the stories to flow, and the informal environment inspired them to tell stories of their working lives at the factory.

Although this wasn't the classic 'deep' ethnographic study, where the researcher spends upwards of one year on-site, observing and working alongside employees in the workplace, as Sallie Westwood (1984) did in the classic 'All Day Every Day' which examined factory life in a hosiery production plant, nonetheless it gave me and artist Bedwyr Williams a clear insight into the functions and non-functioning elements of life in the Burberry production plant. It also helped to make a space for idiosyncratic stories, and both Williams and I were struck by one narrative in particular, one that concerned the quantity of Burberry 'gifts' – handbags, umbrellas, shirts etc., given to employees at Christmas time, but which now lie un-used and un-loved, in multiple under-stairs cupboards throughout Treorchy and its environs, as a sense of 'thrift' was so strong, it prevented them from simply being thrown away. Yet their loathing towards these inanimate objects produced a potent affect that rendered the goods redundant, an issue examined by Banim and Guy (2001) who looked at clothes people keep but no longer wear in terms of a typology of former, current and aspirational selves. But where Banim and Guy examined issues including worries about weight, or dressing for work, my study examined the toxicity of clothes and accessories, where the Nova check pattern had become

politicized, and was no longer palatable. These stories led to an unexpected outcome that emerged over the course of our study: we found that the gap between ‘researcher’ and ‘research subject’ shrank, as these highly personal entanglements pulled both Williams and I into memories of garment histories.

Archives

My focus on a historic clothing company necessitated the use of archives throughout my research, and these ranged from Burberry’s own ‘archive’ on London’s Haymarket, the Chilcomb House archive at Hampshire Museum Services, the University of Worcester’s Kay’s Catalogue archive, verbatim records of debates within the UK Parliament on Hansard, to what Savage (2010) describes as ‘the-internet-as-archive’. Added to these sources were press materials detailing the closure of the Treorchy plant belonging to Joan Young, and to the GMB.

Personal recommendation and networks developed as part of my study actively shaped my research, and gave me access to differing cultures, politics, and viewpoints, and the materials I examined ranged from business expenses, to aspects of material culture. Some documents were kept for legal purposes, and others as reminders of ‘the past’; some archival documents were freely given, for example the press cuttings of the Treorchy closure; some were publically available, for example access to the Kay’s Catalogue archive site and to Hansard; and others, including access to Chilcomb House, were negotiated through professional art historian contacts, some at Chelsea College of Art, and others at the V&A. Access to the Burberry archive took many years to achieve, as I was turned down on multiple occasions through a wide range of corporate offices, but I was eventually introduced to Burberry’s ‘archivist’, David Quelch, by the Keeper of Dress and Textiles at Hampshire Museum Services, Alison Carter.

The negotiations at Burberry affected my research experience, as it proved so difficult to access their collections, mirroring Foucault's argument that archives are 'monuments to particular configurations of power' (Foucault, 1975, cited in Burton: 2006: 6) which help to form a real sense of exclusion. The impact of this exclusion meant that over time I developed an over-fertile vision of what the Burberry archive would look like: I imagined its pungency, the haptic clarity of handling cottons, silks and luxurious wool fabrics from its endless and magnificent collections of dresses, hats, coats, breeches, and smocks stretching back to 1856. I had a clear vision of complete collections of historical catalogues, serried rows of books containing copies of all its advertisements in date order. Of course, what I actually encountered was far from this romantic vision, and the 'archive' was nothing like I had imagined, a situation that Gieger et al confront, arguing that '... even reflexive and interpretive sociologists are not immune to the fantasy of the complete archive, and absolute access to the truth and this forms part of the resistance to the creation of a sociological archive, that it can never be complete, that it will always be a site of loss and failure' (2010: 7).

Quelch's rooms were in the basement of a building in London's Haymarket, opposite their original store. He had been appointed as keeper of the archive after his retirement as Director of sister company, the Scotch House. This was a new and part-time post, and Quelch battled against the odds of re-building the company's records, as they had kept relatively little of its past, and I was surprised at his request to "buy any historical Burberry products you see on e-Bay" with an assurance that he'd pay me back straightaway.

I'd planned my visit in detail: I expressly wanted to see copies of press adverts dating back to the start of the business, however I was disappointed to see that what the company had in abundance were a series of boxes containing mass-produced leaflets for the company from the 1940s and 50s detailing small-

scale regional outlets where Burberry could be purchased, but nonetheless I dutifully photocopied them. Despite this setback, I successfully unearthed a few intriguing documents including an advert from the New York Times in 1970 showing ‘Sherlock Holmes’ descend from a helicopter on a roof-top helipad wearing a classic Burberry trench coat, and an advertising quote recommending Burberry from transatlantic aviator, Sir John Alcock in 1919. Despite these finds, my initial plans had been derailed, and I experienced a bodily sense of disappointment at the non-archive at Burberry: what I’d imagined and planned for did not exist, and I had to re-align my plans *in the moment*.

Quelch invited me to visit the archive again, and though his offer was generous, my access to this archive was short-term, as he died shortly after our first meeting, and what Burton describes as ‘the bureaucratic nature of archival encounters, and the ways in which the administrative apparatus of archives can limit the stories that are told’ (2006: 11), again enveloped my research. My archive fever stemmed not from an anxiety concerning the ethics of the archive, but from a lack of archive, a paradoxical state of affairs given that Burberry now rely so heavily on the archive as a central design direction.

At the outset of my research project, I was unaware of the archive at Chilcomb House, part of the Hampshire Museum Services in Winchester, however after giving a lecture to undergraduates at Chelsea College of Art, the Head of Theory suggested I contact them to arrange a visit. Access to Chilcomb House proved to be more straightforward, nevertheless, the archive itself was in a relatively inaccessible site, and could only be comfortably reached by car or taxi, which meant that visits had to be planned meticulously in advance. However, unlike the Burberry archive, it was significantly more substantial and housed some of the garments I’d been dreaming about, but I still had a sense that calling it an ‘archive’ was perhaps a bit overblown – even with the addition of garments, as the main body of the collection comprised a series of boxes

into which museum staff had placed company papers, adverts, brochures, letters, and photographs, a taxonomy that didn't always make sense, but one that nonetheless reflected my research at this stage – that is, incomplete and developmental, and one that made me yearn for a more 'complete' resource.

My gatekeeper to this archive was Alison Carter, the Senior Keeper of Art, Design, Dress and Textiles for Hampshire. Carter allowed me free reign across the archive, and my days there were characterized by a highly disciplined approach that maximized the time constraints brought on by the necessity of catching an off-peak train from London to Winchester, and I was aware that this privileged access was granted because I was a trusted figure in a relationship that had been mediated and brokered through my professional standing. I was also aware that the archive had been created by the people I worked amongst at Chilcomb House, which tempered my disappointment somewhat, as it became clear that these historians would spend many, many years constructing this collection.

The collection at Chilcomb House was not a digitized archive, and travel constraints notwithstanding, I was happy to have access to original fabrics and clothes, however the online resources offered by both Kay's Catalogue and Hansard records meant that I was able to easily access important information without the need to broker a relationship, nor apply for permissions. And while Gieger et al argues that although

'...some suggest that the internet will never become "more than a place to begin and end the research journey" (Sentilles 2005: 155), and that the internet cannot replace the laborious process of research whether in the field collecting information, interviewing subjects or visiting archives or organised depositories of documents and artefacts.' (2010: 8-9)

I was, however appreciative of the digitized content offered by the University of Worcester's 'worldofkays.org' archive, though it differed enormously from both the Burberry and the Chilcomb House archives. However, the use of web 2.0 technologies necessitated 'a re-thinking of the archive, making it a subject of social and historical inquiry' (Gieger et al, 2010: 9), and, not unnaturally, it was the University of Worcester's own particular understanding and frame of reference that informed the direction and focus of this particular 'social and historical' inquiry. Ostensibly, the 'worldofkays.org' research project seemed to offer innumerable possibilities for examining the impact of catalogue shopping in context to Burberry (which had been sold through Kay's up until 2001), but because the site is designed to deliver information on the history of fashion and female body image through images taken from Kay's Catalogue between 1920 and 1990, it never quite lived up to this potential. The 'search' function didn't trigger any specific Burberry images, none of my emails asking questions specifically about Burberry were answered, and there was no dedicated phone line. However, as the site went live in 2011, funding limitations may have impacted staffing levels to field enquiries. Ironically, however there was a postal address in order to request access to the Kay's collection in person, indicating a retreat from the digital back into a more familiar site of enquiry.

The Hansard site, however, proved to be more successful and despite emanating from the state, there was a total absence of bureaucracy involved in accessing the site. The accurate search function gave me access to an abundant source of information, and a political, social and economic context for why Burberry had been the focus of Parliamentary debate. This wasn't what Antoinette Burton describes as a 'yearning for and seduction by the past' (2006: 10) that she argues is at the heart of archival encounters, but a powerful objective and verifiable exposé of Burberry's employment tactics during World War One.

Image Deconstruction

Images formed an important element of my research, especially those that Burberry used as part of their advertising campaigns, and image deconstruction was a major methodological component in understanding Burberry in both a historical and a contemporary sense.

As Burberry co-existed alongside the nascent British advertising industry, this particular methodology was a useful way of ‘reading’ Burberry as far back as Great War, and I use Baudrillard’s (1968) theory of sign values as a way of understanding how Burberry arrived at some its early marketing decisions.

But image deconstruction is also an effective method of tracking changes to the way the company sells itself to consumers in contemporary markets, and the advert, as opposed the fashion editorial, is a perfect record of how the company wishes to be seen, as it is in control of every aspect of the image. It can be used to detect internal company changes, for example by examining campaigns immediately before and after Burberry appointed an external CEO in the mid-1990s, where we see the overall company aesthetic change from comfortable, middle-aged and conservative into one selling a privileged but hip lifestyle. And it can be used to trace external forces, for example in the wake of the worldwide financial crisis in 2008, when Burberry went ‘back to the land’ for their Spring-Summer 2009 advertising campaign that took place in Petersham Nurseries.

Image deconstruction as a social science methodology encompasses more than representation: Judith Williamson (1978) argues that they reflect social developments and shifts in media self-consciousness, and this method highlighted the rare instances where Burberry fell behind other more sophisticated, more ‘knowing’ advertisers. As Williamson argues

'Each era likes to think it has moved on, and this is built on the very structure of advertising: ads must always appear up to date, as new products must constantly appear to supersede old ones.' (1978: iv)

So where in some adverts from the 1930s Burberry is seen to be distant from other clothing and apparel retailers who have embraced a more glamorous lifestyle, their fashion advertisements can be used as a barometer for internal change as this era marked a change in leadership at Burberry after the death of its founder, and the company momentarily lost its way.

Ultimately, however Williamson argues that advertisements attach meaning to product, and using sign values is an effective way of understanding advertising images, but she also points out that

'...what an advertisement 'says' is merely what it claims to say; it is part of the deceptive mythology of advertising to believe that an advertisement is simply a transparent vehicle for a 'message' behind it.' (1978: 17)

Selecting which images to use proved more problematic as there were thousands to choose from, each with something different to 'say'. The choice was relatively straightforward with older advertisements, as they primarily confined themselves to appealing to an aristocratic elite, one in which Barthes (1967) argued that there was a social need for the aristocracy to distinguish itself from the bourgeoisie, where 'soldiering', following Veblen's (1899) argument, was considered to be a high status, non-productive occupation. However, in more contemporary markets, where the appeal was much more diffuse, this proved to be a more challenging selection, yet paradoxically a richer area to mine as the complexities of model casting practices, story-boarding, venue selection, and image production all competed for attention, and were sometimes not as cohesive as Burberry had intended.

Anthropologist Stephanie Sadre-Orafai (2016) points out there is a relatively long tradition of deconstructing the messages, meanings and codes of commercial fashion images stretching from Barthes (1967), to Goffman (1979) to Williamson (1978), however she brings new knowledge to the area of image production after an ethnographic study of model casting, where issues of ‘whiteness’ and existing levels of exposure count in a model’s favour. Or more straightforwardly, for Black and Asian models, who are already under-represented in contemporary fashion both in editorial and advertising shoots, there is less chance of them being cast because they are less well-known, and the agencies that represent them have less ‘backstory’ to sell to clients. Certainly, using this methodology shows how Burberry use an existing narrative of whiteness in both Kate Moss and Stella Tennant, both of whom have an impressive back-catalogue of stories that their agencies use to sell them to clients. Burberry also co-develops stories with for example, British Vogue, that then reinforces a meta-narrative about both British Vogue and Burberry, but also Kate Moss and Stella Tennant. Though Burberry has cast other, sometimes less well known models, there is no sense that these models move away from the archetype described by Sadre-Orafai.

Ultimately, however Burberry adhere to Susan Sontag’s argument that ‘furnishing this world with a duplicate one of images, photography makes us feel that the world is more available to us than it really is.’ (1977: 24) And it is this unceasing, standardized, global availability that forms the core of Burberry’s contemporary branding campaigns.

The use of all these single methodologies would have worked in isolation, however the combined force of using them in conjunction with one another has created a powerful three hundred and sixty degree examination into Burberry. Putting these differing methods together gave me an ability to see multiple perspectives and to build a considerably bigger picture from different positions.

Chapter two Literature Review

Burberry is arguably one of Britain's most legendary fashion companies, and although it is widely covered and largely applauded in the financial press and fashion media, very little has been written about it from a theoretical perspective. The brand has attracted global media coverage and is seen by some as the quintessential British brand, and the acme of business models, particularly in connection to its new media output (see Smith 2013, Shin 2012, Clark 2012, Moore and Birtwistle 2004). It has attracted coverage in media outlets ranging from British Vogue, the New York Times, CNBC, Marketing Magazine, to CrowdMedia.co.uk, but what is rarely discussed is the social and cultural impact of the brand over its long history.

Burberry self-published 'Concerning Winter Sport', with an introduction by EH Wroughton, in 1925, and the company were involved in the V&A's 'The Burberry Story' (1989), curated by respected lecturer and craft critic, Margot Coatts. Coatts examined Burberry's technological and business development over the course of its history however this exhibition essentially turned into a PR event for the company, who used the V&A site, and Coatts herself, to increase the 'value' of the company by aligning it to these elite sources.

One notable exception of extant work is Jane Tynan's (2011) critical examination of the Burberry trench coat in First World War Britain, where she examines the impact of volume production of officer-class uniform on the military body, and argues that adverts produced by Burberry suggested that their protective clothing could create active bodies for war work and that these figures embodied the 'militarization' of the British home front during war time. She also argues that the design of Burberry's trench coat updated the military body by combining aspects of sporting leisurewear with what she describes as new concepts of war work.

Tynan's research notwithstanding, there is a substantial gap in the literature in which to interrogate Burberry from multiple perspectives, including its business models, design development, production expertise, and consumer demographics, and to examine its transformation from family owned company into global brand and cultural object. The thesis looks at Burberry's history and cultural identity in both national and international contexts, examining the ways in which the company constructs its own specialist vernacular in areas including British-ness, heritage, and labour. It also considers how in recent years the company has sometimes fallen prey to the intricacies of the British class system, which has led to instances of contested consumption.

The literature review is divided into four key elements: Britishness, heritage, labour and consumption and all these elements interlink to form the essential dynamism of the contemporary brand.

British-ness

My research into British-ness can be situated alongside Alice Dallabona's (2014) work on 'Italianicity' and national identity, where she examines narratives of Italian craftsmanship within the luxury fashion industry. Dallabona argues that luxury fashion brands contribute to a process of constructing myths around national identity through the use of powerful images, primarily through advertisement campaigns and promotional films.

Dallabona shows how ideas of national identity using elements of tourism (brochures, guides, and leaflets), literature, movies, and news media that 'are neither natural nor obvious, but constructions whose strength does not lie in their accuracy' (2014: 223) which at Burberry can be seen in campaigns featuring, for example working class Pearly Kings and Queens, or well-heeled 'Sloane' shoplifters, which though unarguably 'constructions' of national identity, are neither natural nor obvious. Dallabona also argues that national identity is

not a fixed entity, ‘but a conglomeration of different traits, a mutable and fuzzy entity, that allow enough diversification for brands to pick and choose the most appropriate characteristics for their ends’ (2014: 222), which at Burberry takes the form of a radical divergence of British identity as patrician and eccentric, while simultaneously appearing as party-loving and cool.

I extend Goodrum’s research on versions of British-ness, with particular focus on her argument that ‘British fashion and the quintessentially British aristocratic look based on huntin’, shootin’ and fishin” (2005: 129), an aesthetic that she argues is now over, against her position that ‘class aspiration is promoted as a key value-adding characteristic in the selling of British fashion and in British fashion exports’ (2005: 129), to show how Burberry carefully use these apparently paradoxical positions, for example in their use of private parkland and the ancestral homes of some of the hip young models that appear in the brands’ advertising campaigns, where desire and aspiration is built around exclusivity and exclusion.

At its polar opposite, Wemyss (2009) work on white discourse, tolerance and belonging is used to interrogate a Burberry campaign featuring the classically British, but working class figures of the Pearly King and Queen, which, like many of the characters in Burberry campaigns, are highly context specific: what might be seen as ‘whimsical’ in the US, are seen as intimately entwined with working class culture in the UK, and are widely viewed as lacking value.

The notion of British-ness as being context specific can be seen in relation to Bolton’s (2006) text in ‘AngloMania’, where he examines ‘tradition and transgression’ in British fashion, but does so from a European and US perspective. Similarly, the products, discourses and narratives associated with luxury fashion can influence what Davey argues are popular notions of ‘Italianess, Frenchness, and Britishness’ (1999: 121) and that it is irrelevant

whether these ideas of national identity emerge from within the boundaries of the country concerned, or outside of them, a conclusion also drawn by Edensor who argues that 'the production of national identity can also occur outside of the nation state'. (2002: 144)

Billig's (1995) research is used to examine the international attraction of what he describes as a form of non-extreme, quiet nationalism that at Burberry largely focuses on British heritage. However I also use Billig's argument to show how this quietness is sometimes contradicted by Burberry's own choices, as in parallel to selling ideas of British-ness through images of souvenir London landmarks and the aristocracy, the brand also uses scenes that include shoplifting, street fighting, drunkenness, and criminal behaviour, both explicitly through scenarios in its advertising campaigns, and implicitly through its choice of models, which veer from white working class, to convicted members of the social elite.

The declining sense of nationalism is explored through Skey's (2011) work, where he questions the need for a national identity in terms of the growing importance of globalization; I show how a British profile continues to matter at Burberry, witnessed through a struggle to retain a 'Made in Britain' status, but also to consumers living outside Britain, as this gives the brand an opportunity to sell an idealized national discourse and for making British-ness significant in a contemporary, global market.

Colley's (1999) work on the contradictory nature of British identity, and the drift from a local to a global identity is used to reflect Burberry's sense of nationhood conjured via the brand's marketing campaigns, which contain images as diverse as ancient rural pathways, weavers cottages in urban London, hip and edgy nightclubs, and hen night preparations, which largely fulfills her sense of Britain as an 'asymmetrical, composite state' containing a range of radically different

but undeveloped allegiances, a position that supports Hall's argument that national identity is 'never complete, always in process.' (1990: 222)

Heritage

The transference from manufacturing to the service industries is examined through Corner and Harvey's (1991) UK-based research, and forms the core of my examination into 'heritage', and certainly their conclusion that merging 'enterprise' with 'heritage' helped to mobilize and manage change on a national level, helps to draw out a clear methodology for Burberry's approach to centralizing heritage as a key element of brand essence, and subsequently as one of their most important brand assets.

Similarly, Moor's (2007) work on the decline of manufacturing and the rise of the service industries in the UK and US in the mid-1980s is used to describe the increase of the 'heritage' sector, and to show how Burberry seized this aspect of change to influence not only the design of their collections, but also the aesthetics of their stores, product offer, and the development of their social media platforms and online appearance.

Drawing on Appadurai's (1996) notion of nostalgia without memory, I show how Burberry used elements of British mythology and culture, including medieval chivalry, class and personal liberty in the inter-war period, and the 'rural idyll', to increase a conservative nostalgia for 'the past' in twenty first century consumerism, successfully re-positioning 'heritage' as a capital-producing element of the brand.

My examination into heritage can be seen in context to Susan Stewart's (1993) work on nostalgia, which she firmly links to inauthenticity as it seeks a past that has never really existed except as a narrative. Stewart's assertion that nostalgia is 'hostile to history and its invisible origins' (1993: 23) can be

seen as supporting Burberry's aim of objectifying 'the past' as a quasi idyll, or what Stewart describes as 'a longing for an impossibly pure context of lived experience'. Though Stewart views nostalgia as primarily utopian, there are similarities to Evans' (2003) work on consumer and material culture, which takes on a darker narrative. Evans cites Rebecca Arnold's (2001) argument that it is in 'the nature of modern fashion to be inherently contradictory through a display of both the promise and the threat of the future...revealing our desires and anxieties...constructing identities that use stylish dress as a route to self-creation and yet ultimately to self-destruction.' (Arnold, 2001 xiv, cited in Evans, 2003: 7) Evans also describes parallels between the nineteenth century ragpicker and the contemporary fashion designer, who 'rummages in the historical wardrobe, scavenging images for reuse' (2003: 13), and that 'these traces of the past surface in the present like the return of the repressed.' (2003: 9) However, for Burberry any sense of 'self destruction' and 'repression' are entirely absent from their collections, and the brand presents its 'dip into the past' as one free of any troubling anxieties.

My thesis questions Corner and Harvey's (1991) assertion that projections of British heritage, however insipid and mythical, have been unable to avoid awkward issues surrounding the idea of a national inheritance and its relation to wide-spread perceptions of both past and continuing inequalities, as Burberry has successfully avoided these awkward issues by presenting the past (in store and online) as a homogenous, glorious epoch where weavers, stonemasons, and carpenters are imbued with high status, their noisy and sometimes dangerous work conditions are eliminated, and consumers are left to experience the 'inheritance' of their work as a sign of valued British craftsmanship.

I show how Burberry are able to conjure a strong sense of heritage using Lury's (2004) work on the logo as index and icon in order to situate its importance as a key selling point to the brand, whilst equally providing reassurance in

financially uncertain times. Correspondingly, Lury's work on the presence of a company founder – what she describes as a 'real live person standing behind the brand' (2004: 80) is used to show how the figure of 'Thomas Burberry' was used to develop positive brand associations for consumers, as 'the question of continuity is important for the ability of the logo to act as an index' (Lury, 2004: 81), which in this case added what Lury describes as 'vitality' (2004: 80) to the brand, and, despite the current lack of family connection, Thomas Burberry's name, personhood and biography is used to evoke a long sense of history and 'heritage', ultimately adding financial value to the brand.

In parallel with Evans (2003) text, I examine fashion's love affair with 'the past' through Goodrum's work into the effects of globalization, where she argues that the sector frequently looks back into history as a way of stabilizing a 'fearful future', and that one of the effects of globalization at the turn of the twenty-first century was often related to a 'reactionary emergence of local nostalgia' (2005: 37). Similarly, her work on increased mobility and poorly bounded cultures is used to show how consumer insecurity and vulnerability has led to a return of what she describes as a 'folksy look' (2005: 37) that points to a bygone age of craft production and homespun charm as a way of actively offsetting global rootlessness, and I show how Burberry capitalized on these feelings of instability in order to design clothing specifically to appeal to a global market, essentially centralizing 'the archive' as a design direction.

Lash and Lury's work on 'imagined communities' (2007: 157) is used to explore Burberry's communication strategies to its consumers, many of whom have a purely online relationship with the brand, to look at how they embed 'heritage' as a customer-facing element of the brand. I also use their work on the brand as a means of communication to underline how Burberry is no longer a manufactured object, nor simply an identity or cultural object, 'it is a medium. It is a means of communication, a communications technology, or a (distributed)

surface in which other cultural products [can be communicated]' (2007: 43), as a way of highlighting how Burberry use social media and specially designed online content including music channel Burberry Acoustic, and fan-site Art of the Trench, as a way of reaching their 'imagined community'.

Data mining - an important income-generating element of the brand, is explored through Lash and Lury's work on what they describe as 'the computer 'back end'' (2007: 192), where conversely, the surface of the brand ceases to be the most important constituent, and the browsing depth and 'flattened media' (2007: 196) take over, compressing space into a series of algorithms and multiple data points. Burberry's use of carefully selected and increasingly repetitive heritage images help to entice consumers to the brand, and once registered, I show how those data points are used to silently control and manage consumer activity.

Using Manovich's ideas on 'augmented space', I explore Burberry's surveillance culture, which takes place not only online, but also within its bricks and mortar stores, and I show how it has adopted what Manovich describes as a source of data that is 'likely to be in multi-media form and is often localized for each user' (2006: 220) in order to create an experiential brand environment for the consumer, but also a powerful data extraction tool for the brand. Burberry also use what Corner and Harvey describe as 'educational heritage' particularly within their Regent Street flagship store, but also within some of their online experiences, as a 'popular, recreational engagement with the past' (1991: 48). But these experiences are, for many consumers, a passive engagement, and are in line with Mellor's interviews with visitors at Albert Dock where a typical visitor comment was "I just like to stand and look at things rather than take part." (1991: 107) But Burberry also needs to make these experiences memorable, which risks turning them into a compulsory activity, a form of co-creation where no drifting is allowed. However enforced activity isn't always palatable to the contemporary consumer, not least within a luxury shopping

environment, and as Mellor attests, some visitors react against seemingly obligatory requirements by stating “I’m not one for that sort of thing” (1991: 107) but Burberry has pre-judged the delivery of these experiences, by ensuring that there’s always something to see and do, for example by simply being in the store customers can see archive footage of the MacRobertson Air Race in 1934, but also understand that Burberry co-sponsored the event.

Labour

Paul Blyton and Jean Jenkins (2012) study of the closure of the Burberry production plant at Treorchy is used to examine issues around labour practices. ‘Mobilising resistance: the Burberry workers’ campaign against factory closure’ (2012) uses industrial sociology and employment relations as a starting point for their research. I draw extensively on their study in order to examine specific industrial relations between management and workforce, and to present an image of industrial unrest from the moment the closure was announced to the final day of work.

Blyton and Jenkins’ (2012) research shows how the Treorchy workforce differed from other workers within the garment industry, by highlighting their geographic isolation and their ‘nothing to lose’ attitude in the wake of the pit closures of the mid-1980s. They primarily use mobilization theory to examine how this cohesive but previously non-militant group of workers acquired a collective response to their employers’ hardline stance, and frame analysis to underline how a ‘compliant’ workforce (which they argue is a common state amongst the high percentage of female employees within fashion and apparel production), were taken on a journey that eventually led to what they term the ‘injustice frame’, where workers fought against what they saw as substantive and procedural injustice from employer to employee. Blyton and Jenkins use Kerr and Siegel’s (1954) research into ‘strike proneness’ amongst geographically isolated

but socially unified groups of workers, as befits the profile of the Treorchy workforce, (an element supported by my own empirical research, Weston, 2009), and Goffman's (1974) work on the organization of experience is used to describe how the workforce were mobilized into a more collective and activist state of mind. Gamson and Myers (1996) text on seizing political opportunities is used to show how the work of multiple agencies including trade unions, local, national and European politicians helped employees to challenge their employer and move into a more adversarial position, away from their long-term stance of loyalty to their company.

Despite a 32-year gap since the publication of Sallie Westwood's 'All Day Every Day' (1984), the workplace for working class women remains depressingly familiar, and the stories that emerge in Westwood's text, from Blyton and Jenkins', and in my own empirical research underline this lack of change. Though Westwood primarily examines ways that women resist the pressures of capitalism and patriarchy through shopfloor culture, there are parallels to my research including the sharp division of labour in terms of gender, where men tended to be in control, and women attempt to affirm 'feminine' culture through domestication of the work place, for example by claiming possession of sewing machines and chairs.

There was also a lively and informal workplace economy in both Westwood's study and my own; similarly, Westwood reports that the workplace was used to repair and alter clothes, and in my own study it was common practice to take in clothes for pressing. Equally, there are parallels in language: Westwood cites a male manager in the finishing department who referred to the women as 'girls', a practice that continued at Burberry, even with women who had worked at the plant for forty years or more.

However, at the root of Westwood's study is the problem of un-equal pay. Westwood carefully articulates how working class women earn a working class wage, yet their wages are not equivalent to a living wage, and I found this still to be case in 2007, as one of the women I interviewed stated 'the men were paid twice as much as the girls.' The beauty of Westwood's ethnographic study is that over the course of her research, she really gets to know her fellow workers, and is able to draw links between the capitalist and male-dominated work environment, and to understand that for many female employees, marriage was perhaps the only safe route to economic stability, but because of this very desire for stability, it reinforced their dependence and subordination to their male colleagues.

In conjunction with Blyton and Jenkins (2012) text on industrial relations, Lury's (2004) work on the relationship between brands, consumers and producers is used to highlight what she describes as a 'hidden relationship' between producers and consumers, where the workforce is structurally positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy, far away from the processes of identity formation by consumers, and design-intensive work at the top. Lury's (2004) work shows how this hierarchy was inverted when the Treorchy workforce became visible throughout the period of protest, but reveal that this dynamism was short-lived due to an increase of what Lury describes as the organization of the production process in terms of the brand, in other words, where whole-company corporate branding took over, replacing the branding of individual products, which returned the workforce who made them back to the bottom of the hierarchy. Lury's argument that brands have a dual marketing role, firstly in 'organizing the exchange between producers and consumers, and [secondly] in organizing relations within the company itself, between employer and employees' (2004: 33) is used to show that preferential treatment was given to the exchange between producers and consumers, consequently creating a conflict between brand values and behavior, where Burberry's treatment of its

production workforce showed a substantial gap between the ways the brand presented itself to consumers and how it treated its employees. This is used to demonstrate that Burberry were guilty of adopting ‘codes of conduct that seem to be much more to do with protecting corporate reputations and attracting customers and better recruits than they are to do with pay and conditions of workers’ (Royle, 2000: 9 cited in Lury, 2004: 162), and shows how the brand shies away from treating their workforce as what Marzano describes as ‘a unique element of the brand’ (2000: 58, cited in Lury, 2004: 34). Marzano’s argument that products, buildings, and ideas can be copied, but the workforce is essentially the ‘soul of the brand’ (2000: 58, cited in Lury, 2004: 34) helps to underline the significance of the closure of the Treorchy plant, especially in relation to the brand’s deep-rooted claim to British production, and gives a real-life example and context to Lury’s argument that the brand is a ‘key locus for reconfiguring of contemporary processes of production’ (2004: 16), as the workforce were shown to be easily substitutable.

Lury’s (2004) work on the brand as medium forms a major part of this thesis, and I use it to give shape to the idea that Burberry immerses multiple concepts around design, class, heritage, and labour within the brand’s public-facing communications. However, in the case of labour, this often disguises the current production process, as Burberry’s public face shows only historical images of its workforce, so I use Lury’s argument that in some cases brands act ‘like a wall or shield, insulating the production process from its environment’ (2004: 159), underlining Burberry’s position towards its contemporary production workforce as not adding value to the brand.

Consumption

I've argued that consumption practices around Burberry remain one of the most contested areas of the brand, so my literature reflects a complexity of theories on gender, class, ethnicity, luxury, youth culture, and lawlessness in order to highlight how the brand often uses contradictory themes within its marketing campaigns. And following that, I question how Burberry positions itself in relation to other brands that have became associated with 'bad' consumption, for example Rockport and Timberland, brands that rely on qualities not dissimilar to Burberry, that is tradition, 'place', endurance, and reliability.

In terms of luxury consumption, the changes in the market over the course of Burberry's lifespan have been immense, and the way we view luxury, or even what constitutes luxury, has changed forever. Vanessa Patrick and Henrik Hagtved (2008) argue that the old luxury market focused on the status and prestige of the brand, but the new luxury market focuses on pleasure and the emotional connection the consumer has with the brand. Luxury is no longer an unaffordable pleasure, and Silverstein and Fiske argue that luxury goods are not always associated with premium prices, and that some luxury goods 'are not so expensive to be out of reach' (2003: 1), for example a barista-made coffee, or an artisan sandwich. This is the marketplace that Burberry, and other brands including Rockport and Timberland now trade in, as they are seen as essential style items and luxury goods, particularly amongst younger consumers. However, these brands aren't always seen as positive, and Anoop Nayak, writing about 'chav' culture, notes that some teenagers risk ridicule for their consumer choices, as this observation underlines:

'On another occasion, I witnessed two white youths taunting a younger teenager who sported a tracksuit, Rockport boots, and a bleached fringe. They pointed and started chanting 'charver' at him.' (2009: 30)

We can see that Rockport, like Burberry has been intimately entwined with ‘bad’ consumers, however, as Crogan et al point out in ‘Style Failure’, an ESRC-funded long-term survey examining consumption practices of young people in Birmingham, Milton Keynes, and Oxford

‘There were, for example, 30 references to the Rockport brand as a crucial ‘must-have’ style item by the Birmingham sample, and none by the Milton Keynes or Oxford samples.’ (2006: 467)

So while some particular ‘luxury’ items are viewed as being desirable in some contexts, they are clearly not in others. Miller (1998) argues that goods communicate and are communicated as social relationships, and we can see from both quotes that using particular items of clothing in one context may attract ridicule, and yet in another it may bestow ‘coolness’, and increase the wearer’s popularity.

Conversely, Karen Halnon’s work (2013) on the consumption of inequality examines how clothing and footwear that originated as blue collar attire has been adopted by middle class consumers in the United States since the catastrophic collapse of the economy in 2008. Here, she finds that Timberlands, originally a work boot designed for agricultural and industrial use, has been transformed

‘The upgrading of the working man’s boot is instantly apparent by the fact that when they are worn designer style there is little observable evidence of dirt, dust, scuff, staining or even excrement on them. Indeed, when observing the boots of brand slogan ‘make it better’ Timberland wearers, one is struck immediately by the cleanliness of their footwear. While being free of dirt, stain, scuff, or animal waste is a virtual impossibility for physical labourers, fresh and kempt ‘Tims’ display upgrading and a

socially sanitized distance.' (2013: 141)

Yet, while Timberland has attracted a new middle-class consumer in the US, Hayward and Yar show that in the UK, the brand still attracts negative attention

'Street level attempts to mobilise cultural capital based on overt displays of designer clothing have instead inspired a whole new raft of micro social control mechanisms, including everything from town centre pubs and nightclubs refusing entry to individuals wearing certain brands within their premises (no Timberlands, no Burberry) to the recent zero-tolerance policy imposed on designer hoodies and baseball caps.' (2006: 22)

While it is anomalous that a US blue-collar footwear brand is linked to a British outdoor apparel company with a Royal Warrant, it isn't the product that is in question but the context, which subsequently triggers attempts to control the appearance and the movement of customers in town centre pubs and nightclubs. Similarly, in Jessica Ringrose and Valerie Walkerdine's (2008) study of the television 'make-over' show, they demonstrate that for one particular candidate on BBC3's 'Get Your Dream Job', there is a predictable outcome, as the candidate arrives for interview at a funeral parlour wearing

'...a bubble gum pink suit and matching pink Timberland boots, white blonde hair with inches of black root and giant gold, 'ghetto' earrings.' (2008: 239)

The format of the show follows a well-trodden path of showing the subject how she might 'correct' her appearance and move closer to what Ringrose and Walkerdine describe as a bourgeois feminine identity, and though their subjects are not seen as being involved in town-centre pub bans or lawless behaviour, nonetheless there are issues of control at play here.

In terms of a more overt link between fashion and criminality, James Treadwell's work shows how particular forms of consumption bring with them exclusion, and I use his work to demonstrate how public disapproval focuses on socially excluded groups including 'chav' culture, where condemnation is 'premised upon their style and preference for vulgar and conspicuous displays of [fashion apparel]' (2008: 121) I explore counterfeiting and its links to 'chav' culture, underlining Treadwell's distinction between the use of luxury fashion garments to gain social prestige, and his argument that the emphasis had changed to what he describes as an 'excessive consumption of some fashion brand items' (2008: 121), which necessitated the production of baggy hooded tops and tracksuit bottoms featuring the Burberry 'Nova' check, neither of which were produced by the brand. Treadwell's text is linked to Jones' (2011) work on 'chav' culture, showing how this sub-culture became the target of relentless and unchallenged hate-speech, and how this compromised Burberry's response when the 'urban chav' was repeatedly linked to the brand, as fighting back had the potential to damage brand value.

Central to my research into consumption is Skeggs' (2008, 2005, 1997, 1993) work on class and gender, which is used to examine notions of 'bad' consumption and to interrogate the moral critique surrounding working class consumption of luxury fashion. Skeggs' (2005, 1997) work on cultural and symbolic capital is used to show how negative value is often attributed to the working classes by middle-class consumers, which consequently helps to maintain a status quo in regards to Burberry's 'ideal' consumer.

In contrast, and drawing on Skeggs' (1997) argument that all forms of capital are context specific, I show how comments from un-edited bulletin boards from dedicated Burberry consumers, alongside those who position the brand in less positive ways, to underline that, at a local level at least, some working-class consumers are able to define themselves as members of an elite group.

However I show that this status is heavily negotiated and occurs from moment to moment, as working class consumers cannot capitalize on an already devalued capital, even on a local basis.

Middle-class ‘disgust’ at the white working classes is examined through Lawler’s work on the making of middle-class identities, where, though historically omnipresent, Lawler argues that a new form of disgust can be attributed to a narrative of decline in the UK from the mid-2000s, where a once ‘respectable’ working-class disappeared, either to be absorbed into an expanding middle-class or ‘consigned as a new workless and workshy underclass, which lacks taste, is politically retrogressive, dresses badly, and above all, is prey to a consumer culture.’ (2005: 431) I use Lawler’s work to show how working-class Burberry consumers became highly visible in the UK print and broadcast media from 2004 to 2008, and that a ‘narrative of lack’ (2005: 431) was used as an effective weapon against working-class consumption of luxury goods.

Lawler’s (2005) work on the fusion between morality and aesthetics is used to draw an image of an emerging ‘chav’ culture, who were widely viewed by the UK press as not belonging to the brand’s demographic as they were seen as lacking in both taste and morality. Lawler’s argument that ‘those positioned as lacking ‘taste’ can also be positioned as morally lacking’ (2005: 441), is used to underline the reasons for a miniature moral panic in Britain, as so-called ‘chavs’ were so unhesitatingly ill-judged by their appearance.

The figure of the ‘celebrity chav’ is analyzed through Tyler and Bennett’s (2010) examination into aspects of fame and social class, and I apply their theories to one former actor strongly linked to the ‘bad’ consumption of Burberry, Danniella Westbrook. Tyler and Bennett’s work also examines aspects of excess and tragedy that follow the figure of the ‘celebrity chav’, and I use their work to examine the community-forming attachment to the ‘bad object’ (2010: 377).

Westbrook's personhood is intimately tied to what Tyler and Bennett describe as 'the excessive embodiment of class hatred' (2010: 379), which is used in conjunction with comments on social media sites and discussion groups, where questions are raised concerning a lack of style and taste, an overabundance of quantity, and where she is at times viewed as an undeserving recipient of wealth.

Branding theory is central to understanding how Burberry attempt to control consumers and consumption practices, so key texts by Arvidsson (2006), Lash and Lury (2007), and Lury (2004) are included in this section, beginning with Arvidsson's (2006) notion of 'putting the aristocracy to work', which is fundamental to understanding Burberry's desire to connect the brand to the British gentry. I use Arvidsson's work to describe how this desire manifested itself in the early twentieth century through sponsorship initiatives involving titled military men and adventurers, and how they have developed and finessed it for the contemporary global market through the use of aristocratic models in their marketing campaigns.

Lury's work on the performativity of the brand is used firstly as a way of examining Burberry's control over its consumers, where information about their activities is collected silently through data mining and used for what Lury describes as 'an essential part of brand-making' (2004: 9), where the goal is not necessarily to achieve a sale, but to develop a deeper relationship with the consumer. I use Lury's argument to show how all of Burberry's online initiatives, and many of their in-store 'experiences', start what Lury argues is a 'sequential progression' (2004: 9) of which the consumer is already a part, unknowingly playing a part as a 'pivotal resource' (2004: 23) in the changing role of retail. Secondly, I use the term to show how the Burberry brand has emerged to resemble what Lury argues is the 'organization of a set of relations between products and services', (2004: 26) showing how Burberry differentiates itself

from, for example, Aquascutum, Timberland, and Rockport, as suppliers of hardy outdoor apparel, as their use of brand channels Burberry Acoustic, Art of the Trench, Runway to Reality etc., forms what Baudrillard (1968) describes as a system of objects, that includes trench coats, singer-song writers, and street-style ‘selfies’.

Issues of brand distinction and brands as sources of power are discussed through Lash and Lury’s (2007) work, which is used to show how Burberry retained its powerful position, despite its many setbacks (including the attraction of the ‘bad’ consumer) as they understood that brand value lay in its distinctiveness from other brands, which at Burberry was developed through a diverse range of experiences both online and in store. Conversely, through some of its marketing campaigns, I show how Burberry lost one source of its domination – its aristocratic aloofness, as it used a working class model to front the brand, and consequently attracted working class consumers to Burberry, who had the potential to negatively impact brand value. However, I show how Burberry fought back, using what Lash and Lury describe as the ‘abstract surface’ (2007: 103) of the brand to insert non-visual cues from online projects including Burberry Acoustic, which helped consumers access the purer elements of the brand via un-amplified voices and instruments.

I examine Burberry’s role in what Lash and Lury (2007) argue are the ordinary uses of goods, undercut by a culture of circulation in a global culture industry, in order to show how Burberry attempt to flatten this sense of difference, and using online global fan site Art of the Trench, I show how the production of locality is via the trench coat itself, and not the city in which it is photographed, which has led the images on the site to take on a homogenous quality, commensurate with qualities of a ‘pure’ brand, experienced by the customer in the same way, in every store.

A history of gendered shopping is examined through two key theorists, Rachel Bowlby (2000, 1993) and Mica Nava (2008, 2007, 1987) to show how founder Thomas Burberry did not deviate from other nineteenth century retailers in his lowly opinion of women, however I show how nonetheless he furnished a women's wear and children's wear department in order to take advantage of female consumers, as they were frequently depicted as what Bowlby refers to as 'pitiable dupes' (2000: 132), and easily persuaded to spend money.

McClintock's (1995) work on early forms of advertising and the rise of consumerism is used to gauge Burberry's own output in terms of store design and advertising campaigns in the late nineteenth century, and is used again to show how Burberry uses techniques dating from the nineteenth century in some of its marketing campaigns and shop fits of the twenty first century, including an exhibition aesthetic 'mirror' finish at the liminal aspects of the store, there to tempt consumers over the threshold, and to lure them 'deeper and deeper into consumerism.' (1995: 218) Similarly, Benjamin's (1999) text on the World Fairs of the mid-nineteenth century is used to show how a systemized display of goods began to excite consumers, and led them to think of the new stores and arcades as places of pilgrimage. Benjamin's (1999) work on the 'garlanding' of Parisian arcades in the nineteenth century segues into Manovich's (2001) ideas on the store as 'gallery space' in the twenty first century, and I show how at Burberry, an unfashionable austerity was evident at their first London store, which opened in 1891, however in the twenty first century, the brand fully embraced the experiential elements of global retailing, installing surveillance systems intended to enhance the consumer experience as an information service, but which also act as an effective source of data extraction for the brand.

The element of 'gifting' in contemporary consumerism is examined through texts by Mauss (1950), Lury (2004), and Lash and Lury (2007), which I use to examine Burberry's attempts to boost its global profile and deepen consumer

engagement through online initiatives involving ‘little presents’ (Lash and Lury, 2007: 136). Using Mauss’ (1950) argument that the gift makes the recipient compelled to give something back as they feel a social obligation to do so, I show how Burberry use this feeling of being ‘bound’ to the brand, forcing the consumer to give additional personal information, which is monetized through the brand’s information systems on consumer profile and activity. I show how Burberry’s use of social media has influenced and helped to shape their ‘gifting’ projects, where initial consumer excitement at apparently receiving something for nothing is displaced, for example by an obligation to ‘like’ Burberry on Facebook. However, as ‘this giving and getting confirms a different sort of [social bond]’ (Lash and Lury, 2007: 206) that is radically different and separated from a classic and enduring gift between friends or family, I show how Burberry are forced to repeat their gifting actions over and over.

As Marc Jacobs’ ‘Treats for Tweets’ (2014) pop-up store in London’s Covent Garden showed, the allure of a free gift is heightened when a ‘luxury’ free gift is at stake. Jacobs’ store sold nothing, but consumers received free gifts, ranging from a phial of perfume to a handbag (dependent on the size of an individuals’ following) in exchange for positive Twitter comments. Marc Jacobs is one of few luxury brands to be involved in giveaways via social media, as this sector is characterised by limited production and limited availability, however as we saw at the outset of this section, what constitutes ‘luxury’ has changed and widened its definition. Even so, within the ‘luxury’ fashion sector, there is a residual opposition to this, as Dallabona argues

‘Many luxury companies emphasize certain traits that are commonly associated with luxury such as rarity, scarcity and restriction.’ (2014: 216)

And one of the benchmarks of the luxury sector is the time-honoured waiting list, where products are available not as a matter of course, but as a matter of chance.

Burberry aligns itself to the luxury fashion sector in a number of ways: through the geographic sites of its flagship stores; through the placement of its advertising campaigns (which are solely in premium women's and men's wear titles including British Vogue and GQ) and via its online film library, available at YouTube, and on the brand's Vimeo channel, and it is this aspect that draws the brand nearer to Dallabona's (2014) description of the Italian luxury fashion industry, which is widely seen as 'authentic'. Other parallels lie between Dallabona's description of a film showing a pair of women's shoes under construction at Ferrogamo, and Burberry's own film of the construction of a trench coat, where the production design uses 'handcrafted' methods including carding, spinning, weaving, cutting, and sewing by hand, and each film still communicates a timeless sense of the handmade. Of course, it would be economically unfeasible for a volume manufacturer like Burberry to produce clothing in the way the film suggests, however it is clear that both films are primarily tourist texts, each one pointing towards a 'tradition' of craftsmanship in both Italy and Britain respectively.

My literature review reflects key questions throughout this thesis, and asks why some consumers view Burberry as the epitome of British elegance, while others still see it as a sign invoking the worst excesses of working-class culture. It asks why some aspects of British culture and history are celebrated through the brand, while others, including elements with genuine and long-lasting connections to Burberry, for example its own highly skilled labour force, are marginalized. Burberry essentially presents itself as a brand onto which disparate ideas about class, gender, celebrity, cultural, and symbolic capital are thinly spread, and which privileges historical production methods over the contemporary production of cultural objects.

Chapter three

The £13,000 Handbag



*Burberry 'Warrior' handbag, Autumn-Winter 2007-08.
Image courtesy of Burberry.com*

In March 2007, the clothing production plant in the small Welsh town of Treorchy closed its doors for the last time. The factory was owned and run by luxury fashion brand Burberry, and they made the decision to move a large part of their remaining UK production to China in order to maximize company profits. The Burberry Annual Report for 2006-07 reveals that total revenue for the year showed an increase of 15%, taking it to £850.3 million, and shareholders saw an increase of 31% in their year-end dividends. Though still not a giant in fashion revenue terms, Burberry was making a healthy profit, however the Annual Report shows that it was aiming for an even larger share of the luxury market, and to achieve this goal every penny was scrutinized. The Treorchy plant solely produced men's polo shirts, and Burberry found that by moving production from Wales to China they could reduce unit costs from £11 to £4 per shirt. The retail price of a Burberry polo shirt at this time was between £55 and £65, which still allowed for a large profit margin on each shirt, even on

ones produced in the UK. This became one of the major causes of grievance amongst the workforce at Treorchy when they heard the news about their job losses: they simply could not understand why a profitable plant, making an estimated £22 million per year according to GMB figures (and uncontested by Burberry) would be closed down, especially given its long and illustrious history in the town.

The factory was built in the 1930s, and had become a familiar part of the town's infrastructure, and through it Treorchy had developed a long and proud history of working with fashion, fabrics and apparel. At its peak in the 1960s the factory employed 1,500 people, mainly women from the local area, and at the time of the closure it employed over 300 people, and was still considered a significant local employer. This area of the Rhondda was designated as a 'special development area' by the British Government in the 1930s, due to the loss of jobs in the declining local mining industry, and this status allowed the factory owners to build the plant with government aid. Long-term unemployment had been endemic in the area from the 1930s, and the pattern continued throughout the following decades up to the miner's strike in the 1980s, when the collieries were finally closed.

The loss of full time jobs at the Burberry plant was a huge cause for concern in a town with a population of 2,000, as it would leave a sizable economic chasm. The history of the town with its skilled and dedicated workforce created a complex economic, commercial and social backdrop to the industrial action that took place in the winter of 2006-07. This action involved not just employees and their unions, but Local and Central Government, the Welsh Assembly, the European Parliament, national and international press media, Burberry customers in the UK, USA and in Europe, and friends, families, and celebrities in support of the workforce. The struggle to keep the plant open became a regular news item during February and March 2007, and some of the workforce

became reluctant ‘celebrities’ because of their involvement in the campaign.

In order to understand why the closure of this particular plant caused such public interest, and why the ensuing struggle became a newsworthy, and largely popular narrative, I have examined it through two contrasting studies: Blyton and Jenkins’ (2012) ‘Mobilizing Resistance: the Burberry workers’ campaign against factory closure’ and through one of my curatorial projects - ‘Can Craft Make You Happy?’ (2009) where I worked with a small group of women who had lost their jobs at the plant. Both studies examine the closure of the long-established production plant, and conduct formal and informal interviews with the workforce, however the differentiation between each study begins with the methodological approach, and ends with a huge variation in conclusion: ‘Mobilizing Resistance’ talks up the ‘success’ of the campaign, while ‘Can Craft Make You Happy?’, which continued long after the anti-closure campaign finished, draws a less optimistic conclusion. In order to test some of the observations made in ‘Mobilizing Resistance’ and ‘Can Craft Make You Happy?’ I used ‘The Treorchy Social Audit’ (2008) a study conducted by the University of Glamorgan that maps the social economy of the area using key data from the 2001 Census, combined with research from their ‘Programme for Community Regeneration’ (PCR), a unit set up by the university in 2000 to show the role social science plays in the promotion of anti-poverty activities, social inclusion strategies and community regeneration initiatives in Wales. The PCR unit was commissioned by Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council to develop and deliver ‘The Treorchy Social Audit’, which examined levels of satisfaction in community and place including local views on unemployment, crime and safety, jobs and business, local services, education, health and wellbeing, transport, recreational facilities, and environment. It gives a framework and baseline statistics that show fluctuations and changes to these key areas, providing statistical data that both supports and challenges observations made in Blyton and Jenkins study, within my own, and amongst respondents in their own study

which highlight a difference between perception and fact.

Mobilizing Resistance

'Mobilizing Resistance' (2012) was developed by Dr Jean Jenkins, a lecturer in Human Resource Management, and Paul Blyton, a Professor of Industrial Relations and Industrial Sociology, both at Cardiff Business School. The focus of their study is largely on the bitter negotiations in the lead up to the closure, and the spectacle of the protest campaign prior to the closedown. They draw on frame analysis to show how a previously 'benign' workforce were professionally mobilized and came to act collectively when they had shown little or no desire to do so in the past. Their overall analysis underlines and acknowledges the journey taken by the Treorchy workforce, who moved from their previously passive position as 'compliant and quiescent' (2012: 26) to a more activist and collective role, and how this went against sector norms.

Though the Burberry workers stopped short of going on strike, Blyton and Jenkins use Kerr and Siegel's (1954) theory on 'strike proneness' to underline how unusual the workforce were to take any kind of industrial action. Kerr and Siegel argue that high strike rates were typically

'...among geographically or socially isolated, cohesive, homogeneous groups of workers (such as longshoremen, miners, and sailors) were a consequence of their alienation from the wider society and the unpleasant nature of their jobs.' (1954: 192)

The Burberry workers were not alienated from wider society, nor involved in 'unpleasant' work, however they are geographically isolated, socially unified, and viewed as a homogeneous group. It is unsurprising that Blyton and Jenkins were interested in investigating how this workforce were able to act collectively,

and how their activism went against the majority of industrial disputes in the UK, particularly in the garment production sector where they describe an almost total lack of action, and this forms the backbone of their ‘good news’ story. Of course there was much to celebrate during the lengthy and bitter campaign where the workforce fought a fierce battle to save their plant. As Blyton and Jenkins note

‘...this workforce campaigned around corporate greed, applied a moral and ethical critique to globalization, and held an international clothing brand up to public censure for its treatment not only of its employees, but also its customers.’ (2012: 26)

Blyton and Jenkins use frame analysis to understand and document the changing fortunes of the workforce over the course of the anti-closure campaign, using Benford and Snow to show

‘...how social groups come to interpret or ‘frame’ an issue or event in a way that generates a shared perception of occurrences and legitimizes and guides a collective response.’ (2012: 25)

They start with Erving Goffman’s (1974) ‘Collective Action Framing’, a theory used to simplify a mass of problems and to summarize ‘the world out there.’ Goffman firmly believed that frames enabled people to ‘locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large’, which Jenkins and Blyton use to show the isolation and bewilderment of the Treorchy workforce pre-closure. ‘Adversarial Framing’ (Gamson, 1995) is used to define the boundaries between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ and to construct protagonists and antagonists, which Blyton and Jenkins use to underline what they describe as the unquestioning nature of the workforce, who saw their management largely as a force for good; they use adversarial framing to draw a line between employer and employees, where each group forms a polar opposite.

'Motivational Framing' (Benford and Snow, 2000) provides a 'call to arms' for the workforce to get involved in collective action, but also provides an improved rationale for doing so.

'Mobilizing Resistance' highlights the importance of 'perceived substantive and procedural injustice' among the workforce, and how the geographic location and community characteristics strengthened their resolve to fight the closure. These issues form the core of their study and Jenkins and Blyton show how the workforce were 'moved' along a path of interconnected frames, from summarizing, to organizing, to rationalizing, and ending in what Blyton and Jenkins call 'the injustice frame.' The study follows the workforce along this path, describing the campaign as it happened, and using the words of those involved.

Jenkins and Blyton approached their research in a highly organized way: in the lead up to the closure they held meetings with the Shop Stewards in a café after work each Friday, and after the factory was closed completely they met regularly with the full-time GMB officer in Cardiff. Blyton and Jenkins workplace at Cardiff University gave them close proximity and easy access to the site for the duration of the campaign, where they conducted questionnaires, surveys, and short interviews with some of the employees. 'Mobilizing Resistance' builds an image of the workforce, starting the moment they hear the entire plant is to be closed, throughout the campaign, and up to the last day of action.

The study begins with a description of the workforce that helps to contextualize their starting point, and demonstrate how unusual their collective action was, and how it differed from other workers in the garment sector. At the outset of the study Blyton and Jenkins refer to the workforce as 'individualistic', but co-operative, willing and able to work with their employer in very flexible ways. Burberry dominated the local employment market so employees tended to

comply with their management, and many families had multiple ties with the factory, and helped to recruit other family members - male and female, across several generations. As one respondent put it “we used to say ‘you were right for life’ [at Burberry]”, indicating that Burberry was seen as a refuge from the increasingly casualised local labour market. Despite grumbles about low rates of pay, particularly amongst the machinists, there was very little industrial action at the plant. Blyton and Jenkins note that

‘...resistance has tended to be individualized and unorganized, mainly in the form of absence.’ (2012: 30)

‘Mobilizing Resistance’ reports that during negotiations in 2004 – two years before the announcement of the closure, a new plant manager was appointed and productivity rose by over 20%, signaling an increase in machinists wages of 6%, though Blyton and Jenkins state that they

‘...remained dissatisfied with their earnings. Garment workers are generally low paid, but for some years, the Treorchy machinists had experienced a steady erosion of their piecework incentives by the advance of the National Minimum Wage (NMW)’ (2012: 33)

Blyton and Jenkins report that this issue had been a source of grievance for some time, but that there had been

‘...no effective organization or mobilization around the issue, reflecting the sector’s norms and this workforce’s reputation for compliance.’
(2012: 33)

The study briefly touches on the issue of gendered employment, though Blyton and Jenkins argue that part of the framing analysis – the ‘injustice frame’, did

not, in this case, involve gender:

'The issue of gendered employment within clothing manufacture might also be a contributing factor in shared experience. However, while the Burberry shop floor was dominated by female employment and the shop floor was gendered along lines identified in the sector more generally, with men prominent in certain functions such as cutting and maintenance and women making up practically 100% of sewing machinists, such was the density of marital and family relationships on the factory floor that this was not a workplace segregated by gender in terms of socialization.'

(2012: 27)

The study pinpoints two key elements that initiated a change of heart within the workforce, and a hardening of attitude towards their employers, one of which was the reduction of product mix at the plant, where they solely produced men's polo shirts. The second element, which hit the workforce even harder, was that this very lack of product diversity became one of the reasons Burberry used to rationalize the closure. Blyton and Jenkins show how Burberry used this 'one product' excuse as a reason to continue with their plans for closure

'A further element in the attribution of blame and defining of injustice was to emerge a short way into the campaign, when, under pressure to justify their actions and the decision to close the plant rather than change its product mix, senior Burberry managers cited a 'lack of skills' at the plant which precluded assigning alternative garments in order to stave off closure.' (2012: 35-36)

The study describes the feelings of hurt emanating from the workforce, and how their pride and self-image had been damaged. They reported the comments of one long-serving worker

'We made everything at that factory...we could do every job there was.'
(2012: 36)

However, the ultimate call to arms came with the single most important element in the entire winding-down campaign: the mishandling of the closure announcement. 'Mobilising Resistance' details the event in September 2006, when Burberry hired its own private security to surround the plant at Treorchy, while severance notices were printed out for the entire workforce. An executive from Burberry went unheard as she shouted instructions over the noise of the plant machinery, which was left running throughout the first part of her announcement. Some of the Burberry executives were seen on the factory floor immediately after the announcement, talking on their mobile phones, smiling and laughing, seemingly at ease. The study details the way the 'Notice of Closure' was announced and how it provided a clear focus for the workforce, drawing them closer to what Blyton and Jenkins refer to as 'an embattled "us"', where the formerly benevolent view of their employer was shattered forever. Blyton and Jenkins cite this as the major contributing factor and 'trigger' for collective action by the workforce

'...conflict between employees and managers was recognized and became manifest at this time.' (2012: 35)

Blyton and Jenkins state that from this moment onwards, references to 'honest profit' and 'working class endeavor' were swept aside, and replaced with a 'framing of injustice': the workforce had kept their side of the bargain and fulfilled their production quotas, yet had not succeeded in keeping their jobs. Blyton and Jenkins go back in time and cite the appointment of the new plant manager in 2004 as another key element in the closure:

'Changes in organization were viewed as a positive rather than defensive

strategy by the new plant manager. Contemporaneous negotiations with plant unions, the GMB and Amicus, emphasized the need to achieve increases in productivity as a means of ensuring the continuing ‘secure’ status of the plant.’ (2012: 32-33)

Blyton and Jenkins place a strong sense of ‘localism’ at the centre of the struggle citing the abrupt departure of the previous plant manager as the moment the future of the factory was sealed. They report several workers saying:

‘[We think] he...was got rid of because he would have fought tooth and nail for this factory. He was from the Rhondda, and he would have made it awkward for them [Burberry HQ]’ (2012: 35)

Public interest in the struggle was still some way off, but ‘Mobilizing Resistance’ shows how the anti-closure campaign captured a wider demographic by placing the Burberry consumer alongside the workforce, pointing out that

‘[This] had wider social appeal than what might otherwise have been regarded as workers’ narrow economic self-interest in preserving their jobs.’ (2012: 38)

The study points out that consumers had started to ask some difficult questions of the brand, including why they were still paying premium prices for goods produced in low cost plants, where the workforce were paid less, and worked without union support. Despite all the public and political support, the factory closed, and Blyton and Jenkins (2012) attribute the closure to a wide range of elements, including poor leadership skills amongst full-time union representatives, who not only failed to secure GMB membership at the remaining two UK-based Burberry plants to show solidarity, but who also did not

capitalize sufficiently on the political support they received from Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, and that the campaign to save the plant remained ‘largely at the micro, workplace level’.

‘Had a broader-based ‘political opportunity’ been recognized and followed through, for example, the campaign leaders might have done more to capitalize on the media and celebrity attention they attracted, to engage with broader concerns about the loss of manufacturing and negative aspects of global commodity chains.’ (2012: 41)

‘Mobilizing Resistance’ concludes soon after the campaign comes to a close, and Blyton and Jenkins clearly summarize what they consider successful elements of the campaign, including how a tipping point of injustice brought an individualized workforce together to act collectively; that the GMB and Amicus did not focus entirely on pay and conditions for the workforce, but broadened the debate to include customers, and how successful negotiations by the unions achieved higher levels of severance pay, however, their principal success story was that the mainly female workforce went against the social norms of this sector, and battled to save their jobs, believing they had little to lose.

Can Craft Make You Happy?

I used my background as a professional contemporary visual art curator, with a specialism in fashion and textiles, to develop ‘Can Craft Make You Happy?’, which was financially supported through the Crafts Council’s ‘Spark Plug’ curatorial scheme. This helped me to fund a primary research programme with Welsh artist Bedwyr Williams and a small group of women who were made redundant when the plant was closed. In the study, I detail how the women reacted to the closure, and show images of their lives post-closure. I used a ‘talking through making’ approach to examine what it was like to work, and to

make a livelihood at the Burberry plant at Treorchy, and how it felt now that the company was no longer part of their lives. Through making small embroideries and counted-thread work pieces, we developed dialogue that explored their experiences, stories, ethical codes, social fabric, and friendships that helped to create a vivid image of their time at the factory. I was also interested to see what had provoked them into action, and if they were indeed what Blyton and Jenkins (2012) termed ‘passive’.

Research Methods

I designed my primary research to give me an understanding of what it was like to handle fine fabrics, and to make luxury clothing and apparel: I wanted to hear about their early career experiences of marking out with patterns and chalk and cutting with oversized shears. I was also interested to know what it was like to make a cashmere coat that retails for upwards of £1,000, when take home pay was £5.25 per hour – essentially making the workforce part of the luxury fashion and apparel sector, but unable to be a consumer of it. Equally, I was interested to know how their workplace experience moved from an initial source of pride, to feelings of anger and resentment, and how their long history of producing clothes for the luxury market impacted their feelings when it ceased to be a part of their lives. Ultimately, I wanted to know if the key Burberry trademark, the (in)famous ‘Nova’ check had become an agent of change that forced the women concerned to confront their worst fears, and whether the cloth itself had become toxic.

In order to develop and deliver ‘Can Craft Make You Happy?’ I visited the Rhondda town of Treorchy on six occasions between 2008 and 2009. The first time was as a guest of the GMB (the largest trade union at the plant) at a reunion marking the one-year anniversary of the closure. GMB Wales had organized anti-closure protest campaigns in London, Cardiff, and Treorchy, so I contacted them directly and was passed onto Mervyn Burnett, the full-

time GMB officer responsible for orchestrating the main campaigns. Burnett's name had cropped up in the press and was on the GMB site, and when he phoned me I asked him about the welfare of the women involved in the Burberry closure, and he asked about my research, what my next steps might be, and he subsequently invited me to the reunion in Treorchy. The GMB also extended an open invitation to their offices in Cardiff, and I was given unlimited access to press materials from the campaign. When I attended the reunion, Burnett introduced me to Joan Young, a former machinist and shop steward at the plant, as well as the Welsh Assembly Member for Rhondda, the Managing Director of Talk HR Solutions in Pontypool, and the Engagement Gateway Development Officer from voluntary sector organization, Interlink. This visit gave me the opportunity to gather invaluable primary research materials, as I was able to talk to an ex-employee, a union official, employment and training experts, and an elected politician, which gave me a breadth of opinion, expertise, and knowledge from third and private sector organizations, the public sector, and from political quarters. Though these voices were pre-selected by GMB Wales, the union nonetheless provided a gateway that opened up a privileged access to some of the key people and organizations that took part in the struggle to keep the Burberry plant open.

After the reunion, I made an application to the Crafts Council's 'Spark Plug' curators' award scheme, using initial findings from my first visit to apply for funding for research and development into the loss of craft skills after the Burberry plant had closed, and how this had impacted on the women who had been laid off. My application was successful, and I was able to develop and deliver a twelve-month programme of visits, interviews, and workshops in Treorchy with a small group of women involved in the closure. I used word-of-mouth recommendations to approach former Burberry employees, working closely with Joan Young, in order to talk about the turbulent times during the run up to the closure. My sample group was small, but over a length of the

programme the women I worked with developed a high level of trust in me, and they were dedicated to the project.

My final visits, in October and November 2009, were with Welsh artist Bedwyr Williams. Williams is an internationally recognized artist who has represented Wales at the Venice Biennale, and who is passionate about the way the Welsh are represented in the media. He was highly engaged in their struggle and was keen to support the women through a range of creative strategies, so together we ran two informal workshops in the living room of a former machinist, and developed new audio work based on our workshops. Together, we spent three days with the women making hand stitched embroideries and counted thread work, which helped them to remember what it was like to create something with their hands. I found that working with them in familiar surroundings encouraged an informal and relaxed atmosphere, successfully creating a sense of attachment that I was unable to achieve by interviewing people alone, or even in small groups. This approach has the potential to make an important methodological contribution to sociological research, particularly within primary research, as project participants can sometimes find it difficult to spend extended periods of time being interviewed. Adopting a more informal method of research was fruitful as the women showed a warm, more humorous, and inclusive side to their lives, and their stories reflected their social cohesion. All our sessions were recorded on a digital Dictaphone, we took turns to photograph and make short films of the participants and their work, and copies of all correspondence and press cuttings have been kept.

Meeting Joan Young

I first met some of the women on a visit to Treorchy in March 2008, and was introduced to Joan Young, a machinist and Shop Steward at the Treorchy plant, at the one-year reunion of the closure. It was a noisy affair, so Joan offered to

meet me the following day to show me around some significant locations in the town. The whole weekend in Treorchy was wild and windy, and it rained hard for the two days I was there, which further added to my impression of the town being physically and metaphorically ‘swept away’.

Joan met me in a little car and we started on our journey: my chance to look at the sites was considerably hampered as I had to roll down the passenger window as we approached a significant site, and roll it up again swiftly afterwards, before we both got soaking wet, but it was important to Joan that I saw these sites. The journey she took followed the route of the march she and her co-workers took on the final day of the plant – what some media coverage described as ‘The Victory March’. Joan showed me where they had set off, which gate they had used, who she was walking with, who else was present, what banner they carried, where they stopped en route, who spoke to the television crews, what they said, which station they spoke to, and what country they came from; she described the jazz band, and the choir, the guest speakers, and the well-wishers lining the streets.

We went from the factory site in the centre of the town, ringed by a double horseshoe of 19th Century houses, to the Parc and Dare - the building they used for a last-ditch public meeting, and Joan described what that building meant to her, and what it meant to the town. We examined history, politics, commerce, gender, socialization, and hierarchy. Joan’s stories breathed life into the streets and homes and businesses of this small Welsh town. She told me that she felt like an ordinary and quite shy person, and in many ways she was the antithesis of Rose Persotta (the founding organizer of the Ladies Garment Workers Union in 1930s America) yet her exhaustive commentary suggested that she had been forever changed and politicized by the events leading up to the closure, and that this act of ‘witnessing’ this monumental struggle had taken over her life. The re-telling of stories about the GMB, the factory, and her ex-

colleagues, suggests that this narrative may never be fully put to rest, and as Joan re-lives these events over and over, she tries to reconcile, or even ‘make right’ what has happened to her and her friends.

Part of my study focused on ‘making’ and working with fabrics at the factory, which helped to give me to a temporal and historical context to the job losses. When Joan started at the factory in the 1960s, other types of employment on offer in the area – particularly for young woman, were very limited. There was retail and catering work in Treorchy, which was unskilled and offered few opportunities for career development, and only Harwin Components, an electronics company, offered work to women and girls, mainly in the offices, which meant that securing a job at Burberry was aspirational, and Joan describes how from an early age, she knew what she wanted to be

“Hand sewer I wanted to be. Hand sewer.”

Their longed-for jobs, and long history of clothing production makes losing their employment all the more poignant, as many of the women I spoke to had spent almost their entire working lives at Burberry. Another woman who started work at the factory in the mid-1960s was Anne, who, influenced by her mother, who was a dressmaker, had also wanted to work with fabrics and fashion for most of her life. Anne started work at the factory aged 15 after her aunt, who was a hand sewer at the plant, recommended her for a job. Joan was sixteen and secured a job after her sister ‘put in a good word’ with the manager. As Anne puts it

“If your mother or sister worked there, you were taken seriously.”

Both women worked at the plant for over 40 years, and reasonably expected to spend the remainder of their working years there. When Joan and Anne

started, the factory was run by sister company Polikoff, who shared production facilities with Burberry at their London site in Chatham Place, Hackney. Polikoff became part of the Great Universal Stores conglomerate, who took over the plant in 1955, and initially both women produced officer uniforms for the Army and the RAF, made from luxurious wool and lined with silk. They subsequently produced many other luxury lines including wool and cashmere coats, duffels, trench coats, casual jackets, quilted jackets, and suits, and all employees needed a high level of skill and a lot of experience to construct this kind of clothing. Anne recalled undergoing a six-week in-house training course when she started at the plant, however this level of high quality training is almost completely absent in the current employment landscape, a fact supported by findings in the Treorchy Social Audit (2008) who underline the lack of local opportunities.

Both Anne and Joan remember cutting and sewing luxury fabrics, and though they were both experienced seamstresses, they still remember the agony of making a mistake, where they would have to report to the manager to ask for more fabric. Here, they were shouted at and reminded in no uncertain terms that they were working ‘on an £800 coat’. Anne remembers being so absorbed by her work that she noticed the way every garment was produced, even one day while sitting on a bus she noticed

“....a woman wearing a Burberry coat and the collar wasn’t sewn quite correctly.”

Injuries at work were common and all the women I spoke to reported regular accidents, with burns being the most common incident, followed by repetitive strain injury caused by wielding heavy scissors. Joan complained about a job she was given matching checks on a run of very expensive coats

“...on the hood, the yoke, the pockets, all matching. The worst job I ever had.”

It severely affected her eyesight, and caused carpal tunnel syndrome. All the women I spoke to suffered from ganglia after pressing down pattern pieces with the full span of their hand, as there were no mechanized cutting facilities at the plant in the 1960s, so each garment was cut out by hand. Burberry was, and essentially remained to its closure, a classic Fordist production plant.

All of my research was conducted with women, and mainly older women, and while they agree that there was a high level of socialization on the factory floor, they point out that there were big differences in what their employer viewed as skilled and unskilled labour, which created a clear gender divide. However, one of the biggest changes to male and female employment occurred after Burberry became a publicly listed company in 2002, and Anne told me that in the final years of the factory men occupied all the positions in the cutting room and on the presses, and that they ‘they earned twice as much as the ‘girls’. However, the women agreed that the men in the pressing room offered them a ‘good deal’ as they pressed clothes – suits, coats etc., brought in from home, for 20p per item, the proceeds of which were given to charity. This narrative was repeatedly talked-up by the women and the ‘act of charity’ was used as a way of displacing the huge disparity in wages.

In the years after 2002, Joan recalled that when the work was slow, caused by a delivery delay or hold up in production, rather than utilizing her extensive skillset, she was asked to do some very basic tasks.

“If you didn’t have nothing to do, they put you on spare buttons. 100 counted out, and one per bag.”

The old mechanized equipment from Polikoff's had been replaced with technologically advanced machinery when Burberry took over the plant in 1989, and it was this element that divided the genders, splitting them into 'skilled' and 'unskilled', as it is hard to argue that counting buttons or sorting swing tags calls for either skill or experience, only endurance. Other differences in work practice under Polikoff's and Burberry included an economic competitiveness amongst the workforce, as the women aimed for some sort of parity. The women I spoke to recalled that in their early days at the factory, they all found creative ways of boosting their wage packets by beating the timings and minutes, which they learned informally on the job, by watching the older women. Anne described one woman who worked at the factory when she first started:

“One old lady used to take her tin home at night and thread her needles ready.”

At Polikoff's all women aged 18 and over earned full pay, however Joan reports that as a 16 year old, she was earning as much as an adult as she was so quick, making up her wages by achieving bonus targets, but by the time the Burberry plant closed, the average adult wage was just £208.00 per week.

Other non-monetary bonuses were lost when Burberry became a listed company, and incentives in the form of the highly anticipated Christmas raffle, where workers had the chance of winning a television, a camera, or a hamper of food, were suspended and replaced with gift certificates to spend in the on-site Burberry shop, where very often the lowest prices exceeded the value of the certificates. Other perks, including mail order catalogues brought in to make extra income from colleagues were banned from the workplace, as management thought they encouraged people to chat, and diverted them from their work. Inexplicably, given the reasons for the original confiscation, each employee was given a copy of the Kay's catalogue, owned and controlled by

Burberry's parent company at the time, Great Universal Stores. This chipping away of remuneration and reward in the workplace formed the background, and added considerable volume to the eventual industrial action that took place in the Autumn and Winter of 2006-07.

Production Mix Reduced

One of the most contentious times at the Treorchy plant concerns Burberry's decision to cut production down to just one garment – the men's polo shirt, and it is difficult to gauge the level of humiliation amongst the workforce, and how deeply this hurt them. Given the enormous pride in their craft skills, and years of working with fine fabrics, to suddenly find themselves in charge of producing part of a polo shirt felt in many ways like a punishment, as Joan argues

“When they bring it down to only one product, that’s a slippery slope.”

Leigh was one of the youngest women I spent time with, and she voiced her concerns when the factory was only producing men's polo shirts

“You know, but then we all said, oh, all our eggs in one basket....”

Leigh lamented the gradual loss of product mix, and in her final years at the factory she worked in the supply stores. She had worked at the plant since she was 16, and so had a long history with Burberry, and she recalled the diversity of work and the sheer volume of production:

“We had a raincoat section, trouser section, jacket section; they had the Army section, and gradually the Army went, the raincoats went, there was just the duffle coats, then it turned all over then the polo shirts, and then closure.”

However the consequences of Burberry's decision to cut the product mix at

the Treorchy plant shocked them to the core and opened the company up to scrutiny and criticism from UK and international press and media. Observer journalist Cadwalladr (2007) reported comments made by a Burberry spokesman suggesting ‘bemusement’ at the degree of media coverage for the protests as

‘...perverse....for a polo-shirt factory’ (2007: 36)

The backlash against Burberry heightened as the company didn’t signal any kind of compassion for the workforce, and their fairness as an employer was called into question, not only by the workforce, but also by its customers, and their corporate greed became visible.

However, the biggest casualty was the Burberry workforce, who had been stripped of their product mix rendering their skills base, their experience, and their ingenuity as null and void. The women I worked with commented on how remote the local management had become, and they had also detected a change at the very top of the organizational structure: the appointment of a new CEO, Angela Ahrendts, who had made herself visible to the workforce when she issued a little notebook to all employees one Christmas.

Joan “*When that woman started up in London, we all had the notebook...*”

Leigh “*Ah, yes, the notebook.*”

Joan “*And within 12 months we were all made redundant.*”

Ahrendts sent a directive that each employee was to be given a notebook containing a short history of the company. This seemed a curious move by Burberry, as it could be argued that the workforce knew far more about its history than a newly appointed Chief Executive Officer whose work to date had

included stints at Donna Karen, Liz Claiborne and Juicy Couture. The ‘notebook’ incident marked yet another deflating episode for the women I spoke to, and in retrospect it provided a key visual reminder of the downward spiral they were now entering.

The ‘Notice of Closure’ announcement in September 2006

Two years after the stripped-back product mix at the Burberry plant came the almost inevitable ‘Notice of Closure’. Joan remembers the day vividly, and how her advice to the Burberry executives, dispatched from head office to summarily give notice to the entire workforce, went unheeded.

“We --we were in work and they called for myself and John Harris to go up to the office. Every time the union was called up there, ‘Oh they’re shutting the place, they’re shutting the place’ they said, isn’t it? So up we went, this was about half past nine and we were taken into a room I hadn’t been in before, and then the – one of the directors came in and said they were down from London.”

“And they came in and said they were closing the place. I said ‘Oh, how am I going to go down there and tell them that now?’ And she said, ‘You don’t have to, I will now’. So I said ‘Are you going to let them have their breakfast first?’ ‘No, I’ll have to tell them now because they can’t be sent home without this letter.”

“But she wouldn’t wait, anyway, she went and said it, when you look back now she should have waited for the two breaks, cleared the canteen out, had everyone in there, but all she did was stand on a box at the top of the factory and called everybody round, they couldn’t hear what she was saying, they had to put the main electricity power off ‘cause there was just ‘mmmm’ like that, hard to be heard and people were saying ‘What’s

she saying like, what's she – what is she saying?"'

The plant was surrounded by security men hired by Burberry, and the workforce were not allowed to leave the site until they had been given their written notice, which were being printed out, very slowly, in the management offices. Leigh recalls the moment she heard the news about the closure, and how many of the women went into shock.

"Yes, yes, we were there, this announcement came over that we all had to meet at a certain area in the factory, which we did, and she just stood over a little box and told us we were finishing. It was – well some people was crying, the younger ones. I was deeply shocked but not crying, some of the older ones were crying, you know, some of the people had been there all their lives. Well, I --, really I'd been there all my life, I know I got started at 16, you know, so --, but there were people who'd been there 30, 40 years, you know."

"But --, well I was --, nobody did any work then, it was, you know, everybody was shocked."

"I think we knew there was something up because there was so many suits in, in the morning, we thought, oh you know. I did think perhaps 50, 60 people made redundant, something like that, you know."

"But when they actually came round and said everything was going, well I think everybody in the factory was really shocked, I really do. So we just stood around, we weren't allowed out of the factory, we couldn't –couldn't leave, we had security on the gate and everyone was sitting round in little huddles not knowing what to do."

The nature of 'fairness' cropped up again and again, not only within the

workforce, but also on a broader, more international basis where customers examined exactly what they were buying. Why, they asked, were they paying a high price for luxury clothes and accessories produced cheaply in Chinese factories? This question contributed to a significant change in the way Burberry was viewed, and became a turning point where consumers had a chance to become citizens, with rights to boycott goods and services that failed to meet their expectations. This single issue – where consumers became involved in collective action, marked a distinction between the plight of the Burberry workers, and that of other workers involved in labour disputes.

The GMB designed an inclusive and high profile campaign, and at events that took place outside Burberry's national and international flagship stores, consumers were vocal about the UK plant closure. The action outside the Bond Street store in London's Mayfair attracted a lot of media attention, and Joan remembers the day in February 2007 when she was surrounded by international press media

“Will you do an interview with me now?” “Yes,” and another one was telling her “I want her first.” Well you’ve never seen the like, you haven’t. So many camera crews were there, wanting to speak to you, isn’t it?”

Joan and her colleagues had never taken part in any kind of protest, but now found themselves involved in subterfuge, which Joan thought was both thrilling and hilarious.

‘They went in [to the Bond Street store] and bought a shirt and then cut it in half outside. My scissors, I was keeping them hidden because we shouldn’t be out with scissors, so I kept them well hidden in my handbag.’

One of the men went into the store with a gift certificate, and Joan remembers that as they were cutting the shirt

“....he went in with his £30 worth of vouchers, and for thirty pounds all he could get was a scrunchie for your hair, and he hasn’t got a hair on his head, which was a laugh.”

The media focused on Burberry’s decision to move production to China, however the GMB and the Burberry production workforce were very solicitous towards the Chinese workers, and did not want to scape-goat them within their campaign. They wanted to show solidarity for their fellow workers, despite differences in pay scale and working conditions.

At the height of the campaign Burberry was scrutinized by customers, press and media, shareholders, financiers, politicians, and its competitors in the UK and abroad: it was very publically shunned by actors Ioan Gruffudd and Rachel Weisz, who were working as models for the company in 2006, and this opened the door to further media criticism about the company. The media spotlight made public the largely invisible workforce behind the brand. The negative attention was a big shock to Burberry, who deployed additional resources to ‘mop up’ the spillage created by the closure. They created a new post within the management structure specifically to deal with the ensuing chaos, fearful that it might spread to other more profitable markets in the US, Europe, and China.

Burberry had originally offered workers only statutory redundancy settlements, however under pressure from the GMB and Amicus, they agreed to double their offer. The Unions also secured lump-sum payments, ‘loyalty bonuses’, of between £1,000 and £5,000 depending on the length of service, and a £1.5 million legacy for the town of Treorchy, to be dispersed by the GMB, Rhondda AM, the local MP, and two of the former shop floor union representatives, including Joan.

The GMB estimates that the final bill for the closure went from £1.8 million to £6 million, however the terms of Burberry’s settlements meant that someone with

over 40 years service, of which there were many, received only an extra £5,000 on top of their redundancy payment, and because the £1.5 million is given out over the course of 10 years, the actual value of the ‘legacy’ decreases annually.

Not everyone in Treorchy and the surrounding Rhondda Valley shared a sense of outrage about the closure. When I first visited the town in 2008, I travelled by taxi to the reunion, which was hosted at the local football club. On my way there, the cab driver asked me what I was doing in the Valleys, and became infuriated when I told him I was writing about the Burberry women. He argued that there was ‘far too much emphasis’ placed on that site. He regarded the Burberry wages as ‘pin money’ and not a real wage with any ‘proper’ economic power. He had been made redundant years earlier, and I sensed that he felt overlooked, and that his anger went unnoticed, and became displaced. His feelings seemed to reflect what Ahmed (2010) describes as ‘spoiling the norm’, and it’s possible that he felt the women had gone ‘off-script’. There was a chance that after years of deferring to fathers and husbands, the women’s apparent change in behaviour now came across as joyless, and indeed they may have been in danger of becoming outsiders in a community where they had forever been on the inside.

The lack of empathy for the Burberry workers was not solely isolated to men, and on the BBC Wales comments pages in March 2007, Susan Carlick from Treharris wrote

‘As an ex works GMB Secretary for Rizla UK Ltd, and a Labour Party member, from my experience of being made redundant there were 130 highly skilled and well paid jobs lost. I do really sympathize with the Burberry workers. What I find strange is that no one was prepared to campaign for our jobs as much as they have done for Burberry workers. It was only the determined effort of the GMB Union, my members, stewards, and myself that secured us with a decent redundancy package.

We still would have preferred our jobs. If we had the same support from all our MPs and AMs as the Burberry workers have had, our jobs may have been secured. I wish all the Burberry workers all the very best for their campaign, and just hope they can save their jobs, as there are far too many jobs gone in the Valley. I think why it has become a major cause is it is vitally important to keep home grown jobs, irrespective of whether they are highly skilled or not. I personally think the people who let me down are now jumping on the bandwagon.'

Carlick refers to the closure of the Rizla plant in nearby Treforest in 2005, and is understandably still very bitter. She references her 'highly skilled' workforce, and how it is vital to keep jobs in the Valley, whether skilled or unskilled, but fails to understand the differences between Burberry and the Rizla brand. Burberry trade on their 'Made in Britain' heritage and status, which lends the brand a 'geographic entanglement' (Pike, 2010) to the UK, and also, by widening the campaign to include more than just pay and conditions for the Treorchy employees, the GMB were able to attract consumer interest in their cause. By involving consumers within the protests, where they marched side-by-side with workforce, the GMB were able to use this expanded focus to make a bespoke and inclusive plan to keep production British, and they were also able to use one of Burberry's key selling points against them.

After the closure

When I caught up with the women in 2009, they told me about their on-going search for work. Leigh had been more successful than most, securing a new job at a chemist in Treorchy. She worked part-time, so her take home pay was substantially less than her Burberry wages, however she felt fortunate that she was still working locally. Two of Leigh's former colleagues had secured work making duvet covers in Merthyr Tydfil, and another had set up her own clothing alteration business, but these were very rare exceptions. Joan, like many other

ex-Burberry employees, had a new job as a care assistant.

“Pauline, Elaine, Diane, Claire, and Susan, all work at Ty Ross.”

Ty Ross is a local care home, and one of the few employers in the area offering any kind of work. The work on offer was unpopular, as the hours were long and irregular, and the shift patterns involved working unsocial hours - at night, at the weekend, at Christmas and New Year. During the first winter after the Burberry closure, Joan had to work on Christmas day, and got into trouble with her employer as her husband kept phoning to check how to cook the dinner, which marked his first time in the kitchen. Joan was very unhappy that at nearly 60 years old she had been forced to work on Christmas day for the very first time, but also that the social roles between herself and her husband were skewed. Shortly after this incident, Joan suffered an injury at work, and subsequently tried to find a new job that involved less lifting. She responded to an advert looking for shop assistants in a nearby town:

“I’ve been down to Pontypridd asking for 2 jobs in boutiques. The one, they said ‘put your name and address, and your age on here’, and the two in front of me – they were 17 and 18. But you don’t know what they’re looking for. They said they wanted a mature person.”

“In the other shop he said ‘I’ve got a young range of wear, and I need someone more in the range of, you know...’”

Though employment legislation forbids using age as a barrier, in practice it may be widespread and unchallenged. For some former Burberry employees, there was a ray of hope when a small branch of Asda opened in the town just after the closure of the plant. A handful of ex-employees were given jobs there, however as the store did not meet profit expectations, they were all laid off again not long after it opened. When a town with a population of 2,000 loses 309 full time jobs, and those who are working have low levels of income and uneven earning patterns, blame was attributed to the fact that there simply wasn’t enough

money in the local economy to keep the shop afloat.

Contradictorily, the Treorchy Social Audit (2008) reports a net increase of employment rates in the area, however the majority were low skilled and low paid. The skilled and stable jobs were long gone, but the Audit states that this increase

‘....generally obscures a continual process of turnover in the local employment base in which particular firms shed jobs or close down even as new firms start operating in the area. The local perception is that these losses have primarily occurred in the more established (and better paying) factories, some of which have recently shed jobs or moved out of the area altogether. Examples of this included recent redundancies at the Burberrys factory and the closure of Harwins components.’ (2008: 2.5)

The Treorchy Audit reveals the extent of fear the closure had on the town, and how whole families were at risk of becoming ‘work poor’ households, where some may never work again. All the women I worked with discussed the ‘family referral system’, and they felt that this had come back to haunt them now they had all lost their jobs. Joan shared her newspaper clippings with me, showing a photograph of a family who lost their jobs

“All of them, look – mother, father and son worked in the factory.”

The Treorchy Audit shows evidence that the benefits of declining unemployment have not been evenly distributed and that unemployment continued to be concentrated within households where no one is in employment. The Audit shows that the lack of skilled and well-paid work in the area was a source of despondency, and that young people ‘see their parents in low paid employment and they see no hope.’ Former Burberry machinist Anne told us

“My niece, she’s coming up 18 and she hadn’t had a job yet.”

One interviewee in the Treorchy Audit suggests that as wages were so low in the local labour market, this has added a ‘push-out’ factor to work outside the area, whether as a daily commuter, or on a more permanent basis. The women I talked to started work at 7.45 in the morning, but worked locally so didn’t have to travel far, however they all now complained that where there are jobs, they are often located miles away involving long journeys on public transport. Several of Joan’s former work mates were employed in a care home in Llantresant, a commute involving two bus rides, which is a significant journey in a semi-rural area.

Though the women spoke fondly about the majority of their time at Polikoff and Burberry, they noticed a regime change when Burberry formally took over in 1989. Anne remembers Polikoff’s as “very family oriented”, and the company allowed parents to tend to sick children, and attend to other caring responsibilities and family emergencies. Burberry, by contrast, preferred to be guided by the rulebook and were very inflexible employers. Anne remembered a time when her son was involved in a road traffic accident, and had been taken to hospital. She had to wait in order to receive a permission slip to leave the factory, and the clerk tried to persuade her to ‘go another day’ as it was inconvenient at that time. However, despite the dictatorial management style, there was a discernable sense of community emanating from the women I spoke to, one in which more vulnerable members of the workforce were supported by their workmates. As Joan remarked

“It’s a proper community, one where people look after one another.”

The women told me of a former colleague who had been suspended from work for selling Burberry polo shirts at a local golf club. He’d bought the shirts from the onsite shop, and was shocked at his suspension. The women had a whip round for him, and gave their cash freely to support him and his family when his wages were docked. Joan told me that her reason for standing as a union representative was to ‘look after the underdog’ and this sense of responsibility

runs deep through their collective psyche. The women talked about workmates with learning disabilities and how they supported them, including one man with learning differences.

“The men would tease him, but the women wouldn’t have it. They stood up for him.”

I asked where he was now the factory had closed.

“He hadn’t got a job. He’s walking the streets, um...first of all with his sister’s dog, didn’t he? But they had him put down, or something. He hasn’t got a new one now so he walks by himself. His mother used to say ‘he walked the dog to death.’ He walks for miles and miles.”

“You go to say ‘Hiya Dave, how are you?’ but all you can say is ‘Hiya Dave’ and he answers ‘I’m alright thank you’ quick as a flash, because he knows that’s what you were going to ask.”

The women talked about the informal support structure around him at the factory, where his manager told him exactly what he needed to do, patiently, task by task, maintaining personal contact with him throughout the day. A space was found at the factory so that he could do a job of work and be useful and needed. When the factory closed he found, like many others, that he was no longer useful or needed and he quickly spiraled into difficulty, as there was no formal structure in place to support him. Many former employees have suffered from ill health since the closure, with depression, dementia and alcoholism topping the list. One former colleague of Joan and Anne’s lapsed into alcoholism and ran up debts on his rent and bills, and he now gets into his property by climbing through the bathroom window as the bailiffs locked all the doors. As Joan says

“People used to look out for him.”

These acts of kindness fall outside a formal system, and as Skeggs (1997) argues, domestic labour in the form of the ‘care system’ have become quantifiable and calculative, but these acts of generosity, what Derrida described as ‘giving outside the contract’ are un-quantifiable, and incalculable - there was no quantifiable value to their kindness.

One of the biggest and largely unseen consequences of the closure was the loss of important social structures, particularly those built up at work, but which were rarely acted on outside working hours. Most of the women I spoke to did not socialize with work colleagues, but built up networks during working hours, often sustaining very long friendships. I came to understand that their social lives did not mirror my own, and that this generation of women put their families first, and friendship was for work hours, Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm. All the women say they still see old workmates in the street or at the shop, but as Leigh recalls, it’s rarely to say more than

“Are you working yet?” as we rush past one another.”

My primary research showed that their social networks are no longer intact, and so when I caught up with the women in 2009, they had not seen one another for months. I found that their resentment towards Burberry is undiminished, as is their focus on the company’s greed. They have a heightened awareness of the Burberry profit margin, and the fact that the Treorchy plant made a lot of money for the company still hurts them. One factor that compromises their feelings towards Burberry are the gifts the company gave them each Christmas, and where once they cherished the products and made presents of the handbags, umbrellas and shirts to daughters, mothers and husbands, now they are repelled, and not wearing Burberry is a lifetime commitment. As Leigh asked

“I wouldn’t wear Burberry now, would you Joan?”

“No, I would not. Mike had a shirt and he’d wear it at the caravan, but

now when he puts it on, you just think (shudders) oh, no. And the girls (Joan's two daughters) don't use their handbags any more, no."

The Burberry trademark Nova Check has become toxic to the women, yet a strong sense of thrift still runs its course, which meant that the women could not throw anything away. As Anne remarks

"We had these gifts at Christmas time, see. There's a Burberry umbrella under the stairs."

Leigh *"I have a lot of stuff under the stairs too"*

Joan *"I have a walking stick upstairs, brand new, and none of the girls wanted it."*

Leigh *"I won't throw it out, mind."*

A sense of pride is bound up in the products, and where once they were proud that they were able to give their daughters a luxury item with the easily identifiable Nova check, now they recoil in horror from this pattern. Leigh talked about Cardiff City fans publicly dumping their unofficial Burberry 'uniform' after the closure, stating that in the past

"You wouldn't see a Cardiff City shirt, you'd see a Burberry shirt."

The Connaught, famous for being the nearest pub to the Cardiff City ground at Ninian Park, and for banning anyone wearing Burberry, is now free of this aesthetic.

Burberry's Trust Fund

Joan and former colleague Gaynor are now involved in distributing funds from the Trust Fund set up by Burberry in the aftermath of the closure. Both women are very proud to represent the workforce and make decisions on what to fund

and to what level, however the amounts they have disbursed so far are small, and the requests are slow to arrive. Joan and Gaynor work with GMB officer Mervyn Burnett, Chris Bryant MP, and Leighton Andrews AM, and to date they have funded a small range of requests:

“One girl wanted for HGV”

One of the youngest former employees applied for £1,000 to get her license, and now has a job in the haulage industry. The former head mechanic at Burberry applied for funds to set up a mobile mending business, but was denied capital funds to buy a new computer, as Joan argues

“Nobody’s having money for computers ‘cause there are lots of places you can go and use computers.”

Other funds have been given directly to other charities, including the Princes Trust, who then re-distribute the funds to their user groups. The sole stipulation is that funds must go to people or organizations in the Rhondda area, however it is clear from the lack of requests that many former employees lack the confidence to make a formal applications for funds, and this is confirmed by local Regeneration Services. There is no provision for assistance or support to complete an application from any of the statuary bodies or third sector organizations in the area, so the £1.5 million ‘given’ to Treorchy may well go elsewhere.

Conclusions

‘Mobilizing Resistance’ (2012) underlines a temporary transformation of the Treorchy employees during the struggle to fend off factory closure, where the predominantly female workforce, described by Blyton and Jenkins (2012) as ‘passive’ became, through union intervention, an organized and assertive unit, who clearly differentiated themselves from other garment workers, not just in

the area, but on a national basis. Garment workers in Rotherham were not as effective as the Treorchy workforce in attracting media attention when Burberry announced the closure of their plant with the loss of a further 540 jobs only one year later, however Blyton and Jenkins (2012) point to a lack of leadership amongst Union officers who failed to properly galvanize the Rotherham employees and work collaboratively.

'Mobilising Resistance' (2012) attributes the 'success' of the Treorchy campaign to the memory of the miner's strike in the mid-1980s, and the long and bitter struggle experienced by the whole town. Many of the women involved in the Burberry campaign remembered this strike, and this helped to motivate them as they fully understood the consequences of another major manufacturing loss within the area, which gave them a 'nothing to lose' attitude.

For many of the women I spoke to and worked with, the struggle has had an overwhelming impact on their lives, however Blyton and Jenkins argue that the 'call to arms' was an impermanent one

'These workers were not transformed into a group of radicalized, politicized activists, rather they were momentarily 'liberated from belief in the legitimacy of the status quo'.' (2012: 42)

However, I have seen how the struggle has left an indelible mark, and though I agree it has not 'radicalized' them, it has certainly been an agent of change. To précis Skeggs (1993) the situation the women found themselves in did not mean that because they challenged their powerlessness, that they automatically moved into positions of power, but rather that they refused to be powerless or positioned without power - a process that happened moment by moment and at a local level.

Through this chapter we learn that a key element of the Burberry campaign was that the workforce and the Unions were able to create a temporary relationship between the producer, the commodity, and the consumer. Customers started to consider the effects of globalisation and momentarily became active consumers with rights and access to legal recourse, including a boycott of Burberry products, and began to stage public protests outside their stores. Consumers were able to link this to media coverage in London, New York, and Madrid, where Burberry prioritised company value above ethical values and responsibilities towards their own workforce. Burberry was shocked to realise that although they held their workforce in low esteem, through the protests in 2007, those same workers were revealed as capable of taking value away.

In contrast, we learn that the global ramifications of the company's decision to move the bulk its production to China were marginal, and Burberry sustained only temporary damage to brand equity, and overall the company has fared well. Profits soared, even at the height of the crisis, and Burberry became the most successful UK luxury brand worldwide.

However, after years of bucking the financial trend faced by many luxury clothing conglomerates, including LVMH and the PPR Gucci Group, and a long run of ever increasing profits, in September 2012 the company issued a profit warning and saw its shares plummet by 21%. This can be explained by a standstill in sales of luxury goods worldwide, and a clear sign of contracting markets, however Burberry has invested heavily in China, including an expansion of its retail spaces to cater to a burgeoning middle class, and could be in jeopardy after it was widely reported that the Chinese economy, including imports, were shrinking.

'However, there are growing signs that China's economy is coming off the boil, with imports shrinking unexpectedly in August and factory output hitting a three-year low. Burberry's profit warning came a day after the

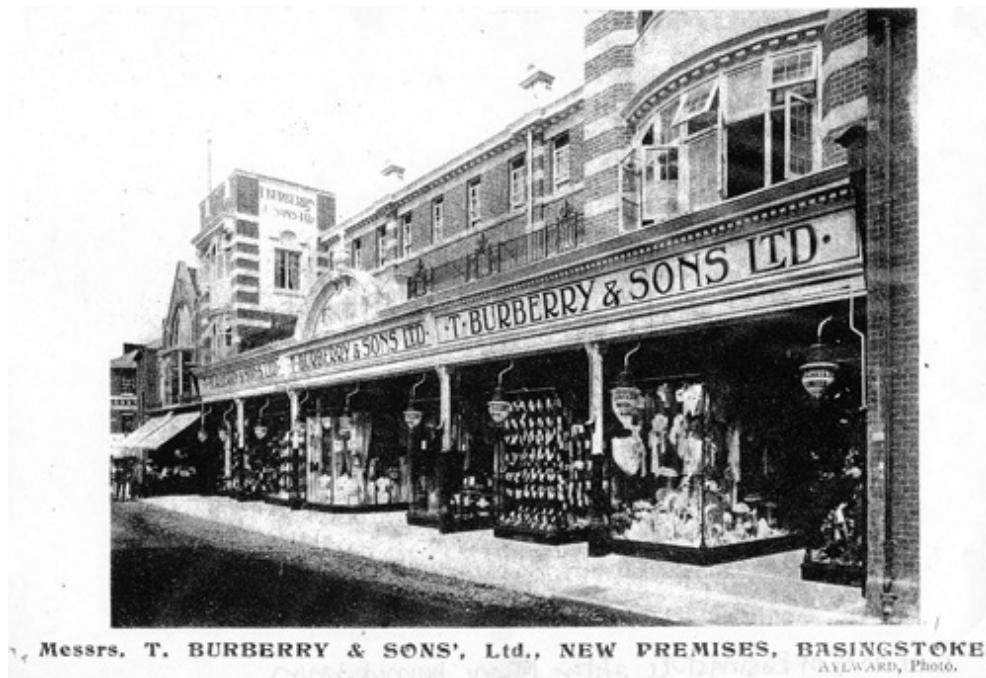
Chinese government scaled back its consumer growth targets for the five years to 2015 to an average annual rate of 15%, down from 16.1% in the past decade.'(Kollewe, 2012)

Had the unstoppable Burberry finally hit an economic wall? Given their track record it seems unlikely, as they developed a wealth of strategies to overcome financial setbacks, including new product launches to reinvigorate their market share, including the launch of the £13,000 'Warrior' handbag. I question how, in a time of austerity, a company would market a bag so costly that only a few consumers worldwide could afford it? And why, given the global economic meltdown at that time, would anyone want to be seen with this handbag? We can look to the merchandising and marketing teams for some of the answers, as Burberry, not usually shy of using the trademark Nova Check, used a different design known only to 'authentic' and well-heeled followers of the Burberry brand, giving it a stealth design value. Burberry, though still fearful of international repercussions from the closure, nonetheless boldly went forth with a campaign championing Burberry's enduring 'British-ness', despite its slender use of UK production, with just a single plant in Castleford maintaining its connection to Britain. The 'Warrior' handbag was promoted in a campaign titled 'The British Medieval Mood', featuring only British models, and members of British boy bands, who were photographed in London's Hyde Park. The campaign helped Burberry to fulfill its role as an authentically British brand, but it also captivated the imagination of consumers in international markets, who fell in love with an image of England, and its embodied qualities within the Burberry brand.

In the next chapter I look at the one hundred and fifty year history of Burberry to see how it arrived in the twenty first century as a brand adored in international markets, and how Burberry has used design, trademarks and patents to construct a non-substitutable brand, exploiting gaps and incomplete information to create its impactful marketing strategies.

Chapter four

Branding Burberry: a one hundred and fifty year metamorphosis



*Thomas Burberry's second store in Basingstoke circa 1870
Image courtesy of the Burberry archive*

In this chapter I detail a branding history and marketing biography of Burberry to establish how it moved from hand-crafted production in a semi-rural community, to its current position as a high value company and one of the worlds leading luxury fashion brands, a metamorphosis that many companies have attempted but few with Burberry's level of success. How did Burberry beat off such intensive competition, and rise to the top of the international luxury clothing market?

I have approached this chapter using direct analysis of archive materials held at the Hampshire Museum Services, home county of the first Burberry shop, and through limited access to Burberry's own archive, formerly housed at their headquarters building in London's Haymarket. I trace an arc of industrial history from the beginning of the company when their clothes were made by a single hand, through semi-industrialization, and finally to globalized production and a digitized selling landscape. Access to archive materials has helped me to draw

an intimate history of the company and outline changes in its retail aesthetic and relationship to consumerism throughout Britain, Europe and the US.

I show how Burberry developed brand values that are specific to its products and history, through its early use of celebrity endorsement and product placement, and how it has moved forward to embrace digital technologies, data mining, and what Arvidsson (2006) describes as ‘putting the aristocracy to work’. I describe Burberry’s uneven financial and social biography over the past 150 years, but show how it has made good use of its inventions, technological innovations, patents, trademarks, and design-led product development.

The Race For The Top

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Thomas Burberry opened an unremarkable store in Basingstoke, Hampshire. Burberry was a tailor’s apprentice and the mainstay of his stock was a rustic waxed cotton smock sold to local farmers and agricultural workers, however records at the Hampshire Museum Service show that he sold a myriad other items including fire damaged goods, knick-knacks and other cheaply produced goods, stacked high, and sold low.

After his first store burned down, Burberry moved to new premises and this seemed to initiate a different kind of enterprise as he expanded the women’s wear, corsetry, and children’s wear sections, but also introduced new amenities including a funeral emporium and a legal services desk. Bowlby (2000) shows how Burberry’s emphasis on goods and services for women and children mirrored a pattern in retailing where women were viewed as being easily duped, and were clustered alongside black and immigrant groups in a subordinate category as they were thought ‘likely to share some particularly unsophisticated (which may mean exploitable) predilections’ (2000: 113) in a dualistic,

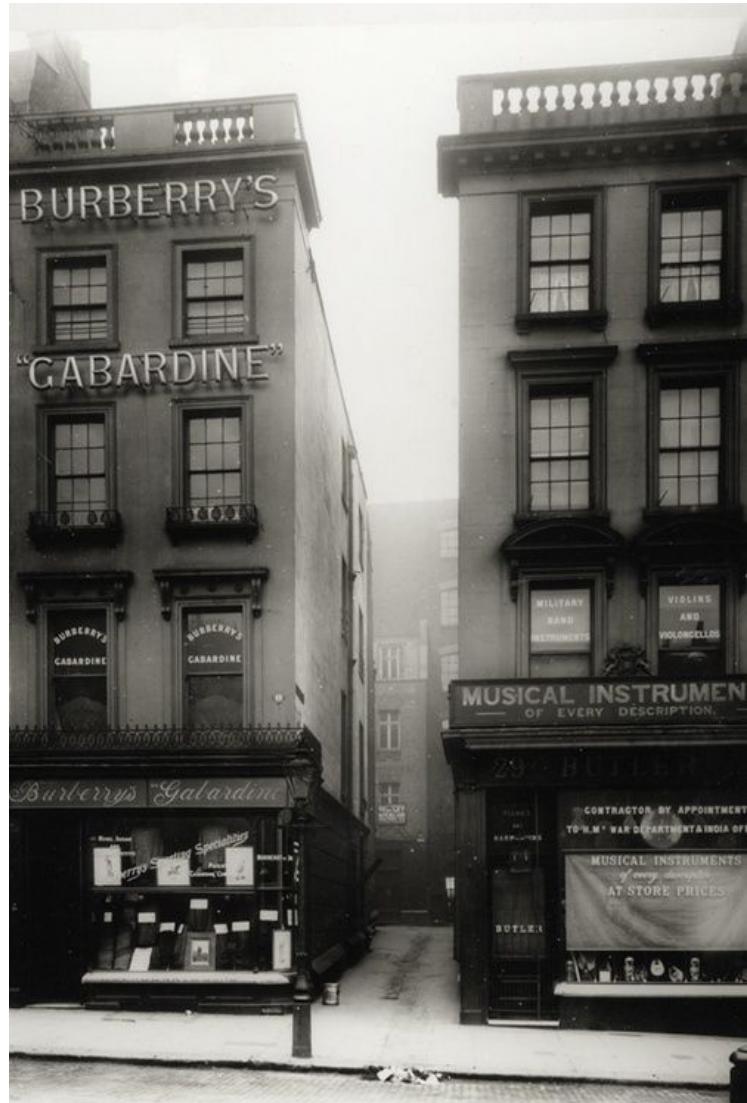
hierarchical structure that favoured older, white men. Burberry shows us that he was no exception in under-valuing women, and used this consumer base to think about ways to diversify stock and develop a space where it was difficult for customers to compare prices on like-for-like goods and services, but much easier for him to identify opportunities for greater profits. In a few short years, he had risen as a middleman and merchant, and the changes he made to stock and store layout unleashed a hitherto unseen competitive element aimed at other shops in the area, which helped him to finesse a stronger relationship with his customers, where they responded to what Chamberlin (1933) described as ‘irrational preferences’, and shopped there not by random chance, but out of choice.

However the real innovation and turning point in his business was still to come, and as Burberry continued to sell the semi-waterproof waxed smocks that he produced in-house, they became the catalyst for a new kind of fabric that exponentially raised his profile, and the profile of the store. In 1879 Thomas Burberry, a keen horse-rider, feeling physically weighed down and frustrated with the heavy and restrictive clothes required to combat cold and wet weather, collaborated with a local mill owner and successfully developed a ‘weather proofed’ cloth, and in 1888 he patented the new tightly woven twill fabric as ‘gabardine’. The cloth was made from a rubberised yarn, which was woven into lengths, and was truly innovative for its time. Other companies across the UK including Mackintosh, Aquascutum, and Barbour had produced ‘water proofed’ cloth, usually as a rubberised laminate, but this was the first time that the yarn itself had been proofed prior to the weaving process, making it lightweight and relatively breathable. Burberry’s simple waxed cotton smock had given rise to an early form of inventive production, and Burberry had succeeded in developing intellectual property features in the form of a patent for his new fabric, making the first move towards developing a non-substitutable product; the new gabardine products formed the cornerstone of the business as it was

then, and reflect how it performs now.

In 1891, the success of his new range of men's and women's weather proofed clothing meant that Burberry was able to open a shop in London's Haymarket (see image right) and the company entered a fertile period of innovation. Burberry had succeeded in diversifying their product range through design-led features on clothing and apparel, and indeed many elements will look familiar to contemporary consumers. Burberry had manoeuvred his company into a position of trust, and used the

Burberry name as a form of guarantee, which was critical to the company as he was no longer just selling to local markets in Basingstoke, but to distant buyers.



*Burberry's first London Store, 1891.
Image courtesy of globalblue.com*

The 1890s marked the birth of the motor industry, and this signalled an untapped market for Burberry, as motorists needed sturdy clothing to keep out the cold and wet. Most cars were open-topped, so wind- and waterproof clothing became a necessity, and Burberry's became a destination store for motorists. Thinking laterally, Burberry seized the moment and began to produce

a wide range of leisure and specialist sports apparel including clothes for golf, grouse shooting, angling, riding, tennis, archery, skiing, and motorcycling, and Burberry's was one of the first companies to produce sports clothing specifically for women.

This was a crucial turning point for his company, and clearly marked out the leisure classes as Burberry's target market, and indeed this customer demographic formed the future direction of the company.

The Boer War in South Africa signalled another new market for Burberry's, and made the Military an important income stream. The sweltering weather conditions on the ground during this war necessitated a lighter weight uniform, and Burberry's lightweight 'Tielocken' coat proved perfect. The War Office gave the Tielocken its official approval, and the 'trench' coat became a recognisable element of the officer uniform. The Tielocken design was trademarked in 1895, and this proved to be a pivotal time for the company as it simultaneously brought two key marketing elements together: a War Office-approved officer uniform, and the 'celebrity'. Lord Kitchener famously wore a Tielocken coat, and Burberry wasted no time alerting other officers to this fact, and it became a standard feature of their advertising campaigns throughout the first decades of the 20th Century.

This convergence created a hybrid celebrity-backed product, allowing the price of Tielocken products to be increased as trust in the Burberry name multiplied. By meeting War Office standards for battle-ready functionality, the company now stood for dependability, and gave consumers two levels of accountability: the War Office, and Lord Kitchener himself. Officers decided that if the Tielocken was good enough for Kitchener as a 'Campaigning Coat', it was good enough for them. Burberry trademarked other design-led accessories including Tielocken gators, and the 'D-ring' belt loop, which was used to attach weaponry.

THE TIELOCKEN BURBERRY



Selected by LORD KITCHENER as the most serviceable weather-resisting campaigning coat, after a critical examination of other models.

THE TIELOCKEN provides, from throat to knees, a double safeguard of the greatest value when exposed to wet or cold.

EASY ADJUSTMENT—no buttons to fasten or lose. The belt fits the coat to any thickness of under-garments and holds it smartly and well.

THE SKIRTS are so arranged that it is impossible for the legs to be exposed, thus obviating the difficulty of keeping the lower part of the body dry in stormy weather.

N.B.—Officers wishing their Tielocken Coats to be ABSOLUTELY WATERPROOF, regardless of hygiene, may have them interlined in impervious material without extra cost.

Everything the Officer Needs Ready for Use or to measure in 2 to 4 days.

BURBERRYS
Haymarket London
Bd. Maleherbes PARIS

Illustrated Military Catalogue Post Free

Lord Kitchener in a Burberry 'Tielocken'.
Image courtesy of the Burberry archive

This helped Burberry's to manage future demand, by moving beyond one-off sales and establishing an identity and reputation that encouraged consumers to make repeat purchases.

Burberry's approach to marketing – through invention, strong design, and the aristocratic endorsement, was fairly advanced for its time, but still relatively unformalised. McClintock (1995) states that before 1851, coinciding with the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace, advertising had scarcely existed:

‘As a commercial form, it was generally regarded as a confession of weakness, a rather shabby last resort.’ (1995: 210)

Burberry, like many other companies, appeared to make things up as they went along, and McClintock (1995) argues that the Great Exhibition helped the advertising industry, such as it was, to evolve alongside the advent of consumerism, which she traces back to the impact of the World Fairs in the mid-19th Century.

‘By exhibiting commodities not only as goods, but as an organised system of images, the World Exhibition helped fashion a new kind of being, the consumer, and a new kind of ideology, consumerism. The mass consumption of the commodity spectacle was born.’ (1995: 208-209)

It is difficult to imagine the impact the vast array of goods at the World Fairs had on visitors, as the sheer scale must have been overwhelming. Benjamin (1999) argued that world exhibitions became ‘places of pilgrimage to the commodity fetish’ (1999: 7) that ‘construct a universe of ‘spécialités’ – a term he used to refer to the ‘luxuries industry’, which he argued ‘modernise the universe’ (1999: 18). Benjamin shows how the world fairs impacted store aesthetics, and details an historical turning point in the mid-nineteenth century where goods were displayed within a retail setting for the first time, leading the Parisian

shopkeeper to

'...deck out his shop from floor to ceiling and to sacrifice three hundred yards of material to garland his façade like a flagship.' (1999: 52)

Bowlby (1993) argues that the consumer needed to be enticed over the threshold, and she writes that the 'Universal Showroom' was used to 'set the scene and get your attention' (1993: 94) however it took years to persuade people to break a habit of a lifetime and consume freely. If we think that prior to the 1890s, 'shopping' as we now understand it only existed as a mundane 'provisioning' activity, where the customer entered a shop not to browse, but to buy. Nava (2007) argues that the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century witnessed a rapid change within retail, particularly the 'growth of urban consumer culture' (2007: 4) however Burberry's first London store did not overhaul its shop window in order to appeal to a metropolitan elite, and it retained a utilitarian aesthetic, clinging to the old-style retail principal of necessity, and not desire.

Advertising started to perform a distinctive role in persuading customers to commit to a consumerist culture, as there were many barriers in place – including a lack of financial resources, and a lack of time, as many people spent long days at work, however towards the close of the nineteenth century, advertising was becoming a recognised part of retail. One unlikely company revolutionized the way advertising was seen by the public, and as improbable as it sounds, this turned on an acquisition of a Millais painting by Pears Soap managing director, Thom Barrett. Barratt changed Millais' title from 'A Child's World' to 'Bubbles' and its strong connection to the business he represented transformed consumer views on advertising. McClintock (1995) argues that Barrett's intervention was especially important as it changed the axis of 'the possession' to the axis of 'the spectacle'.

'Advertising's chief contribution to modernity was the discovery that by manipulating the semiotic space around the commodity, the unconscious as a public space could also be manipulated. Barratt's great innovation was to invest huge sums of money in the creation of a visible space around the commodity.' (1995: 213)

Though Burberry's Haymarket store retained a 'serviceable' aesthetic, its advertisements in the press contradicted this image, as the company's fledgling marketing plan can be understood through Baudrillard's theory of sign-values – where production of Burberry's uniforms went unacknowledged and hidden from view, but their consumption was strongly understood as a sign of 'gentlemanly' dress and behaviour. Kitchener's coat was not scarred with the horrors of war, but was seen and promoted as a 'campaigning' coat, with a viable use-value, but one that was superseded by the image of the 'Gentleman Officer', greatly enhancing the semiotic space around the Burberry name, and in retrospect this period marks a high water mark for Burberry in terms of advertising and promoting its products.

Burberry's preferred promotional media were newspaper and magazine advertisements, and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the company produced almost no 'designed' packaging. Records at the Burberry archive show that the company did not commit any significant funds towards advertising, however the company had begun to sponsor daring air flights and expeditions to the Antarctic and the South Pole, carefully selecting their choice of hero to represent the brand. They started tentatively in 1897, supplying clothing to explorer Major Jackson, who was famed for mapping parts of the Artic Circle. Their next endorsement in 1903 was with explorer Roald Amundsen, the Norwegian explorer, and Burberry supplied clothing when he traversed the Northwest Passage. However, Burberry's most famous endorsements came from Sir Ernest Shackleton's expedition to Antarctica

in 1914, and Alcock & Brown's historic flight over the Atlantic in 1919. This synergistic relationship – where the adventurer is generously supplied with up-to-the moment, technically innovative clothing and equipment, served Burberry well, and the ensuing news coverage helped them to link to widening geographic markets. This quote by Sir John Alcock now looks outdated and clunky, but at the time it was advertising gold:

'Captain Sir John Alcock, D.S.C, the first airman to fly the Atlantic, reported as follows regarding his Burberry kit:

"I am writing to tell you how very satisfactory the outfit has proved which I ordered for the Atlantic flight. Although in continual mist, rain or sleet, and the altitude varying from 200 to 11,000 feet causing great variations of temperature, I kept as dry as possible under such conditions.'

'This was a wonderful achievement even for Burberrys, especially considering that I never adopted any electrical or other artificial means of heating, and that no rubber or cement is used in your waterproofing."

J Alcock'

Quote courtesy of the Burberry archive

At the time, Alcock and Brown were two of the most famous men in the Western world, and to persuade them to talk about the brand was a coup. Burberry's proximity to adventurers and modern heroes ramped up their credibility and allure, which was further heightened when the company organized public exhibitions of their clothing, accessories, equipment, and photographs, most of which is now in the Royal Geographic Society's collections.

From the rather clubbable and masculine elements of Burberry's corporate sponsorships, a new and more cosmopolitan aspect of retailing emerged in

the first decade of the twentieth century - the modern department store. It was an important development on the retail landscape, and though companies including Whiteley's, Fenwick, Debenham & Freebody, Bon Marché, and Swan & Edgar had all opened stores in the nineteenth century and were trading comfortably, the opening of one particular store kept all of them on their toes, and it specifically targeted women. American-born retailer Gordon Selfridge opened Selfridges & Co. in 1909, and his store featured multiple key differences, including the warm welcome he extended to women, and a dismissal of the floorwalker. The floorwalker had been a permanent fixture of the old-style department stores, whose job involved meeting customers at the door then guiding them to specific sales areas in order to make a purchase. His role involved being a doorman, guide, and store detective; he discouraged customers from staying in the shop after they had completed their transaction, and were also on hand to stop 'unsuitable' customers from entering the store.

Selfridges & Co. was consciously aimed at middle and upper class women, however all women were welcomed into his store, including Suffragettes, and indeed one famous member of the Suffrage movement – Lady Mae Loxley, helped Selfridge to raise finance for the store when an important early backer withdrew his support. Nava (2007) pinpoints Selfridge's influence for recognising the 'socio-economic and symbolic part played by women in early twentieth century modernity' (2007: 4) pointing out that

‘He was a supporter of women’s suffrage, advertised regularly in the feminist press and made clear his respect for the astuteness and economic power of women customers.’ (2007: 20)

Though this gender definition looks naturalised within the context of contemporary retail, at the time Selfridge was publicly lambasted for tempting women to spend money they didn't have – more so because it was likely to be their husband's money, as women were thought to be highly susceptible

spendthrifts, and what Bowlby (2000) refers to as ‘pitiable dupes’ (2000: 132) easily persuaded to buy clothes, shoes, and hats they didn’t need. Selfridge built a store that was intended to accommodate women from morning until evening, adding amenities including lavatories, tea rooms where women could safely dine alone, and a library with free notepaper and envelopes. The other big change to occur under Selfridge’s guidance was the notion of browsing – where all goods were displayed in the open, so that customers could see what the store had to offer, which was a radical departure from the old-style department stores, where goods were tucked into drawers and cabinets and brought out singly for the customer to inspect before making a choice. Selfridge insisted that everything should be seen, and in many ways his store resembled the Great Exhibitions of the nineteenth century, where products were transformed into a series of systemised images. The huge windows at Selfridges were put to use to sell a ‘narrative’, often taking their cues from contemporary theatre, where passers-by became an ‘audience’, and some windows were specifically designed to be glimpsed at speed by passengers in motor cars on London’s Oxford Street. Nava (2008) describes how Selfridge attempted to ‘aestheticise’ retailing, encouraging Britain to catch up with the Americans and the French, who used window display as part of their advertising campaigns, and not just an extension of the stock room.

By 1913 Burberry had moved to larger premises on Haymarket, and the company were in a position to commission an architect to design the new store, and they chose Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, Walter Cave. Early in his career Cave used an Arts and Crafts approach to design, however in his later years he adopted a neo-classical aesthetic, and this was the approach he used for the Burberry store. Buckley (2007) argues that ‘Classicism’ became the dominant design approach in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain, and Burberry’s store fitted into a new ‘imperial’ vision of London



*Burberry's flagship store on London's Haymarket, 1913.
Image courtesy of the Burberry archive*

'The visual characteristics of many of these building were ostentation and display, achieved through a plethora of styles. Classicism was deployed to evoke the grandeur, status and stability of 'British' imperial power.'

(2007: 33)

The lack of ostentation in the fabric of Burberry's new building (see image on previous page) in comparison to other buildings of the same era meant that the store looked restrained, though the gleaming white stone of its exterior matched the new streets, hotels, and theatres springing up in central London. However, in contrast to Selfridges & Co., its window displays were perfunctory – they showed the customer what they could expect to buy in the shop, but did not excite their imagination.

Nonetheless Burberry, with just two stores (one in London and another in Paris, on the Rue Malesherbes) couldn't hope to compete with the department stores and their huge range of goods, as by now the company had narrowed its inventory to specific products aimed at the motorist, the sportsman, and the Military.

Burberry retained the high profile adventurer as a symbol of the brand, but was rivalled by Gordon Selfridge who in 1909 showcased the plane used by Louis Blériot in the historic cross-Channel flight from Calais to Dover, which attracted over two and half thousand people a day to the store. However, Selfridge did not confine his events solely to the adventurer, but used his store to showcase a range of cosmopolitan interests, including the 'Russian Ballet and the Tango' (Nava, 2000: 19) and in 1914 he celebrated the store's fifth anniversary with a 'Merchandise of the World' shopping event and special souvenir booklet, the 'Spirit of Modern Commerce.' (Nava: 2000: 23)

Selfridges' retail innovations were grounded in darker days, as the advent of the First World War loomed over Britain. However for Burberry, the war had the potential to generate significant revenue for the company, and was viewed

in a more positive manner. But the war years were not smooth for Burberry, as two years into the conflict the company was publically scrutinized by HM Government and subjected to questions in the House of Commons. Hansard (1916) records the ‘oral answers to questions’ sitting on the 31 May 1916

‘Mr. O’Grady asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he can give information as to the extent to which Messrs. Burberry, of London, Basing-stoke, Reading, and Winchester, have in hand orders for officers’ clothing either from the War Office or from individual officers; whether he is aware that the method of manufacture adopted some years ago by this firm involves the employment of women in place of skilled men, at piece rates much less than those paid in fair houses.’ (Hansard, 1916)

James O’Grady, MP for Leeds East, also asked the Office of Trade Boards if they had received a complaint alleging that

‘Owing to the inadequate piece rates, many women work at home after workshop hours, in contravention of the Factory Act, and also whether the firm had disregarded applications to receive a deputation of their workpeople, accompanied by trade union representatives, on the subject of their earnings, and have since, with the object of encouraging thrift, offered a special payment of 2½d a week to non-unionists.’
(Hansard, 1916)

Hansard records also show that O’Grady asked for an investigation into Burberry by the Office of Trade Boards in contravention to the Trade Boards Act and the Fair Wage clause, and that the results be communicated to the Contracts Department of the War Office, and to any other public departments concerned. As none of O’Grady’s queries were adequately addressed by Burberry, questions continued to be raised in the House of Commons, and on 5 March 1917 William Anderson, MP for Sheffield Attercliffe, asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office whether he

'...was aware that at a meeting on Saturday last the cutters in the London tailoring trade decided to ballot on the question of discontinuing work in sympathy with the employés of the firm of Messrs. Burberry, at Beading (sic), whom they understand to be locked out by that firm because of their refusal to surrender their membership of the Garment Workers' Union; whether the cessation of work in the London tailoring factories would jeopardise the supply of military clothing; and whether in this case it is proposed to apply the provisions of the Munitions Act to the tailoring trade or in some other appropriate way to deal with the situation created by the recalcitrance of Messrs. Burberry?' (Hansard, 1917)

The response came from John Hodge MP, Minister of Labour, who expressed regret at Burberry's lack of response to an offer of mediation, but who nonetheless sent a warning 'to the union representing the workers that any stoppage of work on Government contracts in sympathy with the employés of Messrs. Burberry's would necessarily be very seriously regarded by the Government.' (Hansard, 1917) However, Hodge also stated that he had no legal power to compel Burberry to enter into arbitration as they were not manufacturing, transporting or supplying munitions under Section 3 of the Munitions of War Act 1915, but he made his feelings clear about Burberry, stating that

'I cannot help feeling that the action of the firm shows a deplorable want of that conciliatory spirit which in the general interest is so necessary in the relations between Capital and Labour, both now and after the War.'

(Hansard, 1917)

The ongoing battle between Burberry, the Government, the 'skilled cutters and tailors' and the employment of women shows a clear hierarchy, and one in which the female workforce found themselves at the bottom of the heap. And despite the intervention of several MPs supporting unionization, it is clear that

this was aimed solely at the men who worked at Burberry.

After World War One, Burberry continued to employ women and girls at industrial units in Hampshire. Employees used handcrafted production methods and we can see from the 1919 diary of Alice Attwood, a twenty-two year old seamstress working for Burberry, that she worked on single garments from start to finish. Attwood's cutting and sewing instructions are complex and longwinded, and made to customers' exact requirements, but she is separated from tailoring – which at the time remained strictly a man's occupation. Attwood's diary notes from Christmas 1919 show that she was making a bespoke overcoat

Navel coat regulations
Single breasted fly front
4 holes, bottom one to come 16½ inches from bottom of coat
Tab 6½ up with small buttons
Large button under lapel
Buttons to stand 3½ back
Throat tab to have 2 holes and buttoned on the inside
Facing collar to have 3 inch fall at back when finished
DB turns collar stand 1¾
Tabs on cuffs to be at angle of 40 degrees
Sleeve stitching 4 inch up
Inside tie
Pocket left facing
Pkts welts to come about 7½ inches (cut 8½)
Swing pockets with inside welt with hole and button
Outside welts 2 inches wide stitched on edge
Loose lining
Studs in cuffs, no hole in out welts

Miss A Attwood, 24 December 1919

Courtesy of the Hampshire Museum Services

Burberry retained three production units in Winchester, Basingstoke, and Reading, and records at Chilcomb House in Winchester (part of Hampshire Museum Services) show that the workforce often had to chase work, cycling between each plant in order to pick up available jobs. Records also show that the majority of female workers retired in their early twenties, where after years

of working in poor lighting conditions, they struggled to thread a needle and often left with damaged eyesight, however this was the reality of work before the construction of the Welfare State, with no access to proper health care.

The radical changes taking place within a number of urban retailers in UK cities, exemplified by Selfridges & Co., had yet to extend its reach, and cultural change took a long time to achieve, but after the armistice of the First World War the British Government was desperate to expand the shrinking economy, and this new form of retail was gradually understood to have important economic power.

The inter-war years were marked by two key factors at Burberry, firstly, Thomas Burberry's sons, Arthur and Thomas, took over as joint managing directors, and one of their first decisions was to copyright the Nova check design, which happened in 1921. Through this decision was perhaps one of the most crucial the company ever made, at the time this was not apparent as the check was initially used only as a pattern on a lining fabric, and the 'weather proofed' overcoat remained the dominant product. Secondly, in 1926, Thomas Burberry died, leaving the company without its revered figurehead and inspirational leader, and the company's output in terms of both production and marketing went temporarily fallow.

We can see from the advertisement (see following page) from a March 1930 edition of The Graphic (a weekly, illustrated newspaper) that Burberry's emphasis was still on the reliability of its products, and the illustration of 'The Burberry', though clearly masculine, appears at odds with the 'Henry Heath' cloche hat, and especially with the Swan and Edgar lingerie advert. The Burberry advertising copy refers to 'drenching or continuous rain' and lists qualities including 'naturally ventilating – airtight – cool on warm days', which are unarguably good qualities in a raincoat, but which struggle to deliver a sense of excitement to the consumer, and the text ultimately refers to

HENRY HEATH LTD
105-107-109 OXFORD ST. W.

By Appointment

"VAUDEVILLE"

The charm of this attractive frock is emphasized by its unusual folds and bonnet effect **30/-**

Orderable from any of our Agents or from us direct on receipt of cash or London reference.

THE BURBERRY



keeps its wearer dry and comfortable in every kind of weather.

As a WEATHERPROOF, The Burberry is "the world's best"; a safeguard that keeps out drenching or continuous rain in a truly wonderful way.

As an OVERCOAT, it is a compendium of every quality that makes for comfort when out-o'-doors.

Proof against Wet & Cold—Naturally Ventilating—Airlight—Cool on Warm Days—Warm on Chilly—

The Burberry does duty, either as Weatherproof or Overcoat, in every sort of weather, at every season of the year, and is the one coat that completely armours its wearer against every possible trick the weather can play.

THE BURBERRY BOOK
containing notes on the great value of The Burberry, both as a Weatherproof and as an Overcoat, plus of materials and prices sent on request of "THE GRAPHIC".

BURBERRYS HAYMARKET LONDON SWI

Here in the Lingerie Salon at Swan & Edgar are the most charming and exquisite undergarments for the day and nightwear. The illustrations below are typical of the good values that rule throughout this section.



Charming Negligee in floral artificial washing satin. Trimmed with rows of marabout down front and on sleeves. Finished all round girdle and pocket. In new colourings of lemon, nil, powder, peach or pink. **39/11**

Striking Three-piece Pyjama Suit in non-ladder artificial silk. Can be worn with or without coat. Trimmed with appliqués of contrasting colours. In pink, lupine, geranium, nil, lemon, black, royal or white. Sleeveless Pyjama Suit. **21/11**

Coat, **15/11** Complete, **37/-**

Lingerie : Fourth Floor

SWAN & EDGAR

Swan & Edgar, Ltd., London, W.I. Phone: Regent 1616.

'The Graphic', March 1930.
Image courtesy of old-print.com

'duty' - signifying burden and responsibility. In contrast, the Swan and Edgar advert is aspirational and focuses on 'lifestyle' - their copy draws attention to the 'exquisite undergarments for the day or nightwear', and lists new and innovative easy-care fabrics including 'artificial washing satin' and 'non-ladder artificial silk'. Though these qualities might initially seem to share similarities to the robust attributes of 'The Burberry', there was something altogether more exciting embodied in this advert, starting with the contemporary Art Deco illustration, optimistic 'sunlight' motif and elegant setting, but also suggestions of different ways of wearing the pyjama suit to create an inter-changeable outfit, the addition of marabou and colour contrasting trims, and a wide choice of colourways. These, together with the clear prices, or what Benjamin (1999) refers to as 'the fixed price; the known and non-negotiable price' (1999: 52) had a positive influence on consumer choice.

However, Burberry grew more confident and started to use elements of



*Burberry advertisement, 1938.
Image courtesy of kingscliffdesignhistory.com*

'lifestyle', as this advert (see above) from 1938 shows. Though the advertising copy still refers to the fabric, it now includes references to colour, pattern, 'gossamer textures' and 'generous warmth'. Above all, it shows an aspirational

image of air travel, which in 1938 was still limited to the very wealthy, and this seamlessly conjoined Burberry to an elite form of transport and a luxurious way of life. The inclusion of women in the advert is important and steers the image away from the overtly masculine qualities of Burberry's advertisements – including the 'Rumpole of the Bailey'-type character in The Graphic advert from 1930, and where in the past Burberry had shown women engaged in elite sports, for example skiing, they had rarely shown men and women together. However, in the lead up to the Second World War, Burberry reverted to selling its products to the Military, and this again rendered a more masculine aesthetic to its advertisements, which lasted for many years even after the war was over.

In the post-war period, the company seemed to retreat once again, relying on the symbolic value loaded onto their goods via the Royal Warrant and the Military. They did not address the cultural changes to British retail that occurred after World War Two, where the female consumer played an increasingly important role within marketing, an element which no longer took place at the end of the production process, but was an integral part of the design and production processes. Adverts produced by Burberry during this era show that they did not change their approach to marketing, or attempt to be more inclusive.

Burberry's mainstay throughout the 1940s and 50s was the trench coat, and versions of their 'British Warm' overcoat, which now looked out of date. Their marketing increasingly reflected their 'golden age' when its founder led the firm, and adverts often referred directly to Thomas Burberry, like this one from the 1950s (see following page).

The text on the left reads:



(left) 'Gentleman's Walking Burberry', (right) 'Burberry Air Warm', 1950.
Image courtesy of the Burberry archive

'Gentleman's Walking Burberry'

This is the most popular model, being a direct descendant of Mr Thomas Burberry's (1835 – 1926) Original Design. Cut on classic lines, it is suitable for all occasions. It has a "Panteen" collar, fly front, buttoning pockets and back vent sleeves with a strap and button. All seams are overlapped and stitched. The check lining can be of wool, cotton or Union.'

The advertising copy suggests that Burberry has moved away from the glamour of a luxurious lifestyle, and there are no descriptive adjectives, simply an inventory of details. Similarly, the advertisement for the Burberry 'Air Warm' (see image above, right) reinforces the company's reliance on the past through the engraved images of horse riding, the 'Queens Hotel', and figures in period costume, and does not reflect an age of modernism. Burberry seemed to have lost the confidence they showed in the pre-war era when they used illustrations of elegant men and women flying by aeroplane, and when their well-heeled clients would have begun to use air travel more frequently, the company chose

a horse and carriage as an element of its brand personality. In contrast to the post-war jet age, Burberry stood as the antithesis of modernism.

The changes in marketing in the UK and other developed economies were due in part to industrialization and mass production, and in the post-war era, design for all manner of products were becoming increasingly valued by consumers.

In 1940, American industrial designer Harold van Doren led the vanguard, declaring that

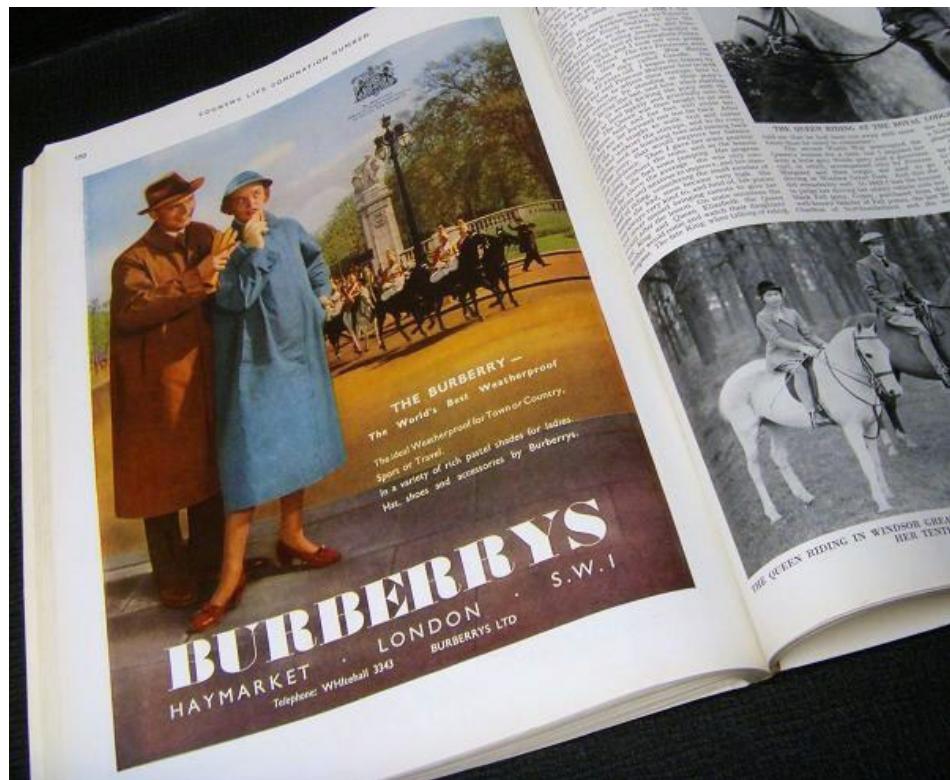
‘The job of an industrial designer is to interpret the function of useful things in terms of appeal to the eye; to endow them with beauty of form and colour; above all to create in the consumer the desire to possess.’
(1940: xvii)

Van Doren understood that the very core of advertising as an afterthought had shifted forever, and that industrial design was a precursor to branding, where the notion of ‘desire’ was starting to replace ‘utility’. In contrast to van Doren’s progressive ideas about consumerism, Burberry continued to use Thomas Burberry’s name in their advertising copy as a kind of bench mark for technical excellence, and illustrations from their illustrious past that alluded to their Royal and aristocratic connections dating back to the 19th Century.

Burberry drew progressively closer to the British Monarchy throughout the 1950s, using events including the Coronation in 1953 as a basis for its advertisements, as this advert (see image on following page) from Country Life shows.

Burberry had advertised regularly in British magazine Country Life from the 1920s onwards, and used what Buckley (2007) describes as a ‘hybrid magazine combining news on farming, property, dogs and hunting’ (2007: 69) as a basis for its outdoor wear aimed at the aristocracy and the upper classes.

Burberry chose a range of themes in keeping with Country Life's interests, which revolved around country sports, horse-riding, and the Monarchy, and this double page spread covers all these aspects of British life. Burberry's advertisement shows a conservatively dressed young couple on London's Mall, directly adjacent to Buckingham Palace, and a full parade of the Queen's Horse Guards passes behind them. However, what makes this special for Burberry is the proximity to the young Queen Elizabeth, who can be seen on the right hand page of the spread riding a horse in Windsor Great Park, which helped to create a synergistic coupling between Burberry and the Monarchy, clearly cementing the two in consumers' minds.



*Burberry in Country Life Coronation Special, June 1953.
Image courtesy of Country Life*

This label is on to something new.



Out-General your friends (and enemies!) in this new Burberry showerproof top coat with a hint of the commanding military look. The Crichton in pure new wool. £29.80. From a wide selection of top coats in various cloths and styles from £23.10.0. Available from Burberrys in the Haymarket, London, S.W.1. and leading stores throughout the country.

*Burberry® and *Burberrys® are registered trade marks of Burberrys Ltd.

*Burberry at London's Southbank, 1968.
Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives*

The Royalist theme continued through the early 1960s, when for example the British Women's Olympic team were dressed by Burberry and photographed on their way to Buckingham Palace in 1964, however in 1968, an extraordinary set of photographs appeared in the UK press (see image on previous page). The setting for the photoshoot was the newly opened Hayward Gallery on London's Southbank, and this particular venue helped the company to associate itself with an absolutely up-to-the-minute element of British culture – the contemporary visual art exhibition. Similarly, the pre-cast concrete structure of the building contrasted sharply with the horses and parks of Burberry's adverts in the 1950s and 60s. The design of the collection remained conservative, but reflected a sober aesthetic seen in middle-class menswear in the UK and the US in the late 60s. Burberry briefly revamped its advertising, and used the tagline 'This label is onto something new', and following a window display in its re-opened Paris store, where a visual merchandizer had used the Nova check on an umbrella, the distinctive pattern was used for the first time on the outside of a coat. However, this brush with modernity was short lived, and the company quickly capitulated, making this set of images an aberration rather than a well thought out campaign.

Despite the early success of the company - where it had worked hard to differentiate itself from other homogenous and substitutable brands, Burberry had become a slow juggernaut with no discernable brake power to take stock and re-position itself, and the company continued to rely primarily on royal and aristocratic connections. However, even the use of Lord Lichfield as their in-house photographer in the 1970s failed to buck up Burberry's fortunes, as his images seemed old fashioned, often depicting a gentle and cosy middle aged, middle class, semi-rural life. Lichfield was a cousin of Queen Elizabeth II, so the royal connection was vivid in the public's mind, however the link proved to be less effective in terms of brand positioning and public approval, and the company became increasingly out of touch with public opinion. Some disastrous

campaigns from the 1970s included the use of fictional character Sherlock Holmes, who was depicted smoking a Meerschaum pipe, wearing a white Burberry raincoat and a deerstalker, next to a helicopter for an advert in the New York Times, and Burberry's decision to run its first 'Miss Burberry' contest in 1970 woefully underestimated the backlash against beauty contests, that in the same year witnessed a stage invasion by a group of feminists at the Miss World pageant.



*'Miss Burberry' contest, 1970.
Image courtesy of Burberryplc.com*

However, Burberry's real problems were structural, as in 1955 it had become part of the Great Universal Stores (GUS) group, with label mates Argos, the Experian credit reference agency, Wehkamp home shopping group, and Kay's catalogue. As time wore on, it became obvious that Burberry was the odd one out, as none of the other companies were aspirational brands, or occupied a luxury fashion niche. As Olins (2008) argues, Burberry's lack of care over several decades had severely damaged the brand, as

'All companies have an image – whether they 'manage' it or not, or are aware of it, or not.' (2008: 25)

It looked as if Burberry's ineffective management of their image over a long period of time, including their widespread use of licensing – where other manufacturers produced branded goods for the company, had effectively put the company into other people's hands. Many of their IP elements had been handed over to manufacturers, and counterfeiting – or what Burberry refer to as 'lucrative parallel markets' (Menkes, 2002) was out of control. Burberry had all but lost their hard won private property and had failed to nurture and protect the brand's distinctiveness, which revealed a shaky legal framework and lack of control over their trademarks, as some goods made by its suppliers were 'passed off' as originals. The fervent grasp of post-Fordism and design-intensive work of the past seemed to be slipping through Burberry's hands, and the company failed to understand how to develop the brand, and how it might connect with consumers.

The proliferation of media formats and fragmented audiences highlighted Burberry's struggle to keep up with other fashion brands, and they showed a lack of awareness of consumer culture, socialisation, and the consumer voice. Their lack of brand awareness and near loss of IP control limited their opportunities to improve their public persona and their marketing strategy proved to be linear, responsive and iterative: they kept doing the same things, and making the same things, over and over again.

The 1980s and early 1990s proved difficult for many traditional British fashion companies, including long-established military outfitter and tailor Thresher & Glenny, and Burberry's nineteenth century contemporaries Mackintosh, Aquascutum, and Barbour, who all produced a 'classic' trench coat and were known for their dependable outerwear. The way people consumed had changed radically over the years, with technology and marketing becoming more central and strategic as a way of 'knowing' the consumer, however Burberry did not change direction. Lash and Urry (1994) show how manufacturing had given

way to design and aesthetics, and that it was this aspect that ensured company profitability

'The...labour process is becoming less important in its contribution to value-added, and the 'design process' is progressively more central.'

(1994: 15)

By 1997, further bad news lay in store for Burberry, as its profits had dropped from £62 million to £25 million over the course of a single year 'leading financial analysts to describe it as "an outdated business with a fashion cachet of almost zero.'" (Moore and Birtwistle, 2004: 412)

However it wasn't just the critiques delivered by financial analysts that dogged the company – it was also failing to attract new customers. How did Burberry fight back and revive its fortunes, bringing it back from a position as a flat-lining company almost at the brink of death?

A New Rose

In late 1997, Burberry made a surprising new appointment when it announced that Rose Marie Bravo was to be their new CEO. Bravo emerged from a career in retail at Saks Fifth Avenue and Macy's, and brought a new kind of energy to the company: she saw huge potential for the firm, but that came not from the design of a new collection, but in how it was marketed. This clear change in direction signalled a new style of leadership, and a new direction for the company, and Bravo came out fighting, uttering these unforgettable words shortly after her appointment was made public

"The goal is to turn the Burberry name into a brand as hip as Gucci, Louis Vuitton, or Prada." (burberry.com)

1998 was a transitional time for the UK, when a New Labour government

had recently been voted into power, and were anxious to sweep in an era of modernisation, and make London the ‘capital of cool’. Burberry’s ‘values’ as a company represented a view of Britain as ‘horsey, classic, snobby and dowdy’ (Menkes, 2002) and their relationship to identity, culture, status and class was the very antithesis of the kind of optimistic images consumers now sought. Burberry did not produce any ‘cultural’ qualities that reflected their knowledge of consumer tastes, habits or preferences, only serviceable ones that were functional, and resembled its military past, as if identity was still likely to be defined by ‘rank’. McCracken (1988) argues that designed and branded goods are given meanings before they get to the consumer, and the sign-values around Burberry were largely negative and uninspiring. Burberry’s wide lack of appeal can also be understood through Hebdige and Willis (1982) who argued that ‘consumption can be seen as a political form of expression against bourgeois taste’, and as Burberry was viewed as a living embodiment of the bourgeois lifestyle - and indeed the company had spent years creating a strong semiotic space around the brand that firmly connected the company to the bourgeoisie, it is understandable that consumers were not attracted to it. ‘Cool Britannia’ it was not, and the company desperately needed strong leadership to take it into the new century. The stakes were high and anticipation surrounding Bravo’s first move mounted, however as New York Times journalist Suzy Menkes (2002) pointed out in a retrospective editorial on the new CEO’s appointment ‘it took someone from outside the British class system’ to understand the value of the company, and that Thomas Burberry

‘...the visionary who founded the company in 1880 and made his raincoats a service to the military and sporting worlds — had become a prophet without honor in his own country. Despised by the British [Burberry had become linked to a group of people as narrow as its product focus]’ (Menkes, 2002)

One of Bravo’s first acts as CEO was to bring the vast majority of the licensing

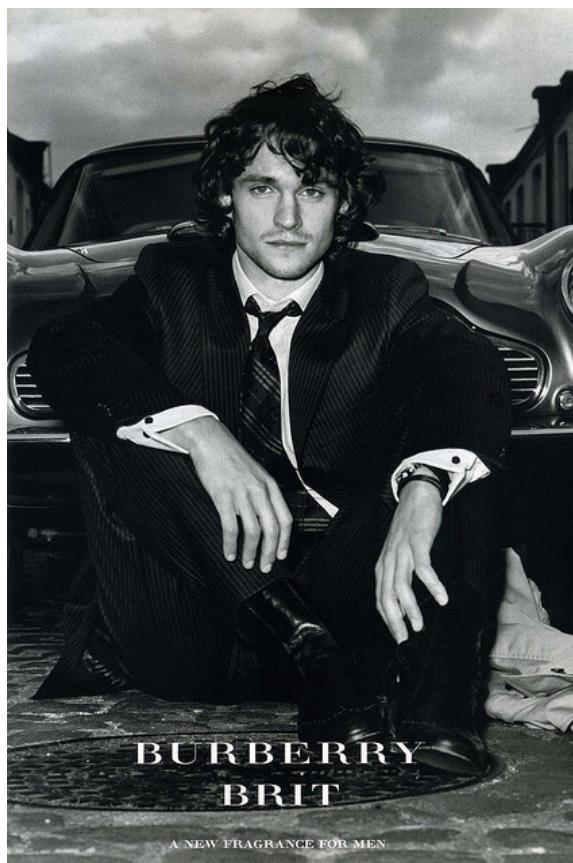
back in-house, spending millions of dollars bringing products including raincoats, umbrellas, scarves, sunglasses, watches and gloves back into their control, helping to ensure high quality products, but also premium prices. Bravo worked to strengthen Burberry's legal position to ensure that their hard won private property was returned to them, and remained in their hands. Burberry aggressively pursued all counterfeiters, retaining relentless and total control over their property, and against anyone 'passing off' their products, ruthlessly protecting the brand's distinctiveness.

Bravo then set about changing public perception of the brand by employing models Kate Moss and Stella Tennant, and photographer Mario Testino to shoot the new campaigns. The clothing didn't change – Tennant and Moss were seen in trench coats and shot in black and white, but the power of seeing Kate Moss in what until very recently was thought of as an antiquated brand proved to be irresistible. Bravo worked hard during her tenure to re-enhance the semiotic space around Burberry's products, particularly through advertising, and the company invested heavily in British 'celebrity' models including actor Hugh Dancy, who at this time had become synonymous with his role as 'Daniel Deronda' (2002-03) whilst simultaneously fronting the 'Burberry Brit' fragrance campaign. Similarly, Burberry used 'Hornblower' (2003) actor Ioan Gruffudd, pairing him with Rachel Weisz to front another fragrance campaign, 'Burberry London', drawing a parallel between actors who played heroic characters and the real adventurers who endorsed their products in the early days of the company.

Testino was hired once again to photograph the campaigns, which saw Dancy's character sitting on a cobbled mews street leaning against an expensive sports car. He sits on his light coloured coat, which gives the impression of an indifference about cleaning costs, and the loosened tie, tousled hair and lightening sky suggest he is on his way home after a long night on the town. The

image is a contemporary update of an early James Bond film, and implies a strong connection to London, and a knowing-ness about the cosmopolitan world: it is tightly controlled and highly aspirational, and stands in stark contrast to the overblown ‘scrapbook’ images of Weisz and Gruffudd, which came two years after Dancy’s campaign.

For ‘Burberry London’, Testino follows the pair to a classic phone box, then to tourist destinations including the London Eye, Big Ben and the South Bank. The image is edged in Nova Check, and seems to shout its tagline, as if earlier messages about London and all it could offer in terms of history and heritage had gone unheard. This image shows that there was no mistaking what Burberry stood for – romance, picturesque scenery, quaint London streets and a classic black cab. Quite by chance Weisz won an Academy Award for *The Constant Gardener*



*Hugh Dancy, ‘Burberry Brit’, 2002;
Ioan Gruffudd and Rachel Weisz, ‘Burberry London’, 2005.
Images courtesy of The Advertising Archives*

(2005) during her contract with Burberry, which further enhanced the brand, as in Hollywood Weisz was known as a true English beauty, and as a Cambridge graduate, her moniker was the ‘Trinity Hall Heartbreaker’. Quite simply, Burberry could not have bought the additional attention and kudos that her Oscar brought to the company, as it combined beauty, wit and intelligence and seemed to sum up all that was glorious about both the British and the brand in the key, and underpenetrated, North American market.

One of Bravo’s major priorities was to float the company on the Stock Market, and in 2002 Burberry issued an Initial Public Offering (IPO) on the London Stock Exchange. The flotation gave the company the additional funds with which to expand the company, and continue its ambitious development plans. Bravo’s other initiative was to structurally sever links between Burberry and its parent company, Great Universal Stores (GUS) in order for the company to stand alone as an international luxury brand, however it took until 2005 for this to become a reality.

Another significant achievement of this era was to ensure that Burberry secured concessions in luxury department stores, including Selfridges, Harrods, and Harvey Nichols, so that potential customers could see their products up close. Though all these stores were in London, this initiative succeeded in opening the company up to a wider market, while still retaining an exclusivity and social cachet of an upmarket international luxury brand.

The Burberry ‘Prorsum’ line began to be developed under Bravo’s command, and though it was, and remains, a tiny collection, it proved important as it enabled the company to show at Milan Fashion Week, and gave them invaluable and positive coverage for the first time in decades. Bravo initially appointed Italian designer and weave expert Roberto Menicetti in 1998 to design the Prorsum line. Menicetti had worked at French fashion house Claude

Montana and at Hamburg-based Jil Sander, developing weave designs for both companies, and perhaps Bravo imagined he could bring some of Thomas Burberry's magic as a craftsman back to the company, however his tenure as head designer was short lived and his work sank without a trace. In 2001, Royal College of Art women's wear design graduate Christopher Bailey was appointed as head of design. Bailey had worked at Donna Karan and with Tom Ford at Gucci as a junior designer; he was well versed with working for North American fashion companies, and understood where Bravo was leading the company.

Bailey was not known for risk-taking or innovative design work, and at that time the role of chief designer at Burberry was a relatively marginal one. However, Bailey's public utterances on clothes, style and music have been useful to Burberry, and he has proved to be of value as someone who could help to extend the brand. Bailey quickly became Chief Creative Officer, and has become part of the Burberry 'experience', and an essential part of the company's economy. His story of humble origins is familiar to readers of Vogue, Elle, The Times, The Telegraph, and a plethora of upmarket print media and online fashion titles, and sets out a clear narrative of a working class boy from the north of England whose dad was a carpenter and mother designed the windows for the local Marks & Spencer. This back-story has made Bailey into the living embodiment of the meritocratic ideal of the Burberry brand, and he is used relentlessly in the press, particularly during the aftermath of the anti-Burberry protests after the factory closures in Treorchy and Rotherham. Bailey became the familiar, friendly and benign face of the company and is regularly called upon to calm situations, for example in the media frenzy that followed the 'cocaine Kate' revelations in autumn 2005, when the company summoned a piece of editorial in British Vogue to counteract press anxiety. Journalist Justine Picardie was dispatched to interview Bailey, accompanied by regular Burberry model Stella Tennant. Moss was nowhere in sight.

'Burberry told its creative director Christopher Bailey to follow his heart and he did just that, finding inspiration in his own Yorkshire roots. Vogue takes him back to his home county with local girl Stella Tennant.' (2006: 175)

The interview and photoshoot took place at Bolton Priory, land owned for centuries by Tennant's family. The rural setting and the addition of the aristocratic model allowed Burberry to paint a picture that reassured consumers that Burberry was not the place for drug busts or squalid lifestyles. These particular elements let Burberry utilize what Corner and Harvey (1991) argue is a 'focus for the mythology of social order, which is one of the most established in national ideology – that of the country house, with its serenity, family continuities, and apparently unlegislated harmony of environmental and human relationships.' (1991: 52) In the same interview Bailey delivers a perfect sound bite for the company.

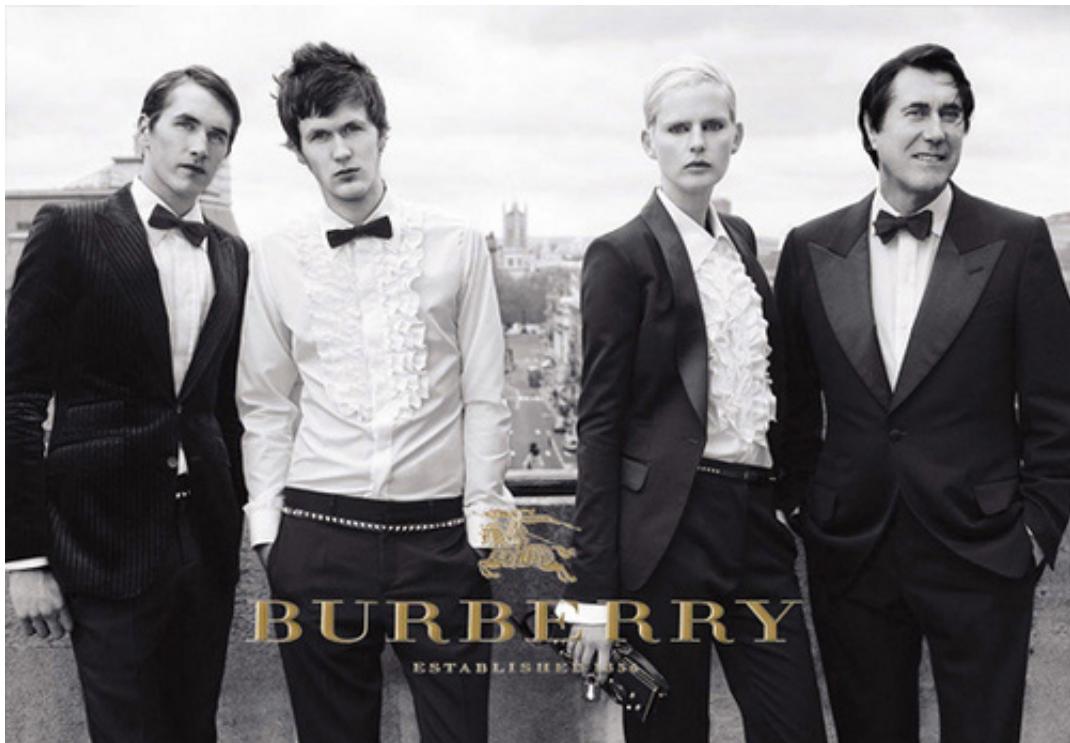
"Did you know that the company has a factory in Yorkshire, near Wakefield, where we make the Burberry gabardine trench coats? And we still use fabrics from the traditional local mills. I love those solid English cloths, they're so durable, they have a solidity and functionality about them. They are really designed to last, which is why you'll hear people in the mills talking about a heavy tweed, tough enough to withstand thorns and thistles." (2006: 175 – 176)

Bailey fills our imagination with images of bucolic beauty, honest labour, and long lasting functionality, but he also uses the region to feed a nationalist agenda about goods produced in England, building an unrealistic image that leads us to believe that Burberry produces all its goods in idyllic rural settings. This was used to increase the brands' desirability but it allowed Burberry to levy premium prices for products 'designed to last.'

Bailey continued to be used to deepen consumer relationship with the brand, and he is credited with overseeing every aspect of design under the Burberry umbrella, including all fashion ranges, accessories, fragrance and make-up, runway shows, advertising campaigns and even the new headquarter building on Horseferry Road in London. However, he is also used to present a real person to the public, serving a similar role as Tom Ford at Gucci, and in many ways Bailey resembles Olins (1978) vision of the 'corporate personality', where image and reality cannot be detached. His role at Burberry became multi-faceted, for example in addition to his design work he is also credited with overseeing Burberry Acoustic, an in-house initiative where young, UK-based musicians are showcased on the brands' main website and on Burberry's YouTube pages. This helps the brand to reproduce what Mauss (1950) describes as 'the gift', which makes and re-makes social relationships and social activities. But Burberry also use Bailey's role to insert him into what Arvidsson (2006) describes as 'networks of communication' - he can recreate social occasions and outings, witness his 'date' with Stella Tennant on her family's private estate.

In 2006, Bravo retired and Angela Ahrendts stepped in as the new CEO. Ahrendts shared a similar background and educational history to Bravo, with qualifications in merchandising and marketing followed by a stint as President of Donna Karen International, and subsequently as Executive Vice President at Liz Claiborne. 2006 was a critical year for Burberry, as it marked their 150th anniversary, and Ahrendts was under pressure to deliver an extraordinary marketing campaign that drew a line under some of Bravo's ill-thought out changes, for example the disastrous decision to dress Kate Moss in a Nova Check bikini and bridal veil that opened the door to working class consumption of the brand, and something Burberry were very keen to distance themselves from, however not all of Ahrendts' decisions were good ones, and the anniversary campaign was no exception.

Burberry, keen to emphasize its noble British ancestry and new 'hip' connections, selected a line up of youthful actors and musicians, and the offspring of some well-known British celebrities including Richard Branson, David Bailey, and Bryan Ferry.



Burberry's 150th anniversary featuring Isaac and Otis Ferry, Stella Tennant, and Bryan Ferry, 2006.

Image courtesy of Burberry.com

This image (see above) formed a key part of the 150th anniversary campaign, and shows a line up of Otis and Isaac Ferry, Stella Tennant, and Bryan Ferry. Otis Ferry, elder son of glam-rocker Bryan, is infamous for his pro-fox hunting views and he has a string of criminal convictions, for example in August 2002, when he was 19 years old, he was arrested while attempting to plaster stickers over Tony Blair's constituency home in County Durham when the government planned to introduce a bill to prohibit hunting with dogs. He is also famous for storming the Houses of Parliament in a pro-hunt protest, and in 2006, he was prosecuted for drink driving. Subsequently, in 2007, as Master of the South Shropshire Hunt, Otis Ferry was remanded to Gloucester prison, charged with

witness intimidation, robbery, assault and perverting the course of justice, and was later found guilty of a public order offence. Otis' brother, Isaac Ferry, is also no stranger to controversy, sending this email to an anti-hunt campaigner in 2002, prompting his expulsion from Eton.

”You are a fucking looser. Why don’t you stop waisting (sic) your time and get a real job/hobby, you cunt.” (realca.co.uk; Real Countryside Alliance)

Burberry had hoped to send a message about family, ‘British-ness’ and tradition, yet the image tells us more about privilege and lawlessness, however Burberry frame their choices through the adoption of what Arvidsson (2006) describes as ‘putting the aristocracy to work’ - using its connections to the nobility through their selection of models, for example Stella Tennant is the granddaughter of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, and Otis and Isaac Ferry’s mother, once Lucy Helmore, is now Lady Birley.

Where Burberry once used aristocratic adventurers – Lord Kitchener, Sir John Alcock, and Sir Ernest Shackleton, and learned to work aspiration through these key figures of wealth, placing the utmost importance on traditional prosperity, not new money, there is a clear line through the history of the company linking ‘tastemakers’, who are mixed with well-heeled but hip socialites including Cara and Poppy Delevingne, granddaughters of Sir Jocelyn Stevens, former head of English Heritage, with Sting’s daughter, Coco Sumner; even the Ferry family, their crimes and misdemeanors forgiven, were represented through Tara Ferry, who was paired with Annie Lennox’s daughter, Tali. These images present a rich seam of stability and reassurance that in a time of economic uncertainty has proved to be a very valuable commodity.

By 2009, Burberry was financially successful and globally visible, however what is rarely discussed, and is not evident from their advertising images,

is the design of the mainstream collections. At first glance, this seems like a huge oversight by the company, however as Lash and Urry (1994) argue, the production of clothing has moved into the production of ‘consumer culture’.

‘...ordinary manufacturing industry is becoming more and more like the production of culture...production has become not just more knowledge-infused, but generally more cultural...[it is] not just a question of a new primacy of information-processing, but more of a generic symbolic-processing capacity.’ (1994: 15)

Consumers are aware of Burberry, but as Lash and Urry suggest, they are using their ‘symbolic-processing capacity’ to assess not just the design of the clothes, but the entire brand, where consumers – but not working class consumers, are not limited to a single sector, but are free to consume across multiple sectors.

The Move East

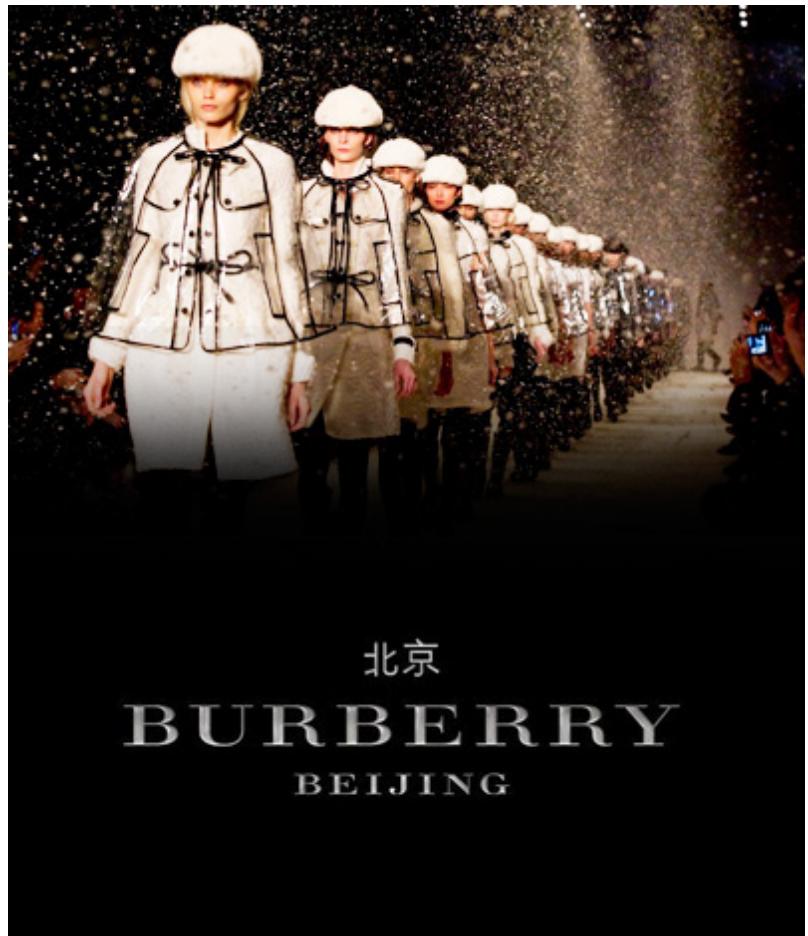
We see the production of ‘consumer culture’ writ large in Burberry’s Chinese market, and it is often credited as a key element in the financial success of the company. Burberry used Bravo’s tenure very effectively as she frequently travelled there for business, often staying for extended periods of time, and because of the company’s perceived devotion to China, Burberry were welcomed by the new authorities and established strong links within their emerging economy long before many other brands had even started to develop markets in the Far East. Ahrendts capitalized on Bravo’s connections, and moved forward with plans to develop new retail outlets in 31 cities, including flagship stores in Beijing and Shanghai, rapidly swelling Burberry’s customer base in the Far East.

The highlight of Burberry's relationship with China came in 2011, when they opened their Beijing store and hosted a holographic runway show at the Beijing Television Sound Stage, with 900 carefully selected guests. This was a significant time in Burberry's history, and underlined the company's importance as a world-class luxury brand.

'Burberry Beijing' was created as a massive cultural production, utilizing music, film, fashion, visual art, holographic 'magic', satellite technology, and live streaming. A huge team, comprising Government officers from the UK Trade and Industry office (UKTI) The British Ambassador to China, Burberry management, designers, service sections, including technical, retail and catering staff, along with indie band Keane. Each stage of the production was very carefully choreographed, and an overriding statement – repeated by Ahrendts, Bailey, and Tom Chaplin, lead singer of Keane, as the financial section of the Telegraph (Hall, 2011) reported

'Beijing is not dissimilar to London, and to Burberry. China is a very old country, but with a young dynamic culture and the future of Burberry and the future of China are inseparable.' (Hall, 2011)

Images from the event showed that everything was branded with the Burberry 'Nova' check - from the trucks feeding the satellite links, the bars serving drinks, staff uniforms, to the floodlight entrances. Iconic images of London, including Big Ben, were beamed to a worldwide audience, and the event became a total immersive experience for invited guests and online viewers alike.



*Burberry Beijing, 2011.
Image courtesy of Burberry.com*

Although Burberry was in the process of expanding their bricks and mortar retail presence in China and in other international markets, they understood that an increasing number of customers had an entirely online relationship with the brand, which changed the way they interacted and consumed. While Burberry had not committed entirely to interactivity or new media saturation, it developed two important elements to their brand, ‘The Art of the Trench’ and ‘Runway to Reality’. Burberry started live streaming their runway shows in February 2010, developing proprietary digital technologies that meant individual customers could watch the show from the comfort of their home, and order clothes, shoes and accessories directly from the show without waiting for them to arrive at their local stores. ‘Runway to Reality’ proved to be a huge success with consumers, as it gave customers from all over the world direct access to what was once a privileged, A-list-only invitation to an exclusive show at London Fashion Week, which very few people saw live. Though I wouldn’t argue that the runway show is what Lash (2002) would describe as an ‘old media’ presentation, it’s true to say that it demands attention – if briefly, and it’s site specific – you have to travel to see it; though the clothing collections are new, the form of the show comes from something old, and in that sense it is detached from everyday life. Burberry’s developments profoundly altered the relationship between consumer and retailer, as they have packaged the excitement of the live show (even using a digital clock on the Burberry site counting down the days and hours before the live runway show at Fashion Week in February and September) whilst online ‘guests’ can see front row celebrities and feel part of the event. Huge digital maps detail where the show is beamed to, giving a sense of international inclusion, and customers can circumvent a minimum of six weeks delivery time, and order in their size and colour choice before it has sold out.

The upside for Burberry, in addition to the increase in sales that followed, came from the data mining going on ‘backstage’, which gave them invaluable information on their customers, but also what Arvidsson (2006) describes as an

'investment in consumer involvement' where brand management was an active process, and gave Burberry a chance to pre-structure consumer activity into desired directions. Burberry made a clear preference for 'pre-structuring' their consumers' activity, and it's always the route they select, choosing a 'sinking into the background' approach over interactivity, data mining over consumer inter/activity, and recommendation rather than 'talking back'.

Burberry use what Lash (2002) describes as 'media comes to the consumer', campaigns, and never opt for a more interactive approach, such as pop-up online adverts, street promotions or any other ambient forms of marketing. Having woken up to a near loss of IP and mass counterfeiting, Burberry started to hold the reins very tight and relentlessly protect brand value, however this had the potential to lead to borderline 'emotionally clingy' behaviour, where the brand wants the consumer to 'like us on Facebook', or 'follow us on Twitter', but perhaps they felt the cost of consumer criticism was too great. We might have expected the company to be a little more relaxed on their 'Art of the Trench' online exhibition (see image following page), where members of the public send in photographs of themselves dressed in a Burberry trench coat, but there too was a rigid control over who appears. 'Art of the Trench' is not an obscure section of their website - it features alongside all the major parts of the company, but it is not the democratic area it appears to be, as a forceful but soundless creative control gives the online images an over-arching generic quality, and no opportunity to 'talk back' to the brand.

Burberry's foray into experience design took a big leap forward when they opened their Regent Street store in September 2012. The development of this store was a key achievement for Ahrendts as she has expanded Bravo's initiative to make the department store concession the most important channel to attract new customers, and now uses it as a partner – with the website - to attract customers to the real deal. Ahrendts understood that developing the

ART OF THE TRENCH

[VIEW ALL](#)

[VIEW LATEST](#)

FILTER IMAGES BY:

- POPULARITY ▾
- GENDER ▾
- STYLING ▾
- TRENCH COLOUR ▾
- WEATHER ▾
- COLLABORATIONS ▾



BURBERRY
ESTABLISHED 1856



ABOUT
NEWS

*Burberry 'Art of the Trench', 2009.
Image courtesy of Burberry.com*

store into a destination point and centre for an immersive retail experience was vital in contemporary shopping, and she is quoted on Vogue.com (2012) saying that

“Burberry Regent Street brings our digital world to life in a physical space for the first time, where customers can experience every facet of the brand through immersive multimedia content exactly as they do online,” said Burberry CEO Angela Ahrendts.’

“Walking through the doors is just like walking into our website. It is Burberry World Live.” (Alexander, 2012)

Burberry had succeeded in creating a fully immersive, entirely branded environment that allows customers to ‘experience’ the clothes, the sounds, and the history, in a Burberry-fragranced atmosphere. The site of the building was crucial – London’s Regent Street is more accessible than their Bond Street store, yet it retains the history of its royal past. Their Bond Street store nestles next to art and antique shops, fine jewellers and the London flagship stores for Chanel, Dior, and Louis Vuitton, which can be intimidating to many shoppers. I made a site visit to the new store shortly after it opened, dressing carefully in my newest clothes and a pair of high-heeled shoes; I was silently, but perceptibly checked out by the security men, or ‘greeters’ at the front door, and happily met with their approval. Entering the store I was greeted with a magnificent interior expensively clad in blonde stone and blonde carpet, with a double height projection screen at the rear of the store, featuring a rolling programme of images that included archive footage of the Nova Check weaving process, old black and white photographs of men at cutting tables, ‘motivational’ messages including ‘121 Regent Street: seamlessly blending the physical and digital worlds’ and ‘Burberry: a celebration of British design and craftsmanship’. Older links to adventurers and explorers are also represented on screen, alongside stars from Burberry Acoustic in their ‘digitally enabled cultural space’



*Burberry's Regent Street flagship store, 2012.
Image courtesy of Burberry.com*

(see image above). Many aspects of the store hark back to earlier times, and some – like the mirror finishes in the store, hark back to the dawn of advertising, resembling what McClintock (1995) references as an ‘exhibition aesthetic’ - a display of commodities within a polished environment, free of the imprint of human hands and labour. When McClintock (1985) writes about the ‘mirroring’ image, she does so in reference to the ‘Monkey Brand’ soap advert from the Victorian era, which shows a monkey always carrying either a shiny frying pan or a mirror:

‘The mirror / frying pan, like all fetishes, visibly expresses a crisis in value, but cannot resolve it. It can only embody a contradiction, frozen as a commodity spectacle, luring the spectator deeper and deeper into consumerism.’ (1995: 218)

Burberry uses mirrored surfaces at its liminal aspects (see image on following page) in order to tempt consumers over the threshold, but it too expresses a contradiction as the highly polished exterior, free of dirt and fingerprints, exerts what McClintock (1995) argues is an erasure of the signs of domestic labour, and turns the mirror into the epitome of commodity fetishism. McClintock (1995)

also argues that polishing ‘was dedicated, in part, to policing boundaries between public and private, removing every trace of labour, replacing the disorderly evidence of working women’ (1995: 219) in order to arrange a ‘theatre of clean surfaces’ (1995: 219). Indeed, it is easy to imagine a female cleaner behind the scenes keeping this store clean and clear of the signs of domestic labour on a daily basis, and potentially the most poorly paid store employee carries the hopes and dreams of an entire

marketing team, yet it is strange to think that these ideas are far from new, and far from innovative, yet strangely compelling.



*Burberry store at Macau Airport, 2005.
Image courtesy of fashionindustryarchive.com*

Burberry has had a long lead-time to develop its retail environments into gallery spaces, and the Regent Street store delivers their vision unreservedly. Each of the three floors is ‘experiential’, starting on the ground floor with the more price-accessible Burberry Brit and Burberry London, and rising to the Burberry ‘Bespoke’ and Prorsum lines on the top floor minstrel gallery space, which blend a mix of browsing and window shopping, with more contemporary ideas about interactivity – including touch-screens displays for customer use, and reactive mirrors that show catwalk images of the items a customer has chosen. The sum of these parts leads to what Arvidsson (2006) refers to as a ‘controlled context in which consumption takes place’ where the store acts as a ‘frame’

for the brand, and as Ahrendts suggests, the Regent Street store really is the living embodiment of their website, but more than that, it is a reflection of the company and its ethical, financial, and intellectual principles.

Conclusions

This chapter highlights the important role founder Thomas Burberry played within the brand, as he is what Lury (2004) describes as a ‘live person standing behind the brand’ (2004: 80), however it also highlights how the loss of this ‘lone genius’ impacted the company when he died, as he subsequently left the company apparently rudderless and lacking in direction. However, we also see a side to Thomas Burberry that is rarely discussed – his collaborative work with another textile professional. Working in partnership with a mill owner to develop an innovative and high-tech cloth proved to be one of the company’s most enduring and profitable legacies, and one that helped to create the foundation for two key elements of Burberry’s early success. It also assisted the company to define and develop its core customer base – the military officer and the motorist, and was an astonishingly successful partnership, but one that has never been repeated.

The chapter also shows how Burberry went along with the commonly held belief that women were unequal to men, and that this inequality extended to the retail environment. When contrasted to Gordon Selfridge’s new department store, Burberry started to look bloke-ish and out of touch, whereas Selfridge’s & Co. offered more cosmopolitan elements within the retail environment, designed to appeal to women. This new form of modern retailing would eventually cause Burberry to lose an important market segment, as the company – along with many others of that era, continued to marginalize women, however that stage was still some way off as Selfridge was seen, like the women in his store, as an outsider. Nonetheless, the period just after the end of the First World War saw the beginning of Burberry’s downward spiral, and their old fashioned mode of

retailing contributed to their downfall.

However, the biggest revelation to emerge from this chapter is Burberry's near loss of IP, and how the company gave up its private property so casually, appearing to sleepwalk into a situation that almost spelled an end to its prosperity. When Great Universal Stores (GUS) took over the company in the mid-1950s, this profoundly altered the way the Burberry was seen, as it was structurally aligned with low-value, mundane companies that shared none of its aspirational qualities. Despite this, GUS were not keen to lose Burberry from its portfolio, as one of its companies – the Experian credit reference agency, was suffering a severe downturn in profits, and they clung to Burberry as it was capable of bringing much needed revenue to the group. The continuing fight further compromised the brand, and Burberry seemed locked into an endless struggle, which meant either abandoning its parent company, or staying within the group and hurting their own balance sheet as brand value plummeted. While this tussle continued, GUS had their eye off the ball, and incidents of counterfeiting went off the charts. It is hard to estimate how much revenue they lost as a result of mass copying, however, the level of visibility was high, and a lack of control was evident - Burberry were guilty of carelessly giving away lucrative licenses in order to make a quick profit in the short term, but neglected to take proper long-term care of their intellectual property.

Incoming CEO Rose Marie Bravo tried to call a halt to the mass counterfeiting by buying back licenses from 1997 onwards, in an attempt to stop companies who should have been making legitimate goods for the company, but who were flooding the market with cheap reproductions, and further damaging brand value. Women's Wear Daily (2010) and The Telegraph (2012) both report that Burberry have been in and out of court from that day to this, and pursue cases relentlessly – some of them over multiple years, and that their settlement figures range from \$1.5 million for a case stated in 2005, to a record-breaking \$100

million in 2012. A banner headline on fashiontelegraph.com (2012) show how breaches in brand security and counterfeiting is now dealt with by Burberry

'Burberry awarded £63 million in counterfeiting case: British heritage brand Burberry has been awarded the sum in a judgment case against Chinese Internet counterfeiters.' (Sowray, 2012)

Burberry took their case to the Manhattan Federal Court and successfully litigated against a network of online companies including 'yesburberryvision.com' and 'buyburberry.com', who had used registered trademarks including the Burberry Nova Check and the Equestrian Knight logo on a range of counterfeit products. The domain names for all the illegal sites were transferred to Burberry, which allowed the brand to cut off any associated web designers and Internet service providers, but what singled this case out as a landmark judgement was that Burberry also went after third party hosts, including payment processors PayPal Inc., winning the right to intercept monies generated from sales. Similarly, sponsored search engines including Google, and social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter have been legally prevented from doing any future business with the defendants in the case, and can now be held accountable for associating with the sites.

Another key theme to emerge in this chapter is the 'store as brand', particularly the Regent Street flagship store, which acts as a branded environment for Burberry. The role of the Regency building is rooted in brand communication, and the building's architecture is used to deliver an external relationship with the environment, leading to what Jansen-Verbeke (1990) argues is a 'strong assumption that the historic setting is a major point of attraction which adds considerably to the appreciation of a leisure environment.' (1990: 135) The flagship store successfully synthesizes both leisure and consumption, but 121 Regent Street also serves as a site of interaction and co-creativity with consumers through online initiatives including Runway to Reality and Burberry

Acoustic.

This chapter also begins to highlight class contradictions, which are woven through the brand via its use of the aristocracy and through aspirational qualities embodied in the hip, young tastemakers; this is sharply contrasted through the brands' use of working class model Kate Moss, who by fronting the company in the early days of Bravo's post re-brand tenure sent mixed messages to working class consumers, particularly those based in the UK, and in the next chapter, I examine her role in the context 'British-ness' and assess its value to the brand. I look at the way Burberry expresses British-ness through choice of models and venues and through the development of its marketing, showing how it delivers sometimes contradictory results in the UK, and elsewhere in the world.

Chapter five

Branding Burberry: Surviving through British-ness



*Burberry advert featuring Kate Moss, 2005.
Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives*

In February 2005, an image of Kate Moss dressed in a classic stone-coloured trench coat appeared in the national and international fashion press. The image formed part of Burberry's Autumn-Winter global marketing campaign, and the advert appeared in worldwide editions of mainstream fashion magazines including Vogue, Elle, Harper's Bazaar, InStyle, and Marie Claire, each with a large readership in countries as diverse as Japan, Russia, India, China, Mexico, and Australia, as well as European, North American, and Scandinavian markets. The advert signalled a sea change for Burberry, and where the company struggled to distance itself not only from its conservative past, but also from working class consumption, the image served as an emblem marking a successful transformation from clothing company to an internationally recognised luxury fashion brand.

The advert contained three important elements – an elegant mews, a cobbled road, and a black cab, all of which played significant roles in building a strong semiotic image around Burberry, optimising its geographic ties to England and

specifically to ‘heritage’ London. Those particular elements were important as they gave shape and form to an historic and valuable backdrop for the emerging brand, however the addition of Moss fundamentally disrupts the image and adds a contradictory element, specifically in the UK, as her working class status goes against the core brand essence of a company known for its strong links to the aristocracy, and takes the image in a radically different direction.

The appointment of new CEO Rose Marie Bravo at Burberry in 1997 proved to be a key move for the company, and it was Bravo who was responsible for this image. However, before Burberry emerged as a desirable and profitable luxury goods company with a global profile under her leadership, the company calibrated and re-calibrated a mix of elements, carefully balancing product, image and site alongside Bravo’s distinctive choice of models (initially just Moss and her polar opposite, the aristocratic Stella Tennant) until the distillation reached an apotheosis in this image in 2005. The campaigns under Bravo’s control up to 2005 took both positive and negative turns, each unfolding in a public marketplace, impacting brand value and company profits, and what emerges from their journey is a fascinating narrative detailing an organizational and aesthetic ‘make-over’, alongside deep structural changes within the company that ultimately led Burberry to centralise a hybrid form of ‘British-ness’ into its brand personality.

What also becomes clear is that it was not a straight story, and the addition of Moss as a central character in Burberry’s rehabilitation further complicates what Lash (2002) would describe as their ‘re-presentation’ as she is simultaneously a ‘global style icon’, (Buttolph, 2000) a symbol of Cool Britannia, but also an authentic working class woman. How did Burberry find itself in this moment, and what propelled them to choose Moss? This chapter looks at how Burberry utilized varying dimensions of British-ness within their campaigns from 1997 onwards, using Moss as a cornerstone of the brands’ British identity, showing

how her profile was understood, and sometimes misinterpreted, within the United States and the UK.

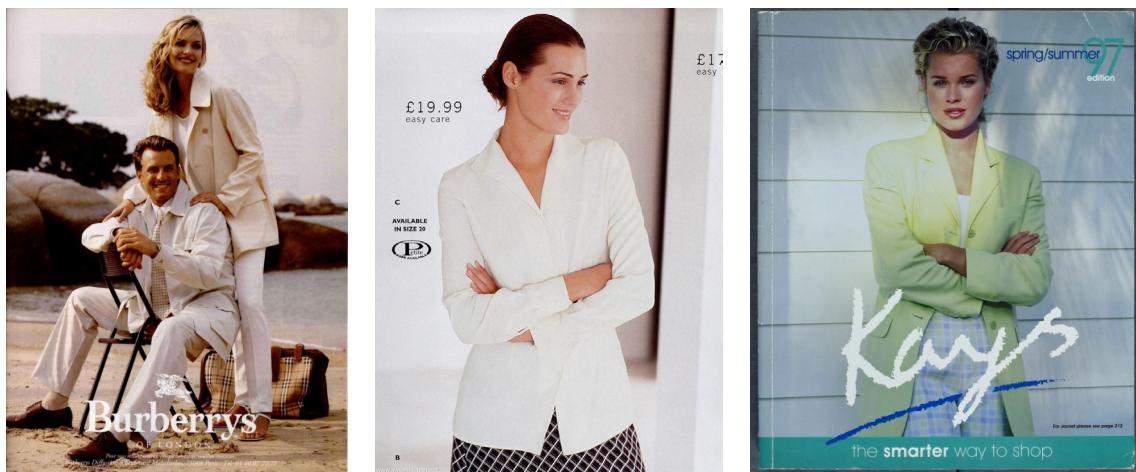
Burberry Re-Born

Bravo's appointment in 1997 came during an era of government-endorsed privatisation, a long-running and saturated programme started under Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government that came to fruition in the 1990s. The initiative involved the privatisation of a range of large-scale public companies including British Airways, British Gas and British Telecom, who subsequently required a new corporate identity in order to mark the distinction between Government control and their new status as private companies listed on the London Stock Exchange. Concurrently, many companies started to examine the economic effectiveness of working solely with advertising agencies, particularly in relation to expanding media platforms and fragmented audiences, areas in which the agencies had limited capabilities. Moor (2007) defines how during the early 1990s

‘...a diffuse set of practices – product design, retail design, point-of-purchase marketing among others - became consolidated into an integrated approach to marketing and business strategy known as branding’ (2007: 3)

Moor (2007) describes how many branding consultancies were formed during this era, and they swooped in and took work away from the old advertising agencies, as they were able to offer a broad vision and a total communication package and not simply an advertising campaign. This new integrated approach provided Burberry with an economic rationale to cope with changes in retail and consumer behaviour, and a clear framework to re-launch their business. 1997 was a turbulent year in British politics that saw a seismic change in leadership as New Labour won a landslide victory, ending an 18-year Conservative rule.

The Conservatives' plan to establish London as a global financial centre was well underway, but it was New Labour who made financial history, as after only four days in office the new Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the Bank of England was to assume independent responsibility for monetary policy including setting UK interest rates. This move gave Burberry and Bravo a clear sign that this was the right time for change, and in many ways Burberry's 2005 campaign could not have happened without these specific political and economic conditions.



(left) *Burberry UK marketing, 1997, image courtesy of styleregistry.livejournal.com*
 (centre) *Next Directory, 1997, image courtesy yasminlebon.net*
 (right) *Kay's Catalogue, 1997, image courtesy University of Worcester*

Burberry's UK marketing in 1997 (see image above left) shows an expensively lit image that exudes warmth through the choice of colour and tint, but the clothing and accessories – even with the addition of two important trademarks, the Nova check (seen on the holdall) and the Equestrian Knight logo, shows that Burberry had more in common with mid-market fashion like Next (see image above centre) which was an aspirational label for the middle-classes, and to mail order catalogues including Kay's of Worcester (above right) which was primarily aimed at working class and low-income families. In the pre-Bravo era of the 1980s and early 1990s, records at the Advertising Archives show that the company's advertising campaigns commonly shared this aesthetic, and though it's clear from the basic colourway of the Kay's catalogue and the £19.99

'easy care' information on the Next advert that products from both companies were competitively priced, the soft tailoring and neutral palette seen in all three adverts show that Burberry collections had become increasingly homogenous and hard to differentiate with product from other women's wear companies. The clothes in the Burberry advert have become entangled with a price range at the middle and lower end of the fashion market, further complicating the company's relationship with its consumers, and making Burberry products highly substitutable.

What had led Burberry down this path, far away from the high quality fashion and apparel sector at this point in its history? The Great Universal Stores (GUS) group bought out Burberry in 1955, and GUS already owned Kay's catalogue, so the buy-out effectively made Burberry a business partner of Kay's. Records at Companies House show that Burberry was acquired primarily for its UK manufacturing bases and throughout the 1950s GUS developed products using the equipment and expertise at Burberry to make clothing, bedding and upholstery which it fed into other companies within the group including the John England and Great Universal home shopping catalogues. GUS had expertise in mail order retail, and specialised in furniture and household goods, but lacked experience within the luxury fashion sector, and despite being part of the group for over forty years Burberry did not enjoy any high visibility recognition, and its image was further subsumed into the Great Universal Stores business strategy, which targeted working class customers and those with a lack of access to credit. This set the tone across the group, and painted an image of a corporation whose profits were primarily made through weekly payment instalments. The disparity between Burberry and its parent company made a classic form of information asymmetry as the association between a mass-market, mail-order business aimed at working class consumers potentially tainted the up-market company. In retrospect, retail analysts including Nick Hawkins from Merrill Lynch pointed out

‘...and of course Burberry is not truly a core business for GUS’ (Heller, November 2000)

It seemed clear that Burberry was an orphan within the giant GUS conglomerate, and in 1996 modifications to the GUS Board of Directors saw some rapid changes made by the new Chairman of the group, David Wolfson. He instigated a halt to the massive expansion programme put in place by his predecessor, Lord Leonard Wolfson, and he also presided over a change in leadership at Burberry. Bad news lay in store for the new Chair however, as in early 1997 the financial press reported a huge and sudden drop in profit of £37 million to £24.9 million at Burberry, caused principally by the financial meltdown in Asian and Japanese markets, as Forbes Global reported

‘By the mid-1990s the Far East accounted for an unbalanced 75% of Burberry’s sales.’ (Heller, January 2000)

The economic crisis impacted on export trading across Asian markets, however Burberry’s over-reliance on this customer base hit the company hard. An article in Forbes from January 2000 (Heller, 2000) details the predicament that Burberry, and GUS, found themselves in, and it suggests that the Board of Directors clearly understood the ‘value’ of the Burberry brand name, but as it represented only 4% of GUS revenue, and both turnover and profits were falling, it was financially un-worthwhile to sell it off. Burberry Chairman Victor Barnett told Forbes

“The truth is we could never get the real economic value out of the company by selling it. Because Burberry has such a large upside opportunity, and we really understand where we’re going, we think we can do better with shareholder value by doing the job ourselves.” (Heller, January 2000)

What made Burberry decide to hire a new CEO, and more specifically what made them depart from their customary pattern and hire externally and not from

someone already within the group? Following a business model at struggling luxury corporations LVMH and the Gucci Group dating from the early 1990s, Burberry recruited Rose Marie Bravo, who was then CEO at Saks Fifth Avenue, hoping to emulate Tom Ford's success at Gucci in 1994. But there was a crucial difference between Ford and Bravo – Ford joined Gucci as Creative Director and he had a background as a designer, whereas Bravo's experience was in marketing. Barnett clarified GUS's motives for Bravo's appointment

“Repositioning Burberry requires dealing with a great many specifics and that takes time,” says Barnett. “This is one reason why Rose Marie is so good for us, because at the crux of the business is the merchandising and marketing, the creation of revenue.” (Heller, January 2000)

Barnett clearly pinpoints the epicentre of the re-branding exercise and clarifies the reason for appointing a marketing expert, and not a designer. Bravo started work at Burberry in late 1997, and revenues continued to fall, dropping 57% from 1998 to 1999 and a further 20% in 2000. Though working with reduced revenues, Bravo's first appointment was New York-based branding consultancy Baron & Baron, who worked with her to develop the ‘underexploited [name recognition value]’ (Heller, January 2000) at Burberry. Baron & Baron, like many of the newly formed branding consultancies offered

‘...a full spectrum resource able to conceptualise and produce consistent communications across virtually every platform.’ (Baron-Baron.com)

Baron & Baron's aim was to support Burberry to ‘actively strategize and manage each aspect of the company’s growth and development, [helping them to anticipate and successfully navigate ever changing global trends, shifting markets, and consumer tastes]’ (Baron-Baron.com)

Bravo's aim at the outset of her tenure was to make Burberry ‘as hip as Gucci, Louis Vuitton and Prada’ and in 1997 the brands that Bravo sought to emulate

were already using sophisticated visual language through their marketing campaigns (see images below) which helped them to establish innovative profiles and a wider consumer base. Baron & Baron had worked successfully with Prada for a number of years, and the consultancy had also helped to shape campaigns for two other clothing companies with origins in other centuries, Dunhill and Pringle, which gave them experience in re-positioning brands with considerable, and not always desirable, histories, and this made them a good fit to fulfil Bravo's aims.



(top) Gucci, Autumn-Winter 1997, photograph by Mario Testino.
(above) Prada, Spring-Summer 1997, photograph by Glen Luchford



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BURBERRY
LONDON

*Burberry advert, 1998.
Image courtesy of Condé Nast*

One of the first images to be published under Bravo's control was this one (see previous page) featuring model Stella Tennant, who was photographed by another close associate of Baron & Baron, Mario Testino. Bravo used the re-branding programme to move the company towards what Moor (2007) describes as 'countering existing perceptions of the brand', which in this instance were 'fusty and fading' (Barton and Pratley, 2004) however some aspects of 'fade' were re-contextualised in this image, including the misty, monochrome tint that gently underlines the historic nature of Burberry. Similarly, they make use of the un-made path, dry-stone walls, and rocky outcrop in order to connect the brand to an ancient rural landscape, giving an impression of an enduring and cyclical natural world, that Corner and Harvey (1991) argue make for a 'timeless past' of social history and hallowed custom. Tennant plays the role of a parent picking up a child from school, and though she has her back to the camera, her high-heeled sling-back shoes are clearly visible in the frame, and indicate a hip and privileged lifestyle, and not an agricultural one. Burberry has cleverly used what Moor (2007) describes as a transformation of abstract values – of the rural and ancient coupled with the chic, into a material form, one that inspires aspiration and carefully sums up 'brand essence'. The image shows how Bravo had started to construct a highly specific representation of 'British-ness' through her international marketing eye, and working alongside a consultancy led by the French-born Fabien Baron, it becomes clear that they were capable of delivering a uniquely hybrid version of British-ness aimed at the global market.

This was an important image for Burberry as they attempted to distance the company from its lacklustre past, and it becomes clear through this campaign that they had embraced a new fashion aesthetic forged by two emerging creatives, photographer Corinne Day, and stylist Isabella Blow. Though independent of one another, their work for magazines including The Face and Dazed & Confused in the early 1990s marked a clear shift away from the

glossy fashion images emanating from North America - a move towards a less conventional type of setting and style of beauty. Burberry's new campaign mirrored this new 'grunge' aesthetic and the campaign was seen as identifiably British.

The 1998 image began to set a pattern for future marketing campaigns, where a combination of elements including the English countryside, a monochrome colour palette, and the use of British models provided a distinctive backdrop to the emerging brand, however Burberry decide to change direction as news of a large-scale profit slump hit the company which, combined with Bravo's desire to open a new flagship store in London's Mayfair, severely dented available resources. However in retrospect, perhaps the lack of visibly recognisable Burberry trademarks, and even the windswept and bleak countryside may have proved too oblique for international markets.



*Kate Moss for Burberry, 1999.
Image courtesy of Burberry.com*

In 1999, Burberry came back with this image (see above) featuring British model Kate Moss. The advert was published in the US and the image shows more of the distinctive Nova check pattern than the 1998 campaign, and Burberry make use of this important trademark in an attempt to make the

company more recognisable within the valuable North American market. The background image builds up a more manicured outdoor aesthetic, where the dog with a velvety coat, the cut lawn and the attractively grouped trees contribute to a more manageable sense of ‘the rural’ than the 1998 campaign. Overall, the image is more consumer-friendly than Bravo’s first campaign - it contains no mystery and in comparison to the Prada and Gucci adverts, it is mundane in its aesthetic. Burberry’s reasons for casting Moss in the central role may have been because she was already well known in the US through her advertising work for Calvin Klein in the early 1990s. This, coupled with her romantic connection to actor Johnny Depp, had exponentially increased international press interest in her, and allowed Burberry to use her proximity to Hollywood ‘royalty’ to maximum effect, despite her relationship with Depp coming to an end shortly before this campaign went to press.

However, this image starts to expose a fault line between brand perception in the US and ‘at home’ in the UK, where Moss was strongly identified as the ‘face of heroin chic’, but equally as ‘the girl from Croydon’, a predominantly working class suburb on the outskirts of London and ‘the second most miserable place to live in the UK’. (Huggins, 2013) Moss told the New York Times (2012) that during the early days of her career

“In the beginning, I thought I’ll do whatever it takes,” Ms. Moss said with a laugh. “Anything to get out of Croydon.” (Trebay, 2012)

The derogatory term ‘Croydon facelift’ – which describes hair pulled back into a tight ponytail to resemble extreme cosmetic surgery, was a pejorative slur used against working class women and girls, and in the UK Moss became deeply entangled with the term. In 2004, online bulletin board ‘BB Fans: UK Big Brother Forums’ describe how Moss was positioned alongside glamour model Jordan and Big Brother contestant Michelle Bass - celebrities known to have worn the ‘Croydon Facelift’ look. However, both Jordan and Bass were

relatively unknown outside the UK, especially in the important US and Asian markets, which gave this narrative a singularly localized British class focus, indicating that international consumers were untroubled with any downsides to Moss's profile. Yet in the UK, as Burberry's re-branding programme relied on social, political, and economic factors, using Moss complicated their corporate communication and identity, as she is not what Pilditch (1970) describes as 'an adjunct' of their advertising, she was part of the total.

In 2000, the company's re-brand still seemed unsettled, and Burberry decided to again swap Moss with Stella Tennant (see image on following page) in the central role, moving the company away from a working class context, at least in the UK. Burberry's profit had dropped a further 20% in 2000, and the company needed free publicity in both the financial press and fashion media, and Tennant assisted the company in two important ways: firstly, the entire shoot was undertaken while she was five months pregnant, and secondly, it was photographed on her family's private estate in Scotland, a radically different British site to the urban working class environs of Croydon.

The media reported on Bravo's leadership in her first two years, the lack of profit, and how Burberry had used a heavily pregnant model in a global marketing campaign, however the secondary marketing story was that the entire campaign had been shot at Glen House in the Scottish Highlands. The site of the campaign positively influenced consumer perception, and their 'interpretation of the image' (Keller, 1993) added a wistful and romantic element to brand personality, helping Burberry to significantly re-energise brand equity. Tennant, who is the daughter of the Honorable Tessa Tennant, and great granddaughter to the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, also helped Burberry to exploit links between the company and a genuine 'blue blood' in order to increase brand value, in the same way as they did with Lord Kitchener and the adventuring aristocrats in the early years of the twentieth century. The 'new'

Burberry, under Bravo's control, had returned to a long-standing British tradition of using titled women as models, and started to re-lay a foundation showing the brand's proximity to the British aristocracy, however Bravo understood that the company couldn't simply return to the past, they needed to mix it with something cool and stylish in order to connect with contemporary consumers, and Tennant again fulfilled the brief. At the outset of her modeling career, she was cast in British Vogue's seminal portfolio shoot 'Anglo Saxon Attitude' (December 1993) and through this editorial she became known as the 'aristo-punk' as her pierced septum and angular features fell outside classic model aesthetics, but she possessed what British Vogue describes as 'looks and lineage' (vogue.com/voguepedia) 'Anglo Saxon Attitude' was styled by Isabella Blow, and shot by American photographer Steven Meisel, and he understood Tennant's intrinsic value, calling her a 'patrician vision of Britain' (vogue.com/voguepedia/stella-tennant)



*Stella Tennant for Burberry, 2000.
Image courtesy of New York Magazine.*

The image (left) shows Tennant and the child straddling her shoulders in relaxed and informal poses, and it appears to be utterly contemporary, however a closer inspection reveals signposts to the past, including a tiny silhouette of a horse and rider on the horizon, which not only harks back to company adverts from the 1950s, where Burberry used facsimiles of nineteenth century engravings as a way of referring to their illustrious history, but which also draw an image of what Goodrum (2005) describes as

'...a version of Britishness in which good taste and cultural-economic rank are inherited, also revolves around a code of exclusivity and exclusion' (2005: 131)

So the rider and pony are not in a public space, they occupy private property, and the consumer is permitted only a glimpse into this exclusive environment from which they are otherwise excluded. The issue of inheritance is key to this image, and Burberry use birthright as a way of 'extending the brand' (Lury, 2004) selectively mixing elements of aristocratic history and modern life, then re-presenting it in a contemporary way using an 'old media' (Lash, 2002) format - the magazine advertisement, to hint at a long duration of British 'values'.

This image of 'patrician' British life proved to be particularly valuable to US consumers and the 2000 campaign was successful in terms of US media profile, attracting bi-coastal editorial coverage in the North American press, (Bellafante, New York Times, 2000; Herman-Cohen, LA Times, 2001) but Burberry nonetheless changed direction again in 2001, and published this image (see following page) featuring Kate Moss and an ensemble cast of players.

The 2001 campaign included renowned models Naomi Campbell, Jerry Hall and Marie Helvin, however it was this 'shoplifting' scene (see following page) that proved memorable. This extraordinary image – polar opposite to the cool, aristocratic setting of the 2000 campaign, shows a different side to British life, and exudes a wealth of visual cues ranging from the glossy Euro-style of Moss's male companion, to the beady eye under the 'Madchester' bucket hat pulled down over the eyebrows. After Moss, the 'Madchester' character has the most central role in this tableau: he looks tense, and his eye is in constant surveillance of the things and people around him, however the scene also looks familiar to him, and his practiced hand is used as a signal and a 'cover' for the



*Kate Moss for Burberry, 2001.
Image courtesy of Burberry.com*

theft perpetrated by a well-heeled woman, who stuffs what appears to be unpaid for clothing into a branded carrier bag. Moss looks directly into the lens as her companion pays for the shopping, distracting the Sikh sales assistant as the theft takes place. She looks insouciantly at the viewer, and though her role in this advert is ‘the girlfriend’, her gaze towards us shows that she is clearly in charge of this scenario.

The cultural diversity, age-range, and social status of the characters in the advert is broad, however the overall image veers towards the comedic, showing a side of British culture that trades on pantomime-esque ‘Carry On’-style imagery, representing what Gold (2008) describes as a ‘cartoonish mirror to the depressed and repressed Britain of the 1950s and 1960s’ and effectively returns Burberry to a working class context. There are opposing elements at play throughout the image, including a distinct lack of ‘respectability’ as the theft seems condoned by us, the onlookers, and we are invited to collude with the characters and the action, ultimately hoping that Moss and her co-conspiritors ‘get away with it’.

In relation to the 1999 image, this time Moss appears more invested in the action, and though we understand very little about her at a local level, in a British context we ‘know’ that she is perceived as a wilful working class woman. This interpretation of Moss is supported by this image where she portrays a character on the edge of lawlessness, and she is seen to inhabit what Skeggs (2005) describes as a ‘body beyond governance.’ (2005: 965) Moreover, the comedic nature of the advertisement, where Moss is seen to be ‘having a laugh’ is a strategy that Skeggs (2005) argues is a way of ‘staging resistance to authority’ (2005: 975) that in this instance is the theft of high cost clothing from a luxury retailer. By fronting the brand, Moss signifies a call to arms for working class consumers to choose Burberry, however the company’s dilemma was how to use Moss’s working class status without making the working classes target

consumers.

The 2001 campaign included images of Moss and Campbell spilling out of a nightclub, and Hall and Helvin ‘fighting’ over a pair of branded shoes, and in the UK these acts of public misdemeanour had significant down sides for some consumers, and could not be read coherently. In Britain, the 2001 campaign took the brand in an undetermined direction, and though Burberry aimed to position itself within the luxury market, its meaning became diffused as the brands’ connection to working class life positioned it in a less positive way, however in international markets, the connection between Burberry and the supermodels signified high quality.

Had Bravo’s career in the United States dressing ‘perfectly groomed women of all ages but one income tax bracket’ (Herman-Cohen, 2001) narrowed her eye for what constituted ‘British-ness’? Undoubtedly, there seems to be a lack of nuance towards British national identity, and an underestimation of how this image would impact on working class consumers in the UK, but perhaps Bravo was chasing cool from a US perspective?

America The Brave in UK Class War

Certainly, Bravo’s real strength was her embodied knowledge of the North American luxury fashion retail market, where she had worked for over twenty years and which was key to Burberry’s international expansion. Her intimate understanding of that sector meant that the focus of her sales and marketing was in the US and, as the UK market represented only a fraction of overall income, it was somewhat neglected. Bravo was correct in her assumption that the 2001 adverts would be popular in the US, where reportage was positive and the campaigns were viewed as charming and entertaining. The Los Angeles Times (2001) described them as

‘...whimsical ad campaigns created by photographer Mario Testino and art director Fabien Baron’ (Herman-Cohen, 2001)

Through this campaign, we see how Burberry’s ‘brand intangibles’ (Thrift, 2005) became polarised and highly context specific, as market segments in the UK and the US reacted in wholly different ways. In the UK, the increase in working class consumption was met with an escalation of increasingly panic-stricken press headlines, especially those barring entry to pubs and clubs for anyone wearing Burberry, while in the US, wealthier consumers turned to the ‘plucky Brit – Burberry’ (Herman-Cohen, 2001) which systematically impacted brand reputation and level of consumer trust, resulting in an upturn in sales.

In May 2001, Bravo’s carefully planned market research included a lunch at a restaurant in Beverly Hills ‘filled with 24 of the most influential and powerful women in Los Angeles’ (Herman-Cohen, 2001)

‘A charming Burberry plaid tote swung from the arm of Kelly Chapman Meyer, wife of Universal Studios chief Ron Meyer, while Lauren King of the King World Productions empire mixed her vintage ivory Burberry coat and trousers with Hermes accessories’ (Herman-Cohen 2001)

This snapshot draws a strong image of a handful of privileged women wearing Burberry to a specially organised lunch, and demonstrates how the company had started to successfully re-brand itself to a narrow but key demographic in the North American market, however a new flagship store on a corner of Wilshire Boulevard, launched in September 2001, not only widened the market, but was material evidence of that success. The Los Angeles Times (2001) reported

‘As the 19th U.S. store, it will be a smaller version of the London flagship on Bond Street, larger than South Coast Plaza’s, and in many ways, more important than both.’ (Herman-Cohen, May 2001)

Though the Wilshire Boulevard store was vital to the re-brand, its importance relied solely on its British connections – Burberry's history, its links to the aristocracy, and the very fabric of its famous trench coats and Nova check lining, however the article in the LA Times shows how the British market had become marginal, and for the first time in the re-branding programme there is a palpable sense of a split between what Heller (2000) describes as 'the old brand and the new look.' Perhaps the UK market was just too small to be significant, however Burberry looked as if it might be promoting less-than-abundant information for customers, and had created a fundamental change within the company - it was not just bringing goods to the market, it was actively shaping a new market.

Bravo's management background at Saks and I. Magnin stores suggests that she was very comfortable with her role as the 'pacesetter of high-profile society' (Goodwin, 1989) but she seemed to struggle to connect to a wider consumer base, despite her well-publicized desire to make Burberry more accessible.

She told the LA Times in May 2001

"We're not about a certain arrogance or elitism," Bravo said. "We're trying a more democratic approach. We have an internal tag line," she said.
"Burberry at any age." (Herman-Cohen, 2001)

By 2001, Burberry had introduced more product lines to appeal to a wider age group, and their retail offer now included the Nova check bikini, headscarf, and baseball cap, but the company neglected to think how these products might be used by working class consumers in the UK. When Burberry employed faux-'Madchester' imagery in the 2001 re-branding campaign, coupled with Moss in a central role, the overall aesthetic proved to be highly appealing to working class consumers in the UK, and the contrast in imagery between the up-scale consumers in LA's Wiltshire Boulevard, and Manchester in the late 1980s couldn't be more polarized.

Though separated by more than half a decade, there is a slip and slide with the ‘meaning’ of Madchester and its relationship to the more temperate and government-endorsed ‘Cool Britannia’ that followed. Bravo and brand consultants Baron & Baron could not have failed to notice the media attention Cool Britannia attracted in the US - a Newsweek cover from November 1996 declared ‘London Rules’ and the magazine ran an editorial on ‘Inside the World’s Coolest City’. In March 1997 Vanity Fair published a ‘Cool Britannia Special’ where Liam Gallagher, the stylish Oasis singer and his wife, actress Patsy Kensit, were featured on the cover under the title ‘London Swings Again’, wrapped in a Union flag.

Cool Britannia was well received in the US, and this may have foregrounded Bravo’s decision to go ahead with imagery alluding to the Madchester / Cool Britannia sub-cultures, using Moss as a central element in the campaign as by the mid-1990s she was strongly identified with Cool Britannia through her connection to Oasis – she had played tambourine on two tracks from their seminal CDs, ‘Definitely Maybe’ (1994) and ‘Be Here Now’ (1997) and appeared live on stage with the band in an acoustic set at the Virgin Megastore in London in 1994. Cool Britannia had been largely neutered by the deadening hand of political approval, nonetheless Oasis emerged as the rebellious face of the movement, as Landesman (2009) observed

‘Then there was a group of young and dynamic creatives who became associated with Cool Britannia, like those bad boys from Oasis, the Gallagher brothers’ (2009: 257)

Cool Britannia gave the UK a momentary sense of self-belief, and the era was seen as a new ‘Swinging Sixties’, celebrating music, fashion and culture. It formed part of New Labour’s intent to re-brand Britain as ‘cool Britannia’ using Tony Blair’s description of the UK as

‘...a people and society characterised by know-how, creativity, risk-taking, and most of all, originality.’ (Bevir, 2005: 47)

Like Moss, Noel and Liam Gallagher came from a working class background and wholly embodied these characteristics – and, perhaps without knowing it, they were the classic freelance, creative entrepreneurs that Blair and New Labour wanted to celebrate. Moss and the Gallagher brothers had grown up in an age of Thatcherism, and though lacking educational and cultural capital, they more than made up for this with an abundance of ‘know-how, creativity, risk-taking and originality’, which maximized their economic capital to the hilt. Burberry recognised and used Moss’s potent ‘image currency’ (Vernon, 2006) and positioned her in the central role, but failed to acknowledge any deep-rooted class distinction.

Burberry were more effective in channeling the positivity that Cool Britannia brought to the UK and built on it to strengthen brand value by emphasizing their connection to Britain, so when in 2004 the European Commission proposed to launch a ‘Made in EU’ label as a way of competing with the ‘Made in the USA’ ‘mega-label’ (IPKat, 2004) they were proactive in the protection of the brands’ origin and its value to the company, and fought hard to retain their ‘Made in Britain’ status. Online intellectual property specialists IPKat reported on the media campaign orchestrated by luxury brand lobbyists the Walpole Group.

‘Businesses in several EU Member States are unhappy about this, since they want consumers to know where the goods they buy are actually coming from -- particularly those companies that emphasise their national ties and trade on their Britishness (like Burberry) or Scottishness (like Scotch whisky).’ (IPKat, 2004)

Burberry, in collaboration with Walpole, worked with EU members in France and Italy and together they publically distanced themselves from other European

countries including Portugal, Poland and Turkey, stigmatizing them as lacking in craftsmanship, tradition and expertise. Burberry returned to the crux of their business – merchandising, marketing, and the creation of revenue, through a re-affirmation of their ‘British-ness’. This involved maximizing the ‘geographical entanglements’ (Pike, 2010) deeply embedded in their intellectual property, and for Burberry the relationship between branding and IP was especially important in relation to their increasingly busy international trade, but only via their marketing images and not in the manufacturing, sourcing or employment sectors of the company.

The Autumn-Winter 2003-04 campaign strengthened Burberry’s geographical links to Britain, and specifically to London, with a campaign shot in Spitalfields, formerly a traditional East End market adjacent to another ‘souvenir’ attraction, Petticoat Lane. The image (see following page) featured Moss and a Pearly King and Queen, and references ‘pearly’ life, a hospitable and charitable tradition of white working-class custom stemming from the nineteenth century. Burberry’s 2003-04 collection, based mainly around the trench coat presented in a variety of colourways, is relegated to a ‘scrap book’ collage border, and despite the playfulness of the models seen dancing and running, the clothes are utterly marginalized by the ‘cockney sparrow’ image in the centre. Moss’s outfit is restrained and unrecognisable as Burberry, comprising a black, cropped trouser suit, ankle length sock, court shoe, and a white shirt, and her appearance is almost overtaken by the flamboyance of the Pearly King and Queen (who in real life were music hall act Larry Barnes, aka ‘The Viceroy of Versatility’, and his stage assistant Maggie.)

But what this image communicated is a sense of companionship between Moss and the ‘pearlies’ that endorses this very particular aspect of urban London life to the consumer. The marketplace adds a public, sociable element to the setting that is far removed from the ‘abstract’ and complex market that Burberry



*Kate Moss for Burberry, Autumn-Winter 2004.
Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives*

operates within. This was a clever move by Burberry as the image of an historic figure like the Pearly King and Queen is an unusual, almost cartoonish facet of British culture and one that would intrigue international consumers, and for those who recognised the largely well-loved character, it signified a joyful ‘roll-out-the-barrel’ knees-up around the piano, and an authentic slice of British working-class culture. Conversely, the image of the East End pearly king can also be read as a sign of ‘whiteness’, which went against the cultural diversity of the area - a predominantly Bengali neighbourhood, and a community who are notably absent in the Burberry campaign. Wemyss (2009) argues that the ‘white pearly king remains at the top of the social hierarchy as the ‘guv’nor” (2009: 111) but only at a local level, and Watts (2007) argues that pearly culture was increasingly viewed as retrogressive, even within their own families, who felt a sense of embarrassment about the tradition. However, as this advert formed part of Burberry’s global marketing campaign, the Spitalfields site played an important role in placing the brand in a context that highlighted the cosmopolitan breadth of British culture. For example, the doorways seen at the back of the shot are the old Huguenot weavers’ cottages, dating from the seventeenth century, which placed the brand in a context of an ancient artisanal expertise, however the area is also home to artists Gilbert & George, and to writer Jeanette Winterson’s café and deli, Verde, which gave it a contemporary cosmopolitanism and individuality, and successfully rendered the site as an important but quirky tourist venue.

Despite their marginal status in the marketing campaign, Burberry’s Autumn-Winter collection was a commercial success, and the ‘new ranges of more colourful designs have also proved popular with shoppers, [in Europe, the US, and Asia] including a pink version of its classic raincoat’ (BBC News, 2004) Bravo and brand consultants Baron & Baron had found a successful way of communicating a sense of international British-ness into Burberry’s brand values through Moss and the pearlies that said ‘we’re down to earth and fun

to be with', and indeed this sense of fun was carried through other marketing campaigns from this era.

A model of British-ness

Burberry marketed a strong sense of British-ness through their choice of models, using young women that British Vogue (Fox, 2014) described as 'confident, individual and quirky'. British ex-pat Victoria 'Plum' Sykes, contributing editor at American Vogue, argues that

"A model who is funny is commercial [And we Brits are famously funny: sarcasm and self-deprecation are as much part of our cultural make-up as HP sauce and bad weather]" (Fox, 2014: 192)

A sense of fun is centralized in Moss, and knowing how to have fun is one of the key characteristics of her public identity, and fundamental to how she is perceived in both the UK and the US. However, in the UK, Moss's profile as a committed carouser is strongly linked to her social class, which positions her as polar opposite to Sykes' description of a self-deprecating Brit. For example, when Bez (dancer with 'Madchester' band Happy Monday's) who befriended Moss in the early 1990s, declared '...she's a proper working-class girl, and she knows how to have fun' (Time Out, 2006) her sense of fun was intertwined with something entirely more risky, an element of which was reflected in Burberry's Spring-Summer 2004 campaign. The marketing images captured a narrative of a hedonistic lifestyle in a setting that resembled Ibiza, and featured Moss and Theodora Richards, daughter of Rolling Stones guitarist, Keith Richards. Ibiza's reputation as a 'party' island with a long connection to drug culture created a backdrop for a collection of paint-splashed clothing that suggested an idyllic, indolent, everlasting holiday. Moss wears a huge pair of sunglasses in the early morning summer haze, which can be read as an attempt to 'cover up'

after a heavy night's partying. However Moss's authentic 'party-hard' lifestyle strongly mirrored her role in the 2004 campaign, and though recreational drug use was not uncommon in the modeling community, Moss was set apart from the mainstream as she was profoundly unapologetic about any out-of-control behavior and was widely viewed as an 'unrepentant party girl' (Trebay, 2012) However, the connection to Ibiza's long history of drug culture can also be read as information asymmetry that distorted Burberry's market, and the question then becomes - does a holiday on the island inevitably lead to 'party animal' behaviour under the guise of having fun? And did the gaps and incomplete information presented by Burberry cause consumers to be fearful through association, not only with Moss, but through connections visited in Keith Richards' own daughter?

On this occasion, Burberry's Spring-Summer 2004 campaign was strangely prescient, as just over a year later, in September 2005, Moss was photographed by the Daily Mirror snorting cocaine in a London recording studio. Bravo took immediate action and sacked Moss on the spot, as her rebellious lifestyle – though valuable when it was under control, had become too close for comfort and threatened to impact brand value. The drug allegations came in the same year as the successful denouement of the 'new' Burberry and the company's triumphant passage into the global luxury market, and the image of Moss in a London mews, conservatively dressed in a trench coat, court shoes and a 'sensible' handbag in February 2005 contrasted badly to the press shots of her in September that year. A spokesperson for Burberry issued a statement saying that

'Ms. Moss was scheduled to participate in a campaign this fall, but "both Kate and Burberry have mutually agreed that it is inappropriate to go ahead"' (Dodd, 2005)

In the UK, after the cocaine scandal in 2005 Moss was portrayed as the

antithesis of a hygienic, cleansed image of white British-ness, and Burberry's dilemma was how to extricate the brand smoothly from the drama, however corporate strength quickly overshadowed Moss's own fight back, and the brand rapidly issued a statement wishing her well, and in the public domain at least, they came across as a caring company. This perception differed from a scenario suggested by the New York Times (Wilson, 2005) who pointed out that perhaps the real reason for Burberry's concern wasn't an act of brand benevolence, but hard finance, as it may have been just too expensive to pull the campaign at such a late date.

Ultimately, Moss suffered the same fate as any other white working class woman who got out of line, and quite simply she was forced to display her 'lack' of moral values on a global platform. Moss had carried Burberry for over seven years and helped to immeasurably increase their profitability, and we also know that her addition was widely credited as 'the most significant factor in the brand's renaissance' (Vernon 2006) yet ultimately she was dismissed by the company as she was no longer cost-effective and proved that she could actively damage brand value.

Conclusions

This chapter highlights the differences and contradictions in dimensions of Burberry's British-ness in the UK and in the US that shows a split between the British as traditional and patrician, and British as 'cool' and party loving. We saw how the driving forces behind Burberry's re-brand, Bravo and Baron & Baron, constructed a form of British-ness that both played on and ignored class values, using Tennant to embody the aristocratic, and Moss as the 'wild card' - elements that were viewed in a positive light in the US, but which signalled an uneasy amalgam of sartorial elegance and working class intervention in the UK. The New York Times reported on this UK-US split (Menkes, 2002)

'It took someone from outside the British class system to use eccentricity and wit to bring back Burberry's legendary status in its own land. Seeing Kate Moss, London model turned international star, in a re-designed Burberry trench coat was the "click" that gave Bravo the sense of how to mix a legacy of credibility with hip, young street cred. (Menkes, 2002)

Menkes underlines the crucial role that Moss played in the re-branding of Burberry, and as a British journalist based in the US since 1988, she was in a strong position to understand the role of the UK class system from within the US, and to see how the brand fared on their shores. Menkes also highlights the importance of 'eccentricity and wit' as another critical factor in Burberry's US success, and we saw from an article in the Los Angeles Times (2001) that 'whimsy' became an important and newsworthy element, and that Bravo attempted to tie this quaint form of humour to the brand.

In 1997 Burberry embraced a post-Thatcherite creative identity that British Vogue (2014) described as an 'iconoclastic creativity Britain does best' (Fox, 2014: 191) and Burberry's re-emergence in the 1990s coincided with a significant but unconventional aesthetic which marked a clear shift away from the glossy 'supermodels' exemplified by north Americans Linda Evangelista, Christy Turlington, Cindy Crawford et al, and a move towards a less conventional type of beauty that was seen as inextricably linked to the British. This 'grunge' aesthetic was wholly embodied by Moss and Tennant and both models became the unofficial British figureheads of the new look, as Moss's short stature and uneven teeth, and Tennant's pierced septum and androgynous features departed from classic model appearances. Their value to the company was the role they played in the new cohort of models who typified 'British-ness' as a place 'where tradition and anarchy sit side by side' (Fox, 2014: 191) which helped to move Burberry away from its mid-market, conservative past and bind it to an image of Britain where the 'capitalistic sheen' (Fox, 2014: 191) was removed from the previous decade's fashion.

Burberry's re-branding programme coincided with the dismantling of large sections of Government-owned industries that relied on the term 'British' – Telecom, Airways etc., as a way of identifying their origins, and as 'de-nationalisation' attempted to shrink the state, other more inventive ways of declaring geographic roots took their place, which at Burberry ranged from a pony and rider on a private estate, ancient rural landscapes, Pearly Kings, to 'Madchester', and Cool Britannia, providing an indelible stamp of 'old Britain' mixed with cool youth subcultures.

Burberry reflected the drift from the local to the global by conjuring a sense of nationhood through its marketing campaigns, largely fulfilling Colley's (1999) sense of Britain as an 'asymmetrical, composite state full of different but inchoate allegiances'. This helped Burberry to construct a sense of place that not only made room for idiosyncratic campaigns, but actively encouraged eccentricity as a selling point. However, despite the move from the local to the global, the 'Made in the EU' campaign showed that Burberry were determined to boost brand equity through the company's origins, and by collaborating with France and Italy to strengthen their association with what Aaker (1996) describes as 'perceived quality', they allied themselves to countries with highly visible couture traditions.

The enormous changes at Burberry between 1997 and 2005 reflected a wider debate in the mid-1990s about a declining sense of nationalism and the growing importance of globalization. Billig (1995) argued that the processes of globalization resulted in a diminished difference and fragmented the 'imagined unity' (1995: 132) within nations, and Burberry formed an almost perfect microcosm of this state through their increasingly standardized, internationally available collections, but also through Moss and Tennant, who represented polar opposites of what international consumers thought typified 'British'. We learn that by chasing a nationalistic 'dream', Burberry effectively harnessed

the aspirations of a new generation of international consumers, but find that they were attracted to what Billig (1995) termed a quiet nationalism – a non-extremist, everyday ‘banal’ nationalism that Burberry used as a framework for centralizing British-ness and making it significant in a contemporary, global market.

Skey (2011) asks if national identities matter and, if so, to whom? Perhaps in Burberry’s case, the answer is that they matter more to individuals living outside the nation state, as the brand sells the idea of British-ness as an idealized discourse within a global market. Indeed, Interbrand’s annual survey for 2006 named Burberry as the ‘most successful commercial export of ‘Britishness’ to date’ (Sweney, 2007) indicating that the path chosen by Bravo and her successor Angela Ahrendts is a strong one that pushed brand equity in to ever more profitable areas.

In the next chapter I look at the wider implications of Bravo’s decision to cast Moss in a leading role at Burberry in the early days of the company’s re-brand, and focus on the issue of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ consumers in the UK market, and their impact on brand value.

Chapter six Good and Bad Consumers: The Lost Fight, and the Fight Back



*Burberry, Spring-Summer 2000.
Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives*

In 2000, to coincide with Burberry CEO Rose Marie Bravo's decision to introduce lower cost product lines into the mainstream collection, the company published this image (see above) of Kate Moss wearing a Nova check bikini and white bridal veil. The image seems casual, almost as if it had come from a home photo album; no one is looking towards the camera, which makes it look as if the photographer had taken the shot by surprise. The characters are laughing and chatting together, another searches for something in the fridge, and the action takes place in a domestic kitchen, giving it a *cinema verité* aesthetic. Skeggs (2008) points out in her work on 'reality' television that creating a believable 'mise-en-scène (i.e. filmic framing or composition) which makes use of familiar settings such as kitchens, gardens, living rooms, etc.' (2008: 562) creates a relationship with the viewer that helps us to make up our minds that what we are seeing is 'real', and that vivid sense of realism is evident in this

image. The overall aesthetic is low-key, behind-the-scenes and accessible, and the props – the bouquet and the veil, are used to reproduce a facsimile of a hen party showing the women preparing for the night ahead. For many UK consumers, it is a joyful scenario as the hen party forms a precursor to one the best days of their lives, but for others it is the subject of moral disgrace as it alludes to what Skeggs (2005) describes as ‘loud, white, excessive, drunk, fat, vulgar, disgusting, hen-partying woman.’ (2005: 965)

The scene sets up a contrasting sense of affect – on one side it leads to what Ahmed (2004) refers to as the ‘pre-determined’ happiness of the wedding day, and in the opposing corner the image embodies what Skeggs (2005) describes as ‘the moral obsession historically associated with the working class’ (2005: 965) that in this case is the out-of-control female having fun at a hen party.

This chapter examines Burberry’s use of imagery that communicated contradictory brand values to consumers in the UK. It also looks at how the brand, the media, and a wide cross section of UK consumers responded to news that Burberry was linked to football hooliganism - primarily a male-dominated anti-social behavior, and to accusations of ‘tastelessness’ when adopted by working class women. This chapter also questions the reliability of assessing ‘good’ and ‘bad’ consumers, how this issue was raised in the public consciousness, specifically in the UK, and ultimately how Burberry became strongly linked to ‘chav’ culture.

The chapter concludes with an examination of ‘the fight back’ – how working class consumers of Burberry use online platforms and social media to assert their views against a mainstream opinion that judges those who buy the luxury brand without possessing the requisite social capital, as ruining it.

Being respectable

Burberry has a long association within working class culture as for over sixty years it was structurally embedded in a retail sector that was primarily aimed at working class consumers - the mail order catalogue. This way of shopping gave consumers a sense of pride as they found a fiscally responsible way of paying for luxury goods, and consequently working class consumers did not see themselves as a 'bad' for buying Burberry, nor did they acknowledge any transgression of invisible dress codes by buying the brand.

Up to 2001, Kay's catalogue sold Burberry clothes and accessories through weekly payment installments, and it remained a point of pride to customers and employees alike that Kay's was the only catalogue in the UK to offer Burberry. In an audio clip on the University of Worcester's worldofkays.org (© University of Worcester) research project, former employee Anne Thomas reflects that the large customer base was

'....slightly higher class than competitors since, unlike them, it included Burberry and other high-value brands.' (worldofkays.org, 2011)

In the fifty years after World War 2, mail order shopping in the UK was given a radical overhaul as it distanced itself from the low-quality, low-grade aesthetic of the pre-war years. Kay's became part of the Great Universal Stores (GUS) conglomerate in 1937, when the pre-war association with home shopping was what Joseph Fattorini, owner of the Empire Stores mail order business, termed 'low class trade'. However, by the time Burberry was acquired by GUS in 1955, there was a feeling of 'respectability' connected to catalogue shopping, as Coopey, O'Connell and Porter (2005) argue

'Working class consumers in the post-war era, however, expected better quality – the wartime Utility Scheme had made an important contribution to this respect.' (2005: 61)

Two key factors helped to enhance the sector: the stringent quality control programmes put in place by each company, coupled with the introduction of branded goods. Branded goods had the potential to excite consumer appetite for mail order, as the public already had confidence in the products, but this was not a straightforward move for the mail order companies as Coopey et al (2005) observes that there were

‘...significant obstacles to be overcome before the mail order retailer’s window could be filled with lines already on the High Street,’ [as manufacturers of branded goods thought they would be lowering their tone to supply mail order companies, and retail shops did not want an invasion into their preserve]’ (2005: 62)

From the 1950s onwards, the mail order companies entered into a ten-year battle with the high street as they attempted to attract the more affluent post-war consumer, however the ‘phenomenal growth of mail order sales in the 1950s’ (Coopey et al 2005: 63) encouraged manufacturers of branded goods to re-think their positions, and they eventually agreed to be included. Burberry’s acquisition by GUS in 1955 was a brilliant strategic move, as GUS neatly sidestepped the need for negotiations and simply added the company to their existing mail order portfolio.

Two other significant elements improved the profile and public reception to catalogue shopping: the shift from cash to credit (which arrived in Britain in the 1950s) and the transition from the ‘club organizer’ to the agent. The agent was able to offer credit to customers, who in turn were able to receive goods even before the first installment had been paid. This was seen as an important step in an era characterized by a generally cautious attitude towards the notion of independent credit for women, as Coopey et al (2005) observes

‘Working class women, comprising the bulk of mail order’s customers in this period could access 38 weeks credit via a simple transaction with

a neighbour rather than exposing themselves to the risk of negative discrimination when applying for credit at a High Street store.' (2005: 65)

As Coopey et al (2005) points out, the provision of a locally assessed credit system helped working class women to circumvent the traditional channels open to them - the High Street stores and department stores, and by avoiding these spaces they no longer felt what Skeggs (2008) describes as 'matter out of place'. Skeggs argues that the store represents a space where working class women feared they would be humiliated, or had already been humiliated, as they felt they lacked the requisite cultural capital, and asking for credit turned it into a site to be feared and avoided.

The agency system also gave working class women a safe haven from the tallymen, who offered quick cash on the doorstep, but charged exorbitant rates of interest, however its two most important contributions were time saving efficiencies, particularly as more women worked full-time, and an extended use of women's social networks at a local level, as the system provided a way in which they could exercise financial planning and a sense of prudence. Miller (1998) argues that 'thrift' is a key value that underpins the way working class women understand their shopping practices, and this characteristic was exploited to its maximum potential by Kay's and other catalogues, as it allowed customers to plan and budget for special, non-essential items including fashionable clothing. In common with other big mail order companies, Kay's relied on its network of agents to assess potential clients' ability to pay, and the agents were usually the most trusted woman in the area. They were custodians of the catalogue, who drummed up trade with neighbours, friends and family, and had the ability to identify and assess extenuating circumstances for any of her clients including sudden job loss, or a death in the family. This assessment could only be done by someone with specific local knowledge who knew exactly who could and could not afford the weekly re-payments.

This form of buying and selling continued until the 1980s, and situated the home shopping catalogue in a local context until other forms of credit - credit cards and store cards were brought to the market. As applications for this type of credit were assessed through Credit Reference Agencies, this made the transactions anonymous and national, and in many ways this remoteness signaled the end of the agency systems' localism. Thrift (2005) argues that the use of 'coding' – exemplified in credit profiling, limits our chances of negotiation, as the remote service has removed the possibility of 'making an account of ourselves' as it is automated and impersonal. The catalogue agents, with their expansive and intimate local knowledge, were phased out, and the heyday of catalogue shopping was effectively over. By the end of the 1980s, Coopey et al (2005) points out

'Credit is freely available, most women have at least part-time jobs and it is far less common to live in a community close-knit enough for catalogues to be passed among neighbours.' (2005: 70)

Home shopping declined in the 1990s, though this was initially masked by an increase in the number of agents, however they bought goods solely for their immediate family. In 1997, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission reported that although GUS were market leaders with 40.6% of the UK mail order market share, with Littlewoods following in second place with 27.9%, all was not well

'However, by the end of the 90s, it was becoming clear, at least to City analysts, that GUS and Littlewoods, Britain's two largest mail order houses, were experiencing difficulties in adjusting to changing conditions. Though GUS had diversified in the mid-1990s, acquiring Argos, the high street catalogue retailer, and Experian, an information services provider, the performance of its mail order division was problematic. A dramatic fall of 70% in profits in 1999 prompted the observation that the time was fast

approaching when GUS should perhaps bite the bullet, and close down.'
(Coopey et al, 2005: 69)

We know from chapter three that Burberry had experienced financial difficulties in the mid-1990s, prompting Bravo's appointment to take control of the ailing company in 1997, but now its parent company was in jeopardy, and after nearly one hundred years of unparalleled success in the mail order business, GUS had lost its way.

Clearly GUS's other businesses were succeeding where their mail order business failed to prosper, as three years later, in 2002, Marketing Magazine reported a £20 million investment at GUS to review and reinvigorate its marketing strategy, previously handled exclusively by McCann-Erickson Manchester. Marketing Magazine revealed that the GUS home shopping catalogue division was considering a 'youth overhaul', with catalogue launches aimed at a younger demographic, and that 'luxury goods brand Burberry' (Kleinman, 2002) was part of the deal. However, this initiative failed to give the corporation an edge over its competitors and as the online and e-commerce market geared up for growth, GUS sold its traditional home shopping division to the Barclay brothers in 2004.

After Burberry was successfully floated on the London Stock Exchange in 2002, they remained bound to the GUS conglomerate until a demerger formally separated them in 2005, but from the early years of the twenty first century, they too had an eye on the youth market, and the Daily Telegraph reported that Bravo was keen to 'broaden its appeal' (Mills, 2000)

"I would like to see more people able to buy into the brand," she says. She hints that the group is working on a range of clothing and accessories which will retail at slightly lower, more affordable prices. "Burberry has the ability to broaden its audience. It will not be mass

market or high street, but it could be more than a rarefied breed," she says.' (Mills, 2000)

The success of the 2000 campaign featuring Moss meant that Burberry were in no doubt about the new direction they were taking

"Getting our bikini on Kate Moss cut the average age of our customers by 30 years in one fell swoop," smiles Ms Bravo' (Economist, 2001)

Though Burberry successfully attracted a younger demographic using the image of Moss in a bikini, what Bravo and brand consultants Baron and Baron had not taken into account was the rigid hierarchy of the British class system, and when the same image also enticed a cross section of working class consumers to the brand, they were viewed by the British media as being radically different to the Kay's catalogue customers. However, one particular demographic began to emerge in the UK media and a vivid image of the football 'hooligan' and their attraction to Burberry became highly visible over the following three years, attracting headlines including 'Pubs slap ban on Burberry lager louts' (Sky News, 2004).

But where did the link between Burberry and out-of-control behavior emerge? One potential source, dating back to the nineteenth century, came from the 'Scuttlers' - large groups of teenage gangs who roamed Victorian Manchester; they came from the poorest and most overcrowded districts in the newly-industrialized city, and were not conventional criminals, but took pride in how aggressive they were, and pride in their territory. Their distinctive neckerchief (see image on following page) draws parallels to the Burberry Nova check, and perhaps this formed a visual link to the company that was carried forward into the next century.

The image (right) shows three convicted Scuttlers, who despite solely conducting their turf wars with other teenage gangs, were widely feared by residents, business owners, religious and civic leaders, as the fights were highly visible and heavily reported in a plethora of newspapers in the north east of England.

A moral panic ensued throughout the 1870s and right up to the 1890s, and ever more harsh prison sentences were handed down to boys as young as 12 and 13, some of whom received fifteen to twenty-year jail terms. (Davies, 2009)



*The Scuttlers of Manchester, 1870.
Image courtesy of Andrew Davies*

After the public outcry over the nineteenth century Scuttlers, in the twentieth century, a new figure - the 'Mod', began to emerge within post-war UK youth culture. Here, newly affluent working class teenagers spent their disposable income on luxury clothing, which they used as a way of what Hebdige (1975) describes as creating a 'parody of consumer society in which they were situated.' (1975: 93)



*Rod Stewart, Shotgun Express, 1966.
Image courtesy of Columbia Records*

This image of Rod Stewart (see left) shows him wearing a classic Burberry trench coat in the mid-1960s, at the height of the Mod era. Stewart came from a working-class background and self-identifies as a

Mod, however the image shows us that the standard parka and mohair suit ‘uniform’ wasn’t worn by everyone within the subculture, and young working class men often wore tailored clothing from long-established British clothing companies. Two years prior to this image, Stewart was photographed wearing a ‘Daks’ suit jacket (a rival of Burberry, established in 1894) at one of his first live appearances at the London-based Marquee club. Stewart was still only nineteen years old, but he states that his intention at that age was to dress ‘like an English country gent.’ (*Imagine*, BBC television, 2013) Stewart’s background as a working class teenager was typical of many – he was a reluctant pupil who left school at fifteen, and drifted through a range of dead-end jobs until he started to get paid regularly as a backing singer. Through he lacked educational capital he made up for this by constructing an image of himself that enhanced his cultural and symbolic capital through the character of an ‘English Country Gent’. Hebdige (1975) describes this style as ‘expropriating’ meanings given to objects borrowed from the dominant culture, and transforming them by the way they were worked into a new ensemble. So Stewart’s classic trench coat and Daks jacket were transformed into what Hebdige (1975) argues are ‘oblique criticisms’ of the passive consumerism around them, as the Mods

‘...learned by experience (at school and work) to avoid direct confrontations where age, experience, economic and civil power would have told against them. The Mod dealt his blows by inverting and distorting images (of neatness, of short hair) so cherished by his employers and parents, to create a style, which while being overtly close to the straight world was nonetheless incomprehensible to it.’ (1975: 93)

Similarly, in the early 1970s, and taking many cues from Mod culture came the ‘suede heads’, or what the Sunday Times dubbed the ‘Crombie Boys’. Though the suede heads followed in the aftermath of the skinhead movement, they were very different in temperament as they eschewed violence, and they too wanted

to look like 'gentlemen'. The suede heads adopted a more tailored aesthetic, and selected British company Crombie (established in 1805) as their label of choice. Crombie were a traditional men's outfitters, and the company were more closely linked to city businessmen than to suburban suede heads. Though many working class consumers aspired to own a genuine Crombie, in hard financial times they could not afford the genuine products, and had to opt for imitations, as this double-page Sunday Times article (see image below) detailed.



'The Crombie Boys', 1971.

Photograph by Red Saunders; Image courtesy of the Sunday Times

'The kids call these overcoats Crombies, but they are rarely the genuine article made from the celebrated Crombie cloth. Still, there is a touch of real class tucked in the top pocket - a pure silk handkerchief. This gentlemanly fad started in London, swaggering out from the east end on to the football terraces where it was caught like measles and spread to places as far apart as Highgate and Barnes. Now you can see Crombie boys getting off the football specials from the midlands and the north. It's a look for boys (and a few girls) between 12 and 20 who want to give themselves a group identity that swings away from the aggressive look of skinheads and rockers; some south London Crombie boys have even been seen with rolled umbrellas.' (Sunday Times magazine, 1971)

The image (previous page) linked the 'Crombie Boys' to the football terraces - even placing a headless figure wearing football colours in the centre of photograph, which helped to position the characters in the shot firmly in a working class context and away from the 'City Gent'. The text points out the importance of the right accessories – the silk handkerchief and the rolled umbrella, items borrowed from the dominant culture that echo findings made by social scientist Frederic le Play (Crane, 2000) in nineteenth century France, where he documents how working class men - largely in urban settings, adopted the silk or satin tie, waistcoat and vest, styles firmly connected to the middle classes and the bourgeoisie.

In 1970s Britain, many of those 'bourgeois' accessories were bought using mail order catalogues, especially for working class consumers on a tight budget, as well as those who lacked access to fashionable stores. On the 'mod-to-suedehead.net' forum, Man-of-Mystery remarks

'[This] reminds me a lot of some pictures I once saw in a mail-order catalogue (Littlewoods?) my mum had in about 1970. Obviously the mail order company was trying to cash in on trends observed on the street,

but got there late.' (10 October 2013)

Some trends 'observed on the street' included a new type of well-dressed gang, and one hundred years after the Scuttlers, came Birmingham City Football Club's 'Zulu Warriors', (see image below left) who began to wear designer clothing.



(left) The 'Zulu Warriors' wearing Daks, 1982; (right) a man is arrested wearing a Burberry jacket, 2004.

Image (left) courtesy of @PaddyTeager, Twicsy; (right) courtesy of Bravo Television

The Zulu Warriors were highlighted on a programme broadcast by the British-based Bravo channel. The channel specialized in reality television programmes aimed at men aged twenty to forty, and the station's image emanated partially from its tag line – 'Home of the Brave', and from its output, where a typical show was the Danny Dyer-fronted 'The Real Football Factories' which was shown between May and June 2006. The programme responded to a new source of moral panic surrounding football hooligans in the early- to mid-2000s, and attempted to give an in-depth profile and history of football hooliganism and football firms using Dyer's on-screen persona as a working class 'hard man' (Deans and Plunket, 2014) to market the series. However the stories behind images such as the one above (right), though showing extreme behavior, masked a narrative of shared community, identity and camaraderie. 'The Real Football Factories' examined the Zulu Warriors' role as an anti-racist firm comprising black, Asian and white supporters in the early 1980s, who battled

right-wing and BNP fans at other clubs. The cultural diversity of this gang was matched by the uniformity of their clothing, which shows them wearing Burberry clothes and accessories in several personal photographs. In one image from 1982, three young black men are seen wearing a Burberry flat cap, a Burberry trilby and a Burberry scarf, and another image shows an equally diverse group of friends on a train on match day also wearing the distinctive Burberry Nova check. In Dyer's documentary, one of the original Zulu Warriors, David George, is interviewed and he explained their choice

“We went with all our colours, our favourite clothes and our favourite music” (The Real Football Factories, May 2006)

For George, the group identity made it clear to other members of the firm – which at its height during the 1980s comprised over four hundred, that “these were my brothers”, and the instantaneous recognition – mirroring the nineteenth century Scuttlers - gave each member a feeling of solidarity. Criminologist James Treadwell (2008) suggests other key reasons for appropriating labels like Burberry as brands of choice in the early 1980s

‘For football hooligans the underpinning logic of adopting expensive clothes was avoidance of police attention – and designer ware and comparatively more expensive modes of transport [‘intercity’ rather than football special trains] ensured this. Moreover, they could readily identify others dressed like them’ (2008: 124)

However to the public, the sight of four hundred young men engaged in battle – however noble the cause, was terrifying. Burberry’s polarized image emerged from this context in the UK and has effectively remained in an altered state – away from the luxury and premium fashion sector - at a local level since then.

Towards the end of 2003, the Burberry brand started to leak – and where once it was contained within football culture, now its disrepute spilled over into

mainstream working class culture. The national face of Burberry's downward trajectory began in November 2003 when a bar in Aberdeen refused entry to a woman with a Burberry handbag and umbrella as part of their 'no Burberry' dress code stipulations. Some publicans had continued to make a connection between the brand and incidents of football hooliganism, however in this case it was the misrecognition of the woman as a 'football casual' that attracted headlines in the Scottish Herald (Chiesa and Porch 2003) the Publican (2003) the Daily Mail (Madeley, 2003) the Guardian (Finch 2003) British Vogue (2003) and marketing and media title, The Drum (2003) The Guardian reported that many bar owners in Scotland felt that

‘Burberry has become the badge of thuggery.’ (Finch, 2003)

Press coverage on the Burberry ban in Aberdeen eventually trailed off, however another ban issued in the summer of 2004 by two Leicester-based bars, the Varsity and the Parody, who refused entry to anyone wearing Burberry, reignited media interest. The Varsity and the Parody were part of the Barracuda Group who ran a network of 154 venues throughout the UK, and news of their ban also went from being a local news story to one of national significance, and was covered in newspapers including the Guardian (Oliver, 2004) the Telegraph (2004) PR Week (Robertson, 2004) and featured on Sky News and the BBC. All media outlets reiterated the original press report from the Leicester Mercury that the ban on drinkers wearing Burberry was an attempt to 'crack down on violence' (BBC News, 2004)

The Barracuda Group's initiative was duplicated by bars, pubs and clubs up and down the UK and highly visible notices appeared outside city centre licensed premises, predominantly those attracting a younger demographic, barring entry to anyone wearing Burberry, including 'Snobs', a Birmingham-based club who issued this dress-code edict in 2004 (see image on following page).



*Snobs' club, Birmingham, 2004.
Image courtesy of William Fallows on Flickr*

Informally, the police got involved in identifying potential troublemakers, and the link between Burberry and hooliganism persisted, as these posts on the 'Police Specials Forum' confirm. 'Pinky', responding to the article in the Leicester Mercury, writes

'I do Hudds Town Football matches regularly - more or less every home game - and you know who the troublemakers are by the labels they wear - and they are LABELS, in the "Look at Me!!!" way of wearing them.'

You can spot the 'hooligans' as they wear the Fred Perry polo shirts and jeans, with Burberry caps, and you can see the younger element, the "wannabes", wearing labels on everything. I saw one lad (approx 17) at the Town v Hartlepool match the other week with Burberry baseball cap, t-shirt with BURBERRY on it in big letters' (policespecials.com, 23 August 2004)

Two days later ‘Zulu’, another officer, responded

‘The sad thing is that the majority of “burberry” items worn in the High Street are not even genuine Burberry, just imitation. I was talking to a lad in custody (in for burglary) who asked me if our Stabvests come in Burberry.’ (policespecials.com, 25 August 2004)

The posts from the Special Constables mark an important distinction as although they are informal messages from colleague to colleague, both officers represent an official element of dominant culture and their messages are visible in the public domain.

After the deluge of comment and criticism, Burberry issued a statement dismissing the story from the Leicester Mercury, stating that it was ‘a localised issue and to be honest it’s actually quite insignificant in the face of the brand’s global appeal’ (BBC News, 2004). However, by October 2004 Burberry were no longer in a position to deny the fracture occurring within the brand, and when their Finance Director Stacey Cartwright was interviewed in the financial section of the Independent, she admitted that

“We’re missing the UK domestic consumer … the UK market has been sluggish, particularly in central London.” She admitted that the adverse publicity over the popularity of the group’s trademark check with “chavs” - an emerging class of twentysomething urbanites who favour designer labels but lack the social status of traditional luxury goods customers - was probably behind the fall in demand. “It won’t have helped, I’m sure”, Ms Cartwright added.’ (Mesure, 2004)

The sensational headlines and public ‘dress code’ bans effectively polarized Burberry’s image in the UK. The company attempted to reassure investors and consumers by implementing remedial action to reposition the brand away from its trademark check after the ‘beige-and-black motif was hijacked by the likes

of football hooligans.' (Mesure, 2004) The Money Programme (Bothwell, 2005) confirmed this and reported that Burberry

'...had removed the checked baseball caps from sale and reduced the visibility of their distinctive pattern. Three years ago it was on a fifth of all products. By 2004 it was on less than 5%.' (Bothwell, 2005)

But it was already too late, as the Burberry brand had leaked on a nationwide basis. It had become part of a different ideology and its brand associations had widened to include the football hooligan. It was hardly surprising, then, that the Bravo television image from 2006 showing a young man wearing a Burberry Nova check jacket being arrested by two police officers was, for some viewers, business as usual, as it captured all that was 'wrong' about luxury brands being appropriated by the 'wrong' consumers. For Burberry, it highlighted the radical difference between its local image and global profile, and in the UK it made a clear connection in the public domain between working class consumption of Burberry and criminal behaviour.

A cycle of appropriation started by the nineteenth century working class Scuttlers, the mid-1960s Mod, the 70s suede head, the Burberry-wearing Zulu Warriors in the early 1980s, to the late-1980s 'casual' made it clear at a local level at least, that this way of dressing not only helped to identify rivals, but it also boosted cultural capital through ownership of high prestige items admired by peers.

Burberry was not the first brand to be used as a way of what Moor (2007) describes as "buying' cultural capital in objectified form through brand name commodities' (2007: 134) but it was likely to be the most expensive, and so when an emerging 'chav' culture started to be connected to the brand, the media questioned how they could afford luxury fashion on an income that

consisted primarily of benefits. But were they even attempting to buy cultural capital?

'Chav Scum'

'Chavs' argues Jones (2011) are unremittingly portrayed as thick, violent and criminal, and differ from what was perceived as an older, more 'respectable' working class. 'Chav' culture was effectively formed by a rising inequality that led to an increasingly segregated society in Britain, where a 'traditional' male-dominated heavy industry infrastructure had been slowing diminishing. Starved of conventional work, and with little hope of secure employment, many turned to the welfare system, and were subsequently viewed as a 'workshy underclass' (Lawler, 2005), facing a lifetime on benefits. Jones (2011) also argues that the Conservative government's demeaning attitude towards trade unions helped to strip the working classes of their public voice so that the middle-class effectively became the new decision-making class. However, 'chav' culture wasn't solely a product of Tory legislation, as New Labour compounded the problem as far back as 1997, stating 'we're all middle-class now', which heralded an era of neo-liberalism.

Against this background of political, economic and social change, perceptions of Burberry altered radically to take account of a new influx of 'urban chav' consumers, and Burberry, or more accurately the Nova check, became the aesthetic focal point of 'chav' culture. Consumers and the media reacted swiftly to the connection between the luxury brand and a demographic they felt had no business wearing Burberry, however what is distinctive is the level of protest – the football hooliganism from an earlier era was mutely accepted as they occupied a very particular domain – the football terraces and streets surrounding the ground, however 'chav' culture was ubiquitous, appearing frequently in the news and entertainment media. Jones (2011) argues that

'chav' as a pejorative term is potentially the last form of prejudice, but one in which all classes participate, and where racist or homophobic hate speech has become taboo, 'chav bashing' became socially and politically acceptable. The Telegraph's financial reporter joined in the abuse with this headline

'Burberry brand tarnished by 'chavs'

Burberry, the luxury goods group, has seen a sharp decline in UK sales due to the popularity of its trademark camel check among so-called 'chavs', a pejorative term for a low-income social group obsessed with brand names, cheap jewellery and football. Retailers who stock Burberry products say there is a growing negative association with the brand as the national obsession with chav culture has flourished' (Hall, 2004)

The financial report is clear about its intent to show how brand associations can impact sales and revenue, but Hall's article nonetheless demonstrates a negative appraisal, and he uses derogatory semantics throughout the article. Two posts on the consumer site reviewcentre.com go further in their criticism of 'chavs' adopting Burberry as their brand of choice

'I urge the company to drop this design and disassociate itself from this class of society' (Andy123, 3 September 2004)

'The founders of Burberry must be so annoyed that their brand has become the staple diet of chavs across the country. They put in so much hard work coming up with designs only for them to be adopted by idiots and Neanderthals as a calling card (Lcarlisle, 21 February 2008)

The two posts – written four years apart, show how entangled Burberry had become with a negative symbolic value of 'chav' culture, and they also demonstrate how angry UK consumers had become in relation to what they perceived as an 'undeserving' marginal group essentially hi-jacking an important, symbolic-making and historic brand. But why did Andy123 and

Why care so much about Burberry's reputation? Lawler (2005) suggests that it may well have been middle-class 'disgust' - a powerful affect aroused when they sensed that the 'good taste' in which they had invested, had been violated.

Burberry could not follow Andy123's advice and 'drop' the Nova check design, as it was one of their biggest brand assets, however the company faced a dilemma: how could it defend itself from the onslaught of what Lawler (2005) describes as 'disgusting subjects' without appearing to be highly judgmental, which in itself had the potential to damage brand equity? The social, political, and economic climate between 2004 and 2008 - when the posts were first published, was characterized by what Lawler (2005) describes as a 'narrative of decline', where

'...a once respectable working-class which held progressive principles and knew its assigned purpose [had] now disappeared, to be either absorbed into an allegedly-expanding middle class, or consigned to a workless and workshy underclass which lacks taste, is politically retrogressive, dresses badly, and above all, is prey to a consumer culture'. (2005: 433)

Burberry's silence may have been sufficient ammunition for UK consumers and the media to respond on their behalf, as 'chavs' had already been widely assigned a role as the repellent 'other', and no one was likely to come to their defense. Andy123's level of disgust prompts him to post another comment the same day, showing how his repugnance manifested itself in his description of the 'chav' aesthetic and lifestyle

'It continually keeps a smile on my face seeing the burgeoning peasant underclass trying to look stylish by wearing it! To be fair, when this design came out it was probably seen as very classy and upmarket for high

flyers who wanted to be seen as being successful. Now, unfortunately, the masses have adopted it as a form of bling to go with their hideous gold clown pendants, Von Bitch copy t-shirts, trakkie bottoms, Rockport boots and fatherless new-borns sporting Claire accessory creole earrings! Please, I implore you! Drop this design and disassociate yourselves as far away from these kinds of lowlife chavscum.' (Andy123, 3 September 2004)

Andy123s comments about 'high flyers' versus a 'burgeoning peasant underclass' (a phrase taken directly from 'The Little Book of Chavs', Bok, 2004) shows the polarity of Burberry's position in the UK where, metaphorically speaking, one class is in the ascendant – the 'high' flyer, while the underclass is facing down, but it also illustrates Lawler's (2005) argument about how personal aesthetics can be directly translated into a sense of morality, where 'chavs' are viewed as having no taste and where

'...those positioned as lacking 'taste' can also be positioned as morally lacking...This is precisely why working-class people are so readily judged by their appearance' (Lawler, 2005: 441)

Andy123s post simultaneously piles on the hate speech, but also references what Skeggs (2003) calls 'coding a whole way of life that is deemed to be repellent' (2003: 2). In contrast, the 'old' working classes, though once viewed as a scourge, were now seen as somehow noble and respectable, and it was 'chavs' who were viewed as scroungers.

Again, the question for Burberry was how to extricate itself from this situation without damaging brand value, however the company were braced for more bad news, as their situation was further complicated by an increasingly widespread production and adoption of fakes.

F for Fake

It is likely that many low-income consumers could not afford authentic Burberry products, making the Special Constables' comments about 'imitations' particularly apposite. The rise in counterfeit goods troubled Burberry, particularly in proximity to working class consumption of the brand, many of whom sought 'alternatives to expensive, genuine products' (Pollinger, 2008: 32) and it was this consumer group's on-going search that proved to be a significant driver in the increasingly widespread production of fakes. Burberry CEO Rose-Marie Bravo attempted to stem the flow of fake goods to the market in the late 1990s, however the company's complex licensing agreements with global manufacturers meant that her initiative was difficult for the brand to police effectively. It did, however, alert the company to the importance of regulating their own intellectual property rights (IPR) and protect their distinctiveness through a legal framework by attempting to exclude others from using the same designs. Lash and Urry (1994) argue that in post-Fordist work, where design is central, company value is primarily about acquisition, packaging and marketing IP rights, in other words Burberry's distinctive trademarks – particularly the Nova check and the Equestrian Knight logo, put a financial value onto the company. However, it was those visible and easily recognizable elements that attracted working class consumers, and not the more obscure and upmarket Burberry Prorsum line, which has no familiar features. The check and the knight are the elements most used in fakes, so there was a significant danger of diminishing brand equity as the flood of fakes entered the UK market.

Trademarks were originally introduced to protect consumers from goods being 'passed off' as originals, however as IP law became more internationalized in the contemporary global market, May and Sell (2005) argue that the laws are increasingly used to protect revenue streams and money spent on marketing, and have significantly less consumer focus. Fake Burberry products are offered for sale on eBay and in street markets up and down the UK, and a study carried

out by lawyers Davenport Lyons and Ledbury Research in 2007 showed that Burberry lay in third place, after Louis Vuitton and Gucci, as the most copied brand in the UK (Cable, 2007). Reuters reported that the IPR division at Burberry ‘devoted a lot of resources to eBay and worked closely with the site, ending more than 30,000 auctions last year’ (Cable, 2007) and according to the UKs Anti-Counterfeiting Group, shoppers hoping to buy a designer bargain on eBay or from a discount website are taken in by convincing sites and prices that reflect a premium brand, however as IP laws no longer extend their protection to customers, The Independent (Chesters, 2012) reported that goods suspected of being fakes are intercepted at airport hubs and dockyards and destroyed on site, after which the firm sends a letter to the buyer telling them they have bought a fake from an illegal seller, and the customer is left empty handed.

Conversely, Mishcon de Reya, lawyers representing some of the luxury brands against the counterfeiters, report that monitoring sales of fake products has become increasingly difficult, as the business has expanded rapidly from a small number of retailers on the high street, to a multiplicity of sellers trading from home. The Independent (Chesters, 2012) pointed out that while the source of counterfeit products is widespread, the Far East is ‘at the core of the problem’, but surprisingly discovers that ‘it is more common for China to be the manufacturer rather than the consumer of copies’ (Chesters, 2012) and it seems that although China’s high profile markets are attractive to bargain hunters, they are primarily aimed at the international tourist trade, and middle-class Chinese consumers shun all but the originals.

One of the biggest issues for luxury brands are the global distribution chains, and according to Jeremy Herzog, head of the intellectual property group at Mishcon de Reya, fakes can even find their way to legitimate distribution channels. More disturbing though, is the lack of control, as brands cannot regulate the pricing, or the invaluable ‘consumer experience’ outside authorized

retailers. The brand-protection company MarkMonitor argues that fakes have direct cost implications for consumers, as firms have to raise their prices in order to differentiate their products from the fakes.

Despite the work attempting to differentiate the genuine from the imitation, fakes can easily be mistaken for a legitimate product, and this anonymous post at reviewcentre.com shows how the writers' sense of pride in owning an original Burberry shirt turns to dismay at the easy availability of fakes for sale in his own neighbourhood, lessening the impact of his 'authentic' product, and potentially diminishing his local status.

'Written on: 07/08/2006 by Anonymous101

Good Points

My Burberry casual shirt is the favourite item in my wardrobe. My girlfriend bought me it about three years ago and although it is a little threadbare now, it still manages to turn a few heads when I go on a night out. A lot of my friends can't afford Burberry so I feel far superior to them.

Bad Points

Burberry is now very famous and is widely available throughout the UK. Even Doggy market has been selling the brand recently. I do however, worry that all these baseball style caps, t-shirts and jackets being sold near my house will deter from the impact my shirt once made.'

(reviewcentre.com, 7 August 2006)

The author of this post is clearly worried about the impact of fakes on his elite reputation in the neighbourhood, as he is proud to wear a genuine Burberry shirt, and it's a point argued by Treadwell (2008) who points out that 'the ability to acquire core items most admired by peers' (2008: 124) remains a key element in building and maintaining local status. It's not just fans of Burberry

who are worried about the association fakes bring to the brand - the significance of the cheap imitation has permeated British culture more widely, as this post from 'Silly Sausage' on Secularcafé.org (2011) illustrates

'The problem with Burberry is, as Pendaric says, all the knock off gear. I don't know if Burberry makes those awful shell suits or they're knock-offs [I don't think chavs will be in a hurry to ditch the Burberry (or knock-off) gear though, and that's part of the problem. While they continue to wear it, and people know they are wearing it, it will never have the same appeal in this country.] (secularcafe.org, 26 January 2011)

This post underlines how difficult it is to differentiate between fakes and genuine Burberry products, as the Nova check pattern has become part of another, fetishistic style at a local level. Burberry don't manufacture shell suits, but the counterfeiters have seen a gap in the market and produced clothing featuring the Nova check in order to satisfy consumer demand, however those same consumers have then adapted the clothing to fit their lifestyles, for example, by wearing a baggy hooded top with a pair of tracksuit bottoms so it resembles an entire suit. This sense of 'reworking' is evident in Hebdige's (1975) study of Mod culture where he examines

'.....the way objects and things were borrowed by the Mods from the world of consumer commodities, and their meaning transformed by the way they were worked into a new ensemble. This involved expropriating the meanings given to things by the dominant consumer culture, and incorporating them in ways which expressed sub-cultural rather than dominant values.' (1975: 87)

This way of dressing, then, was no longer a way of buying status within dominant culture, but a way of expressing sub-cultural values, and this was

and continues to be a paradox for Burberry, as the ‘chav’ consumer group have moved away from what Hayward and Yar (2006) describe as the ‘charade of self-improvement’, and are instead preoccupied by what Treadwell (2008) describes as the ‘excessive consumption of some fashion brand items’ (2008: 121).

In a long history of cultural appropriation, working class culture has effectively shaped a new pathway, where ‘borrowing’ from the dominant culture means re-assigning values attached to luxury brands, and no longer signals a desire to be ‘better’.

Where working class men’s consumption of Burberry was tied to an image of football hooliganism and misconduct, this image of Danniella Westbrook (see following page) became emblematic of all that was perceived as ‘bad’ about working class women’s consumption of Burberry, as it was, and still is, widely considered to be ‘tasteless’. Westbrook’s own image has become indelibly linked to failure – failed relationships, failed career, multiple failed drug rehabilitations, and she has become a figure of what Tyler and Bennett (2010) describe as ‘celebrity chav’. The image of Westbrook and her infant entirely clad in Burberry Nova check dates from 2004, however UK news media continue to hold her personally responsible for the potential downfall of Burberry and banner headlines including ‘When it comes to Burberry, Danniella Westbrook has a lot to answer for’ (Carpenter, 2011) are not uncommon. Certainly, Westbrook’s personhood as a key ‘celebrity chav’ communicates what Tyler and Bennett (2010) describe as ‘the excessive embodiment of class hatred.’ (2010: 379)

Why was Westbrook singled out and pilloried so heavily for wearing Burberry? Prior to this image she was known in the media as the celebrity with a cocaine habit so severe that she required surgery for a collapsed septum. After this



*Danniella Westbrook, 2004.
Image courtesy of Big Pictures*

photograph appeared, she became what Tyler and Bennett (2010) describe as the ‘bad object’, and a single focus for public rage. Tyler and Bennett (2010) point out that

‘...many of the social networking sites, blogs and discussion groups devoted to the analysis of celebrity behavior express intense, hyperbolic hatred and aversion rather than love or admiration. Hatred can be a community-forming attachment to a ‘bad’ object.’ (2010: 377)

Westbrook, then, fulfilled the ‘bad object’ role completely and she continues to follow a well-trodden path of other ‘celebrity chavs’ including multiple children with different fathers, self-penned exposés of the rise to stardom, regular appearances on confessional and ‘reality’ television programmes. However, the principal and most public sign of a ‘celebrity chav’ is breast augmentation surgery that Tyler and Bennett (2010) argue is a

‘...key signifier of working class female celebrity associated with glamour modeling and pornography, especially when surgically enhanced,’ (2010: 385-386)

Indeed the ‘celebrity chav’ lifestyle is built around this form of excess – too much silicone, too much misery, too much fat, too much money, and too much poverty. It was this sense of overabundance that made Westbrook a clear target for the media and online communities, who did not denigrate her for wearing Burberry, but for the quantity of the distinguishing pattern, which has been repeatedly described as ‘tasteless’. Lawler (2005) points out that this sense of ‘tastelessness’ has a long history within the working classes, arguing that

‘Everything is saturated with meaning: their clothes, their bodies, their houses, all are assumed to be markers of some ‘deeper’, pathological

form of identity. This identity is taken to be ignorant, brutal and tasteless. As in eugenically-inspired (often retouched) photographs popular at the turn of the Twentieth Century white working-class people's actions and appearance are made to mean: they are made to indicate signs of ignorance, stupidity, tastelessness. An assumed ignorance and immorality is read off from an aesthetic which is constituted as faulty.' (2005: 436)

The media focused on Westbrooks' aesthetic and found it overwhelmingly 'faulty', and her outfit choice for a single day effectively cast her as 'ignorant, stupid and tasteless' forever. UK newspapers including the Guardian, the Daily Mail, the Express and the Economist did not hold back with their brutal comments on Westbrook's appearance, as this piece from the Guardian illustrates

'But, there is one image in the history of Burberry that sticks in the mind, with the same lingering cloy as a half-sucked toffee: a picture of the actress Danniella Westbrook clad top to toe in Burberry check: the hat, the skirt, the scarf, her baby dressed up to match, as if she had gorged herself upon it, rolled about in it like a pig in muck. It looked like the end of the much-heralded Burberry revival: the Burberry check had become the ultimate symbol of nouveau rich naff.' (Barton and Pratley, 2004)

The left-leaning Guardian uses an enflamed language that seems at odds with a liberal newspaper, showing how pervasive and unchallenged hate speech towards the white working classes had become. Westbrook's proximity to the brand created a sullying effect on Burberry, and caused writers to hold her responsible for making it a 'symbol of the nouveau rich (sic) naff.' Four years later, Liz Jones, writing in the Daily Mail shows how the media still dwelt on Westbrook

'The day that former soap star Danniella Westbrook and her daughter stepped out head to toe in Burberry sounded the death knell for the company's credibility.' (Jones, 2008)

Though it's less surprising to see extreme language in the right-wing Daily Mail, nonetheless tying Westbrook to the 'death knell' of a company is excessive, however it was an article in the Daily Express (2011), also part of the UK's right-wing media, that took Westbrook to task not only for her choice of clothes, but for her life choices, effectively returning the text to a description of the poor at the turn of the twentieth century.

'Many will remember the occasion in 2004 when the ex soap actress - then best known for her nose-eroding cocaine addiction - was photographed on the streets with her daughter dressed head-to-toe in the label. We're talking everything from matching skirts and bag down to baby buggy covers. At the time it had become almost a byword for "chav" and Danniella's overdosing of the trademark check exemplified all that had gone wrong with the British brand. Anyone deciding to don its outfits feared for their sartorial credibility.' (Carpenter, 2011)

The corrosive tone of the article effectively turns Westbrook into a caricature of deformity and unthinking excess, but the overall text invites us to tacitly agree with the writer and become a fellow arbiter of what constitutes 'good taste', which Lawler (2005) contends is a long-running argument and that

'...the many expressions of disgust at white working-class existence within the British media and other public forums [cut] across conventional Left / Right distinctions – have largely passed without comment' (2005:

Lawler (2005) also examines what constitutes a ‘common understanding’, which in this case was Westbrook’s degree of ‘tastelessness’, as there is no public sense that she is not tasteless, and consequently we are invited to join in with the criticism, and to accept it without question. Westbrook was, and still is, criticized from multiple sources – the fashion press, news media, celebrity gossip and entertainment magazines, online communities, the financial press, and using Lawler’s (2005) examination of what is ‘respectably sayable’ within a cultural space, we find that even the finance pages use Westbrook as the ‘bad object’, as this article from the Economist (2011) shows

‘By the early 2000s the company’s distinctive camel-coloured check had become the uniform of the “chav”, the stereotypical white working-class delinquent looking for trouble. [When Daniella Westbrook, a soap actress, was photographed with the Burberry check adorning herself, her daughter and her pushchair, the brand’s elite reputation seemed to be lost.] (Economist online, 2011)

Though it’s important for financial analysts to pinpoint any underlying social causes for economic upheaval, the Economist uses language that belittles its targets – the white working classes become ‘delinquents’ and Westbrook is not an actor, but a more diminutive ‘soap actress’ (or as the Daily Mail puts it ‘former soap star’, while the Express opt for ‘ex soap actress’), but who is nonetheless capable of single-handedly depriving Burberry of its elite reputation.

And though it is impossible to ‘buy’ cultural capital, the same commentators also point out that even with financial resources at her disposal, Westbrook still fails to achieve a level of ‘respectability’ - a point Lawler (2005) takes issue with, arguing that since respectability is

‘... coded as an inherent feature of ‘proper’ femininity, working-class women must constantly guard against being dis-respectable, but no

matter how carefully they do this, they are always at risk of being judged as wanting by middle-class observers. And this is a double jeopardy since if working-class women can be rendered disgusting by dis-respectability and excess, they have also been rendered comic or disgusting in their attempts to be respectable' (Lawler, 2005: 387)

Equally, Westbrook has failed at what Skeggs (1997) describes as 'passing' – using skills including making-up and dressing up in order to 'display the desire not to pass as working class.' (1997: 84) Those same skills – when they didn't work were used to vilify Westbrook, as the context then becomes an issue of social mobility. The underlying critique becomes an assumption that Westbrook used Burberry clothing to 'escape' her working class life, however Tyler and Bennett (2010) remind us that this is also likely to end in failure, as the dominant culture weighs in with a 'cautionary narrative' that accompanies the 'celebrity chav', and assumes that the outcome of transgressing class boundaries will be both 'difficult and undesirable' (2010: 389).

In every way, Westbrook became the object on which to attach class rage, frustration and hate, however, what Burberry struggled with is that while any number of anonymous men behaving badly whilst wearing the Nova check could be dismissed, Westbrook was higher profile and could not be ignored so easily. The media storm surrounding her overtook the outrage and moral panic generated by the brand's link to hooliganism, and though Westbrook had not committed a crime, the consequences of her decision-making – dressing herself and her infant head-to-toe in Burberry, were in many ways worse, as they burrowed into the very core of the company's values that claimed to embrace a 'meritocratic ethos' (Burberry Annual Report, 2001- onwards). What is clear from Westbrook's experience is that a resolutely inflexible class distinction was still in place at Burberry, and though she had worked her way from obscurity to become a well-known actor, her lack of cultural capital held her back. Burberry,

even when put on the spot, defended the company's wide appeal, as this interview with Creative Director Christopher Bailey in the Daily Mail (2008) demonstrates

'And while Bailey, talking about his label's chavdom, is keen not to sound elitist - 'I'm proud we had such a democratic appeal'', he has been instrumental in returning to the brand its coolness' (Jones, 2008)

Though it's clear that Westbrook would not have a role in returning Burberry to its 'coolness', her attempt to dress in a brand she perceived as high value in order to stand out is understandable, and as Berlant (2000) argues 'an aesthetically expressed desire to be somebody in a world where the default is being nobody or, worse, being presumptively all wrong' (2000: 3) speaks for the harsh treatment meted out by the press and online communities who presumed her to be 'all wrong', as this post from Matty on SecularCafé.org illustrates

'ah daniella mononostril westbrook. interesting case, a straight up chavvete who "done well enough" to buy the real shit' (SecularCafe.org, 23 January 2011)

Westbrook was indeed an interesting case, as she co-existed as a publically owned celebrity – albeit a 'celebrity chav', and as an authentic working class woman, and this multiplied the quantity of criticism aimed at her. The subtext in Matty's comment carries an assumption that as Westbrook earned higher than average wages, she could afford to buy authentic Burberry clothes, so there was no excuse to look 'cheap'.

Similar responses awaited other working class women who wore Burberry, like this comment from Kelly Owls on Football Forums in response to the Leicestershire-based 'Pub-goers face Burberry ban' story on the 20 August 2004

Kelly Owls (23 August 2004)
'I got a burberry scarf -> £35
I got a pink Von Dutch cap -> £45
I got a blue Von Dutch cap -> £60
I got some gold Nike Shox -> £110

Does this make me a bad person?'

Jagielka (23 August 2004)

'No, it just makes you a tasteless one.'

(FootballForums.net, August 2004)

Kelly's rhetorical question is well argued and assumes a preferred answer, however Jagielka's response ducks the obvious retort - that owning particular fashion brands could make anyone a 'bad' person, but instead uses a default reaction of 'tastelessness', turning it into an archetypal, gendered response.

Partington (1992) argues that a sense of division can be traced back to a period after 1945

'The working class has been perceived as divided in the period after the second World War, between those on 'the margins' (who are thought to reject commodities or 'subvert' their values) and the mainstream (thought to consume passively) For instance (masculinized) sub-cultural 'style' is distinguished from (feminized) mass cultural 'fashion'. While working-class women's activities have been associated with devalued cultural practices, male working-class culture has enjoyed the status of 'subversion' on the grounds that the commodity is either refused, or creatively 'appropriated' – as in bricolage.' (1992: 149)

Hebdige's (1975) argument - that the Mods' oblique criticisms were aimed at the 'passive consumerism' around them, and his description of 'creative appropriation' as a way of subverting meanings given by the dominant culture, supports Partington's (1992) argument about how 'marginal style' is seen as

superior and a form of dress primarily attributed to men.

We see this male-female divide again in this post from 'Legs from Leeds' - a dedicated female consumer eager to share her positive views and experience of Burberry at the online consumer site reviewcentre.com, however she finds herself the focus of criticism, and clashes with a male reviewer.

'By legs from leeds on 1st Sep 2004
User Ratings

Goods purchased and cost	Overcoat £500, duffle £595, watch £250
Quality of service	10/10
Layout of shop	10/10
Value for money	10/10
Overall rating	10/10
Recommended	Yes

Good Points

Burberry is the best

Bad Points

Expensive not many stockists in leeds

General Comments

I love Burberry you can't beat it for style and class when I'm out with my mum and two grandsons and we are all wearing burberry that's a head turner some people snigger but that's usually the clampets that can't afford Burberry I have socks shoes 2 overcoats 2 dufflecoats trousers jeans T-shirts, blouses, belts, hats, scarfs, gloves, sunglasses, 5 bags, purse, 4 keyrings and a watch so I know what im talking about Burberry real class we travel far and wide for ours.' (reviewcentre.com, 1 September 2004)

'Legs from Leeds' is overwhelmingly loyal to the brand, and we can see she has committed significant financial resources to buying clothing and accessories from Burberry. There is a clear sense of pride as she makes an inventory of her

purchases within a public domain, but she also shows a clear understanding that not everyone at a local level understands her choices. A few months after her initial post, a comment from another online reviewer appeared in response to Legs' appraisal.

'Comment by oldfart on 31st Dec 2004

'I have a very nice Burberry trenchcoat which I bought from Burberry's in Regent Street about 15 years ago to replace the one that got pinched while I was having dinner at the House of Commons. Just goes to show that you couldn't trust anyone even then. I'm very fond of that trenchcoat and it's still in excellent condition. I had no idea that Burberry had such a huge following these days. People used to buy their products because they were of very high quality, i think even HMQ used to wear a Burberry headscarf on occasion. It would appear that today people buy Burberry for reasons of fashion, which usually results in the quality of the product coming down. There are so many good quality clothes out there, why bother to drape the entire family from head to foot in Burberry. You are inviting opinions so, to be quite frank, I think it's a bit of a tacky thing to do. You might have a bit of money but you may not have any taste or style.' (reviewcentre.com, December 2004)

'Oldfart' carefully constructs an image of himself as a connoisseur of authenticity by letting us know that he bought his trench coat from the original Burberry store in London's Regent Street; he has dinner in the House of Commons, indicating that he's comfortable in a traditional base of authority, and has personal links within a seat of power; he references 'fashion', distinguishing it, as Partington (1992) argued, as a 'feminized' element of mass culture, and positions it as a lower status pre-occupation. What he makes abundantly clear, however, is that in his judgment Legs displays a sense of tastelessness, and that she has no business 'draping the entire family in Burberry'. 'Oldfart' harks back to a consumer culture of the past, in which identity was defined by 'rank', status,

occupation and gender, and he seems bewildered that Burberry has moved into contemporary consumer culture that places an emphasis on signifying the cultural qualities of goods that reflect the knowledge, tastes, habits and preferences of consumers within an advanced economy. However, where the dominant culture usually triumphs, on this occasion Legs is prepared for him, and re-asserts herself in a robust and adversarial exchange of opinions.

'Comment by legs on 4th Jan 2005

'We are a working class family who happen to love burberry. We are not rich but I don't drink, gamble or smoke. My vice is burberry. I dont want my grandsons to look like most other kids walking round in a pair of tracky bottoms and a football shirt. I have taste and my grandsons have style. We don't wear it as a fashion thing. As you stated in your review you bought a trench coat 15 years ago, I've just bought a black trenchcoat. Fashion lasts 6 months not 15 years.' (reviewcentre.com, January 2005)

Legs clearly feels strongly about the brand - strong enough to compel her to write a review about it, and having posted it, prompted her to re-visit the site and respond to visitor comments. She constructs herself as someone responsible with money - she doesn't 'drink, gamble or smoke' and rejects the female 'spendaholic' stereotype, or someone who is gullible and easily seduced by adverts.

What is implicit in almost all the reviews on the reviewcentre.com bulletin board is a sense of misplacement, particularly when working class consumers are thought to be consuming the 'wrong' things, or consuming them in the 'wrong' way. After his remarks about the House of Commons and 'HMQ', Oldfart is clearly trying to 'outrank' Legs: he sees himself as the intellectual, the person able to make judgments on others, and though clearly annoyed at Legs' lack of cultural capital, he is unable to voice his frustration coherently. Skeggs (2005)

articulates succinctly on his behalf on why he has become so enraged about Burberry being bought by the ‘wrong’ people.

‘Attributing negative value to the working class is a mechanism for attributing value to the middle-class self (such as making oneself tasteful through judging others to be tasteless). So, it is not just a matter of using some aspects of the culture of the working class to enhance one’s value, but also maintaining the position of judgment to attribute value, which assigns the other as immoral, repellent, abject, worthless, disgusting, even disposable.’ (2005: 977)

Within the UK class structure, Legs’ lack of cultural capital would have assigned her as ‘other’ within a dominant and symbolic national level, however Skeggs (1997) concludes that all forms of capital are ‘context specific’, and though ‘Legs from Leeds’ is not part of an elite group in a national context, she is at a local level. Legs carefully documents the price of her Burberry goods in order to differentiate them from fakes; she is critical of the way ‘most other kids’ in her neighbourhood dress, and dismissive of those who are critical of her clothing choices; she is aware that she’s created a look that attracts attention which in turn means she has set herself apart from others in her own habitus. However, despite the expensive purchases, she is unlikely to command much in the way of economic capital, and though she may not possess legitimate forms of cultural capital, she is aware of what is seen as legitimate taste. Bourdieu (1986) argues that taste, an acquired ‘cultural competence,’ is used to legitimise social differences, and that taste functions to make those social distinctions, but Legs shows us how those distinctions are made moment-to-moment, and on a micro level. Skeggs (1997) goes on to argue that

‘The space for contestation over cultural and symbolic forms of capital occurs at local as well as national and global levels. The local is the site where de-legitimacy is resisted yet the ability to counteract the de-legitimation of their own cultural capital at a local level does not mean

that already devalued capital can be capitalized upon. Rather it suggests momentary refusals of powerlessness. To challenge powerlessness does not mean that one automatically shifts into positions of power. It means, straightforwardly, that one is refusing to be powerless or be positioned without power.' (1997: 11)

Legs' refusal to be positioned without power takes the form of her ongoing fight back in her own neighbourhood, and her assertiveness in the face of Oldfarts' belittling comments. However, Legs' fundamental problem is that she has invested in Burberry as a sign of taste, and has bought into a brand image created by the company. What she can't cope with is the fact that the brand doesn't have a fixed meaning – that what she thought clearly signified 'good taste' has been positioned in other ways.

Though Burberry regularly use contradictory images - including the 'hen party' metaphor, in its advertising campaigns, the brand did not thoroughly think through how those campaigns might appeal to working class consumers, however as the company was defended to the hilt by the UK media, Burberry has been relatively unscathed financially by its proximity to 'bad' consumers, and the storm surrounding them proved to be an isolated and a particularly British one.

Conclusions

Burberry's entanglement within a working class demographic was initially through a mail-order catalogue in post-war Britain, which helped the company to reach a massive consumer group who were viewed, and viewed themselves, as being 'respectable'. However, after Burberry CEO Rose Marie Bravo introduced lower-priced items into the collection – a bikini, a bandana, and a baseball cap, we saw how this status changed. Each of these items embodied distinct characteristics that were polar opposites of the sturdy outerwear that the company were famous for. However, they were very attractive not only to a

younger demographic, but to working class consumers.

Because of the change to the product line, Burberry, more than any other company in the luxury sector, presented particularly uneven, and sometimes contradictory brand values, as in the early days of the company's re-branding, and especially between 2000-2004, Burberry's outward-facing communication strategy showcased a series of narratives around the new products that were inconsistent with a brand essence encompassing 'quintessentially British outerwear' (Burberry Annual Report, 2006) with images including the errant hen party guest, the shoplifter's accomplice, and the out-of-control night-clubbing woman. In chapter three, we saw that one of the effects of casting Kate Moss in a lead role as the company underwent a re-brand in the late 1990s started to attract more working class consumers to the brand, and as the campaign in the early years of the twenty first century continued, Moss's working class identity combined with 'staged reality' images and the new product line, attracted not only Burberry's desired consumer – the young, hip shopper, but significantly more working class consumers.

This influx of less well-off customers drove the production of imitation goods, and the spectre of fakes came back to haunt Burberry once again. However these fakes were not merely straightforward copies of Nova check scarves and hats, but specially produced items where the counterfeiters had effectively changed the silhouette to a baggy hooded top and a tracksuit bottom, products that Burberry did not design or produce. The new consumer demographic at Burberry threw up a paradox for the company, and while using luxury brands as a way of 'passing' or boosting cultural capital on a local level is easily understood, this did not apply within 'chav' culture, whose main preoccupation was with quantity.

Burberry attempted to distance itself from ‘chav’ culture by limiting the quantity of Nova check on its products and by shelving production of the baseball caps, however this only served to make those products scarce and therefore highly sought after, creating what May and Sell (2005) describe as a ‘rivalrous’ state. Product scarcity also drove many consumers to websites selling counterfeit clothing and accessories, which had the potential to damage Burberry’s brand value as two key assets – the Burberry Nova check and the Equestrian Knight logo, were commonly used in fakes, and as Moor (2007) points out, since the 1980s, there has been a growing recognition of the ‘brand as asset’ (2007: 91) therefore any disruption to the brand had the potential to directly impact its revenue stream.

Burberry’s history within marginal youth cultures stretches back to the mid-1960s, and has strong connections with Mod culture, a distinctly masculine community, and we saw how this sense of masculinity runs through other subcultures with a connection to Burberry, including football hooligans and Casuals from the 1980s, where the gender divide was still present. And while men used Burberry to stand out, to be respected – even if that was to be feared, women used it as a ‘means of social betterment’ (Partington, 1992: 149). However, white working class women were taken to task for misappropriating Burberry and they became targets for accusations of tastelessness. Even in 2008, negative brand associations still surrounded Burberry, and a sense of ignominy was directed at women, as this invective editorial in the Times (Olins, 2008) shows

‘The clever but naïve idea to print a few affordable Burberry headscarves and bikinis to rid itself of its stuffy image turned into a highly contagious virus.’ (Olins, 2008)

Though the linguistic style of Olins’ piece suggests an enrageement with the brand, it is only women’s wear that has been singled out, and made into a focus

of something unpleasant that could be ‘caught’ in public.

Despite Olins’ editorial, remarkably the brand was largely found not to be at fault, and the UK media continued to turn on customers who were viewed as ‘misusing’ the brand, and they were subsequently used as a cautionary tale to other luxury companies through the spread of ‘hate speech’, particularly in relation to the female ‘celebrity chav’.

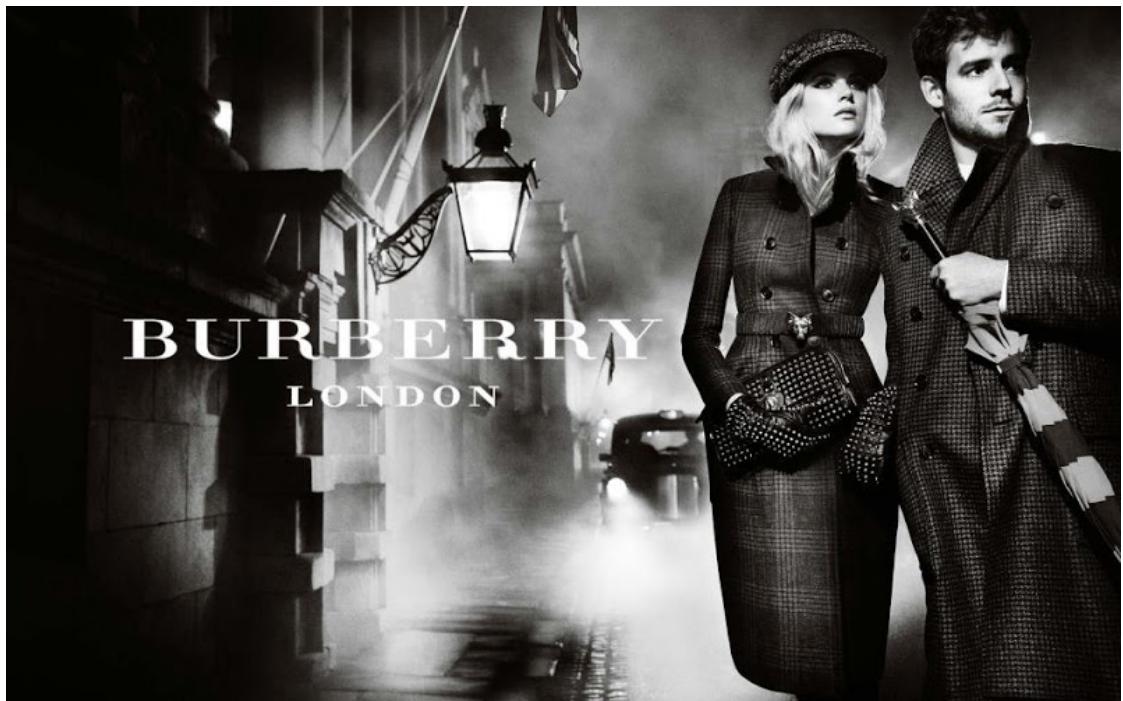
Social media helped some consumers to fight back against a mainstream view of the ‘bad consumer’, however we saw how their conflict, while boosting cultural capital momentarily on a local level, ultimately did not impact the dominant culture’s view on a permanent basis.

Ultimately, this chapter underlines how Rose-Marie Bravo’s obsession with age, not class, underestimated the impact of the lower cost lines and that the legacy of her decision to expand Burberry’s product range to include bikinis and baseball caps led to an extreme divergence in brand perception, and to complications of consumption.

In the next chapter, I look at how Burberry has attempted to manoeuvre itself away from working class culture by inserting ‘heritage’ into its brand personality, using birthright and inheritance as a powerful tool in its economic development.

Chapter seven

Branding Burberry: Heritage, Craft, and the Global Marketplace



*Burberry, Autumn-Winter 2012.
Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives*

In February 2012 Burberry published its Autumn-Winter marketing campaign (see image above) featuring actor Gabriella Wilde and musician Roo Panes. Seven years on from the campaign featuring Kate Moss in a London mews, we see a semi-familiar backdrop behind the two models, comprising a flagstone-clad street, a black cab, and a mist. The aesthetic is conservative, and shows more visible elements of grandeur than the 2005 campaign, including the elegant columns, gaslights, and a Union flag hoisted on its own flagstaff. The clothing and accessories shown in this image include a fine wool and cashmere suiting woven into a Prince of Wales plaid, which dates it back to the nineteenth century; the studded gloves make a visual link to the early motorists' gauntlet; the fox head on the belt clasp signifies the 'rural', albeit a sanitized version with no connections to hunting, and the cast metal handle of the umbrella references a sense of craftsmanship and the handmade. Each element has been carefully chosen to echo Burberry's history as by 2012, and by its own admission,

Burberry had become ‘as much a media content company as a design brand’ (Grieve, 2013). As the 2005 campaign constructed a hybrid image of ‘Britishness’ and class culture, the 2012 promotion built an image of ‘heritage’ Britain using these highly specific visual cues.

In this chapter I’ll examine how Burberry’s CEO Rose Marie Bravo, in partnership with new head of design, Christopher Bailey, started to construct a sense of Britain’s ‘past’ through their ready-to-wear collections, and the way they were presented, that boosted brand value on a global basis. I also look at how Bravo’s successor, Angela Ahrendts, configured a seamless product and service offer, standardised across the world, that fully delivered a globalised vision of Burberry, selling a sense of its long history as a form of ‘heritage’. I will show how economic and political shifts in the UK led the country to formalise what Corner and Harvey (1991) describe as ‘heritage enterprise’, and illustrate how this sense of historic preservation became an invaluable brand asset at Burberry. I’ll also show how the company moved from selling its goods to tourists in souvenir shops, to become a leading exporter in the global marketplace, using British ‘heritage’ as a way of attracting international customers to the brand. In a wider context, I explore the importance of digital technologies and the role they played in reaching new consumers and show how Burberry used social media as a tightly controlled form of marketing that allowed them to place a hybrid version of ‘heritage’ London at its core.

Embodying ‘Heritage’ In-Store

Burberry’s 2012 campaign reflected changes in the British economy that emerged from political and economic shifts dating from the early 1980s. Moor (2007) describes a significant development from this era relating to a wider economic context set up by a Republican government in the US and a Conservative government in the UK, which saw a decline in manufacturing and

a growth in the service sector.

'The disappearance of the manufacturing industry from entire regions led to the reinvention of those areas through forms of service delivery; the growth of the 'the heritage industry' was one area that provided much of the basis for the growth in events and exhibition design and for various kinds of architectural and retail design work.' (Moor 2007: 35)

This shift away from 'making' and the transition into service-led work required a fundamental re-think in some sectors of British industry, including the fashion, textiles and apparel industries. Back in 2000, under CEO Rose-Marie Bravo's control, Burberry's plans to launch a global network of stores were fairly advanced, and in that year the brand opened two important retail venues - a flagship store in London's New Bond Street and their first standalone store in Japan, in Tokyo's prestigious Ginza district. Both sites share a long history of luxury shopping and they became significant elements of Burberry's new corporate identity that placed 'heritage' at its centre.

The Bond Street and Ginza stores gave consumers, financiers, shareholders, competitors, the press, the general public, and its own staff a clear sign that Burberry intended to re-establish its links to the luxury fashion sector, and as Bravo 'pulled the brand out of small tourist shops' (Economist, 2001) the turnaround was astonishing, prompting the Economist (2001) to report that in the space of a year the label 'shunned by all but Asian tourists for its naff plaid-lined raincoats' (Economist, 2001) had been re-born.

That the brand had its own long history added to the legitimacy of inserting 'heritage' into its core values, and combining retail with heritage was a way that Burberry could communicate those values to global markets. Corner and Harvey (1991) examine the transference from manufacturing to service industry in some depth, concluding that merging 'enterprise' with 'heritage' helped to

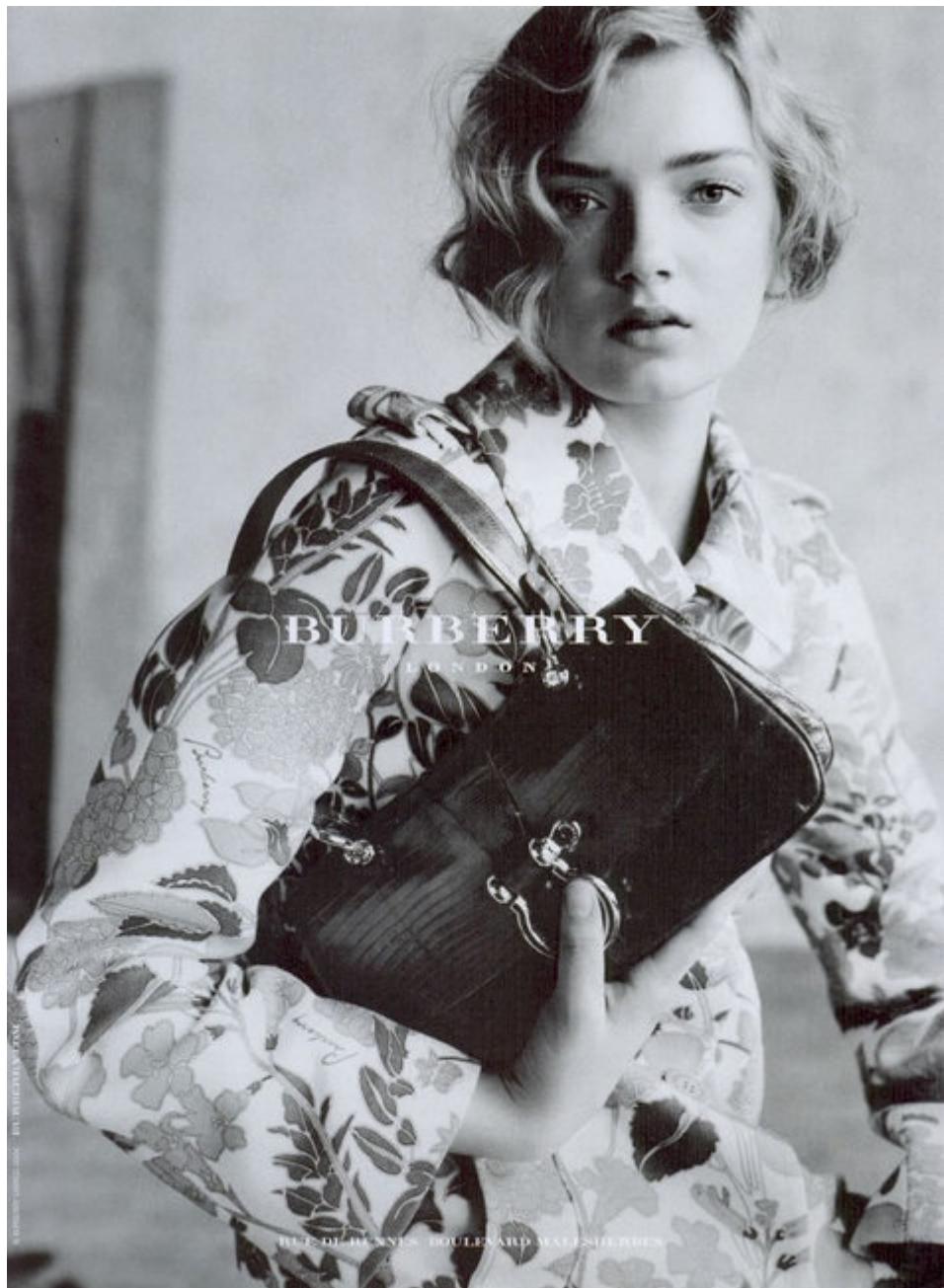
officially mobilize and manage change ‘at the level of national culture and its attitudinal deep structure’ (1991:45) They agree that although both enterprise and heritage played an important political and ideological role before the 1980s, both terms underwent a radical re-organization during the decade and saw them emerge as specifically interconnected, and it was into this framework that Burberry emerged in the early twenty first century.

Bloomsbury Girl

One of the first clear manifestations of a liaison between heritage and retail at Burberry was the Autumn-Winter 2004-05 ready-to-wear collection, designed by Christopher Bailey. Bravo appointed Bailey as the new head of design in 2001, and his first series of collections were considered to be unremarkable renditions of the military/sport theme that Style.com claimed had ‘surfaced on so many other runways’ (Mower, 2002). However in the Autumn-Winter 2004-05 collection, a sense of ‘heritage’ was strongly evident, prompting British Vogue to report that

‘...this was a collection inspired by Virginia Woolf and the other “thinkers” of the interwar period.’ (British Vogue, 2004)

Bailey explained that the collection was “all very English [and] kind of reviewing the era’s romanticism in a modern way.” (British Vogue, 2004) The image of Donaldson (see following page) as ‘Virginia Woolf’ makes an aesthetic link from Burberry to the Bloomsbury Group, an avant garde collective of upper-middle-class artists and writers who formed an intellectual aristocracy that rejected bourgeois conventions of Edwardian life. In the image (see following page) the fabric of the trench coat is a bold floral design printed onto a furnishing fabric, and is reminiscent of the décor at Charleston House, the South Downs country home of Bloomsbury Group co-founders Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant; the alligator handbag is fastened with a strap that resembles a horses bit, which



*Lily Donaldson for Burberry, Autumn-Winter 2004-05.
Image courtesy of styleregistry.com*

in turn alludes to both horse riding and hunting, outdoor pursuits that Buckley (2007) links to a classic element found in ‘Country Life’ magazine, and which in the interwar years was still predominantly an aristocratic pastime. Donaldson’s hair is styled to look like Woolf’s own long, shingled hair, tied back, but not cut short, and the unruly wisps of untied hair reflect Woolf’s own messy hairdo, which was regarded as bohemian in the early 1920s. The 2004-05 marketing campaign was shot in a space that resembled a stripped-back artists’ studio, with lime-washed walls and dusty bare floorboards. The set was carefully dressed with paint-spattered easels, ladders, and wooden stools. Lengths of canvas, string and rope sat next to pots of fat brushes atop tall jardinières, and old cleaning rags were positioned next to jars of turpentine. One male model wore a striped knee-length duster coat, another a white shirt, dark tie and a knitted cardigan; actor and model Hugh Dancy wore a velvet dinner jacket, white shirt and dark cravat, and all the male models had shoulder-length hair. The women were styled in above-the-knee satin evening dresses, paired with strings of long pearls and elbow-length gloves; high-collared trench coats had large-scale brooches pinned at the throat. The overall campaign signified a life of ‘the aesthete’, and as a piece of fashion merchandizing, it proved to be highly alluring to consumers, though as a slice of fashion history its accuracy was questionable.

The Bloomsbury Group lived an appealingly eccentric life, and could be considered ‘worthy of preservation’, but their life as intellectual artists was also an aristocratic one, and though they chose an alternate path that embraced feminism, sexual and political freedom, it was nonetheless a privileged life, and it is this aspect that fits with Burberry’s brand personality. Burberry’s campaign shows an aspect of life that many people from that era would struggle to recognize, as the interwar years in Britain were constrained by a crippling economic uncertainty. Historian David Cannadine (1989) links that uncertainty very firmly to the heritage ‘industry’, and argues that postmodern ‘heritage

consciousness' is broadly related to economic downturn

'Since the 1870's, the British economy has experienced three major downturns, each one known to contemporaries as 'the great depression'; during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, between the end of the first World War and the beginning of the second, and in the long, lean years after 1974.' (1989: 98)

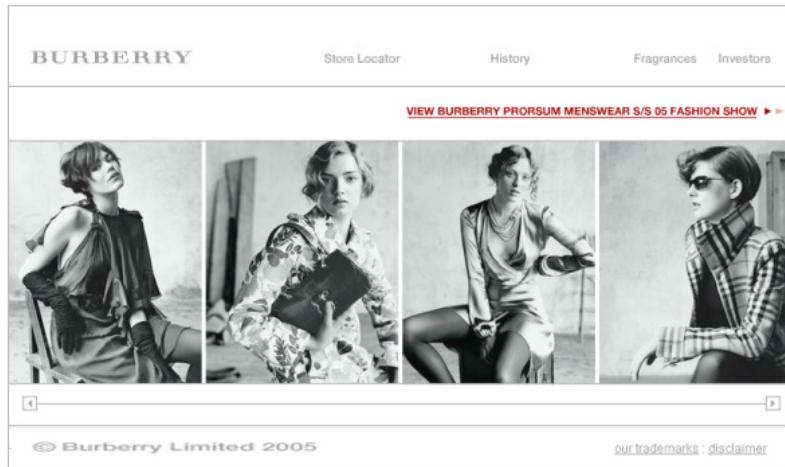
Cannadine (1989) points out that each of these eras was characterised by the formation of national preservation groups, including the beginnings of the National Trust in the late nineteenth century, the Council for the Protection of Rural England during the interwar years, and preservationist campaigns around Mentmore, Calke Abbey and the raising of the Mary Rose, which all occurred in the early 1980s. Cannadine (1989) concludes that this

'...adds up to a recognisable and distinctive public mood, which has twice come and gone, and which is now firmly entrenched in Britain once again: withdrawn, nostalgic, and escapist, disenchanted with the contemporary scene, preferring conservation to development, the country to the town, and the past to the present.' (1989: 99)

Burberry's international customers agreed with Cannadine's observations, and at a time when some sectors of British retail, and specifically fashion retail, were feeling the after-effects of the dot.com collapse in the early years of the twenty first century, business was good in Burberry's global markets, particularly in the US, Europe, and Asia. Bravo revealed to the Guardian her thoughts on why Burberry was a successful export

"There is an admiration [for Burberry] in Asia and America and even Spain," says Bravo. "They like the British lifestyle and what they think it stands for - whether it's reality or not." (Barton and Pratley, 2004)

Bailey, alongside brand consultants Baron & Baron, delivered a vision of Bravo's 'British lifestyle', re-working aspects of England's past to a global market thirsty for a sense of 'tradition' found in long-established luxury goods companies, however this had the potential to render Burberry's products as sentimental, as consumers yearned for a past that may never have existed.



*Burberry, Autumn-Winter 2004-05.
Image courtesy of styleregistry.com*

Burberry was able to spread its 'heritage' narrative to a wider consumer base after expanding its outward-facing communication from just print and billboard campaigns, to the web. The brand started to build its online presence in 2004, and the 2004-05 collection was its first feature, although nothing was available to buy, as Bravo feared the consequences of online retail, telling the Telegraph back in 2000

"The internet is susceptible to the grey market and counterfeiting," she [Bravo] says.' (Mills, 2000)

Bravo did not change her mind during her tenure as CEO, and the role of new technologies and the increasing importance of social media in the retail economy were entirely lacking under Bravo's leadership, however this suspiciousness ended when Angela Ahrendts took over as CEO in 2006, and it

was Ahrendts who grasped the importance of a strong online presence. Though she understood that it was important to site stores in prestigious locations, she realized that traditional bricks and mortar shops were no longer sufficient in a widening global market, and that the way ahead was to develop an online relationship with consumers, however it wasn't until 2006 that online sales became a reality in the US, and 2007 in Europe. Ahrendts is widely credited as the driving force behind Burberry's digital strategy and how it could link to a more lucrative 'heritage' culture, as the Observer (2013) reports

'But her relentless focus on reviving Burberry's heritage to the "millennial" digital generation – which includes selling trench coats with mink collars, alligator epaulettes or studded leather sleeves – has worked wonders. Annual sales have more than doubled since 2007 to £1.9bn, and the share price has doubled since she took over in 2006 to £13.70.' (Neate, 2013)

Ahrendts began to develop Burberry's digital strategy at the outset of her tenure, and though it seems naturalised in contemporary fashion retailing, in 2006 it was a radical departure for a luxury retailer. Many premium retailers argued that online transactions devalued the face-to-face in-store 'experience' as there was no opportunity to see and feel the fabrics, examine the fit, or benefit from the expertise of the sales assistants. Even in 2012, Prada, one of Burberry's primary competitors, told the Harvard Business Review that they would not sell high-end collections online because they were 'concerned about compromising our image by using a channel where secondhand cars and books are sold.' (Cartner-Morley, 2012)

Ahrendts went against the flow of luxury fashion retail, and not only developed a digital platform, but started to target younger consumers through online initiatives in order to develop a new demographic for the brand. CNN (2013)

credits her ability to understand how and where younger customers absorb brand values

'But there's also been her ability to tap into a new generation of digital consumers relying on social media for fashion trends, and increasingly buying online.' (McKenzie, 2013)

However Burberry's journey to a successful online profile took some time and their first digital platform - 'Art of the Trench', didn't appear until 2009, but the path that took them to this point gave the company an opportunity to examine their historic credentials and delve into a potentially lucrative 'heritage' market.

Real English Heritage

One of the first collections Ahrendts oversaw was for Autumn-Winter 2006-07, which was also the year that marked the 150th anniversary of the company. The anniversary gave Ahrendts and the brand the right kind of context in which to celebrate its own heritage, and the ready-to-wear collection was characterised by a look back in time. Style.com reported a specific temporal context and design brief, stating that the inspiration for the collection was the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, and their 'extended sojourn in Paris' (Mower, 2006) while others were more generic impressions of a rural England, including British Vogue who likened the collection to 'all the colours of a walk in the English countryside' (Morton, 2006)

Ahrendts later revealed in an article she wrote for the Harvard Business Review (2013) that from the outset of her appointment at Burberry, she was worried that licensing (which was still out of control despite the efforts of Rose Marie Bravo) threatened to destroy the brand's unique strengths and that her approach was to

‘...centralize design and focus on innovating core heritage products.’
(Ahrendts, 2013)

This move essentially put Bailey in the driving seat alongside Ahrendts, and the two of them worked collaboratively to design and deliver this vision. Ahrendts also told Fortune magazine that in 2006, she'd examined Burberry's competitors and made the decision to 'look backward to identify enduring strengths' concluding that "we're British. They're not. How do we exploit that heritage?" (Leahy, 2012)

Ahrendts' plan to centralize British heritage surfaced through the festivities of 150th anniversary, and gave the British fashion media an opportunity to celebrate the brand, and particularly its creative director, as British Vogue reported

'Christopher Bailey has developed this label while staying faithful to its heritage and very proper British beginnings. [The label captures the essence of the childhood rose-tinted view of England that you never want to lose.]' (Morton, 2006)

Style.com added 'That such a whippersnapper has been able to turn the frumpy old country lady's Burberry into a fashionable thing for the first time in its 150 years is in fact something of a cause for national pride in Britain.' (Mower, 2006)

The Autumn-Winter marketing campaign focused on the 150th anniversary and featured formal eveningwear for men and brocade cocktail dresses for women. The women's wear was accessorized with belted sequinned cardigans, and a cloche-shaped hat, which lent a pre-war glamour to the collection, however the garment highlighted in the British press was a trench coat with 'fox fur cuffs and collar' (Morton, 2006) that attracted only a minimal level of protest when it was shown at Milan Fashion Week, but which nonetheless alluded to fox-hunting.

Bolton (2006) argues that 'few sports seem more English than fox-hunting' (2006: 107) which rendered the garment into English mythology, particularly on a European and North American basis. However, the links to Edward and Mrs Simpson (and their supposed Nazi sympathies) and the use of fox fur did nothing to harm brand value, and Burberry's Profit & Loss sheets showed an increase of £6 million in this financial year (Sawers, 2007).

Burberry successfully developed 'heritage' as a capital-producing element of the brand, and carefully judged the correct balance of 'heritage' as nostalgia, but this took the form of what Appadurai (1996) describes as 'nostalgia without memory' (1996: 30). Burberry understood that it could sell a sense of nostalgia to its increasingly large global market and potentially utilise one of the effects of globalization, what Robins (1991) describes as an increased mobility across frontiers. Robins (1991) argues that this mobility made it ever more difficult to maintain coherent and well-bounded local cultures and places, and Goodrum (2005) concludes that 'in view of this mobility, globalization at the turn of the twenty-first century is often related to a reactionary emergence of local nostalgia' (2005: 37). Goodrum also argues that as a result of the

'...instabilities affiliated to globalization have, in extension, generated feelings of insecurity and vulnerability, and that the folksy look with its signposts to a bygone age, craft production and homespun charm is being actively employed to offset this apparent global rootlessness.'

(2005: 37)

Burberry used this sense of 'rootlessness' to re-imagine a national space – using aristocratic models and bohemian eccentrics, and reconstituted it as a key element of the brand.

The following year, however, spelled an end to Burberry's run of good judgement and for Autumn-Winter 2007-08 Burberry showed a collection titled



BURBERRY
ESTABLISHED 1856

BURBERRY.COM

*Burberry, Autumn-Winter 2007.
Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives*

'The British Medieval Mood' (see image on previous page) A company press release explained that the campaign used only British models and musicians who were sited against a backdrop of 'iconic argyle and Prorsum horse motif wallpaper.' (burberry.com, July 2007) This helped to suggest an Old English context, but one that was brought alive by the addition of hip young models and musicians.



*Equestrian Knight logo
Image courtesy of Burberry.com*

The collection was inspired by the Burberry Prorsum 'Equestrian Knight on a Charger' logo (see image left) and featured what Mower (2007) referred to as 'armour, tunics and jousting regalia'. Yet despite using model-of-the-moment Agyness Deyn for their runway shows and the accompanying advertising campaign, the collection failed to ignite consumer interest. Records at Plunkett

Research (Apparel and Textiles) for 2007 show that the rising profits of previous years flatlined in this financial year, and it looked as if the company's attempt at reconfiguring Burberry's past had misfired as they had delved too far back in history.

More successful was the redesign of the 'Knight on a Charger' logo, which was trademarked in 1901, but updated for the twenty first century. The image resembles a brass rubbing, a hobby popularized in Victorian Britain, whose devotees made copies of monumental brasses celebrating the life of medieval European nobility from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Holistically, the logo neatly captures a sense of all that seems 'respectable' about British history and heritage and hints at elements that are 'worthy' of preservation.

The logo embodies a strong sense of narrative – the noble knight, defender of nation, is the embodiment of a latter-day hero, however its use in the Autumn Winter 2007 collections was a way of describing what Bailey termed ‘chivalry chic’ (Ilari, 2007)

Burberry again tried to capture a successful ‘heritage’ aesthetic the following season, in Spring-Summer 2008, this time spreading their historic influences more widely:

“Our rich Burberry archives were the starting point for this collection, inspired by Burberry’s historic role in aviation, Shackleton’s Antarctic expeditions and the strict military tailored uniforms of the British Sandhurst Military Academy.” (Kratzch, January 2008)

This collection also failed to excite consumers, despite an advertising campaign - ‘The Beat Goes On’, featuring what Alexander (2008) described as an ‘A-list of gilded youth from catwalk superstars to emerging rock n roll aristocracy to snake-hipped musicians from edgy indie bands’, all selected from ‘BoomBox’, a legendary club in London’s Hoxton that closed on 1 January 2008. ‘The Beat Goes On’ proved to be too specialist for international consumers, and shares in the company took a hit, dropping 16% by mid-January 2008 (Finch, 2008)

However later that year, Burberry had re-grouped and delivered their Spring-Summer 2009 ready-to-wear collection, re-aligning their Old English history through a perfectly judged marketing campaign that correctly assessed consumer need for something gentle and stable. The collection was presented at a time of enormous economic upheaval within the Western economy, and at the height of the credit crunch and ‘sub-prime’ loan scandals, consumers were looking for reassurance and dependability in the face of an increasingly globalized marketplace. Burberry, essentially an ‘old’ company carefully

groomed for the contemporary market, satisfied a yearning for some sort of stability, that Goodrum (2005) argues

'In fashion too, a similar trend is evident, with the quest for authenticity, realness and depth assuming crucial importance in a fragmentary, postmodern world of signs.' (2005: 37)

Burberry had begun to appeal to an increasing conservatism within global markets and their 'authenticity' and undisputed British-ness felt real and provided a safe harbour in choppy financial waters.

Burberry's Chic Rural Idyll



*Burberry Prorsum, Spring-Summer 2009.
Image courtesy Burberry.com*

Burberry's Creative Director, Christopher Bailey, intended the Spring-Summer 2009 runway show to resemble a tableau of "little gardening girls [wearing] every kind of outerwear - from their rain hats to their silk dresses." (Jones, 2008) The collection was intended to be "soft, very romantic, something familiar but something new and reflecting our company heritage" (Jones, 2008) and

featured unfinished hems and ‘handmade’ patchwork handbags. British Vogue congratulated Burberry for its elegant restraint, and praised the fact that nothing was ‘too extravagantly polished in these times of economic strife’. (Jones, 2008)

The photo shoot for the marketing campaign (see image on previous page) took place at Petersham Nurseries in Richmond-upon-Thames, which though lacking in instant recognition is nonetheless full of what might be perceived as a romantic version of an English country garden. Designer Antonio Berardi (2008) underlined this sense of gentle rustic beauty when he wrote about the collection in an editorial for British Vogue (June 2008) referring readers to Robert Browning’s poem ‘Home Thoughts from Abroad’, which starts with a memorable line ‘Oh to be in England, now that April’s there’, and he continues the rural theme with

‘Think April showers, English gardens and birdsong and you begin to get the picture.’ (Berardi, June 2008)

The use of Browning’s poem gives an important perspective to international consumers, as the poet talks about an idealized England seen from distant shores, and as Burberry were still showing at Milan Fashion Week at this point, this allowed them to increase the mythology surrounding the aesthetics of English culture in order to develop feelings of deep nostalgia.

The area surrounding Petersham Nursery was also important to the ‘heritage’ narrative, as neighbouring Richmond Park is a National Nature Reserve, and forms part of English Heritage’s national portfolio. The site has a long relationship with the British Monarchy as it was established by Charles I in the seventeenth century; it is one of London’s Royal Parks, and still retains the King’s deer park, which makes it a magnet for international and domestic visitors alike, and further deepens the brand’s entanglement to what British

Vogue describe as a ‘chic rural idyll’ (Barnett, 2008).

Combining the rural with the chic is a long-running and paradoxical motif at Burberry, and it is one the brand returned to with the Spring-Summer 2009 collection. The marketing campaign included British model Lily Donaldson, and musicians Sam Beeton and George Craig, who were used to personify a hip version of ‘rural chic’, and despite the collection hitting all the right ‘heritage’ notes, Burberry were still able to keep a firm grip on specific trademarks including the instantly-recognizable Nova check seen on the hem of Donaldson’s smock dress. Equally, the smock echoes garments produced by Burberry for farmers and agricultural workers in the nineteenth century, while the broderie anglaise of Craig’s shirt alludes to high levels of craft skill and artisanship (although the fabric is mass produced) and is used here to evoke feelings of nostalgia for ‘the past’, and the romantic qualities of the ‘handmade’. Corner and Harvey (1991) argue that the skilled craftsman is often appropriated to serve a very particular role within heritage, where their ‘imposed toil’ is displaced and ‘naturalised as displays of resourcefulness and quiet fortitude’ (1991: 53) and indeed the entire Spring-Summer 2009 campaign references the ‘handmade’ and the ‘home grown’, making connections to sewing, gardening, and eating what we grow.

The setting for the photo shoot fits into what Corner and Harvey (1991) detail as changes in UK visiting preferences from the mid-1980s, which switched from ‘the hall’ (1991: 52) and refocused on to the industrial and rural workplace. Both settings provide a familiar backdrop as we instantly recognise the ‘displays’ of work and labour (even if we have no knowledge of the industry) and the products that dress these sets give us visual clues. Wright (1985) notes ‘the increasing importance of personal ‘clutter’ and household implements’ (1985: 52) to tell a story, so the nursery setting in the Spring-Summer 2009 campaign, styled with terracotta plant pots, truggs, potting benches, and watering cans

gives us a contained version of the rural, but one that is more expansive than a domestic garden, which gives the image a feeling of richness and abundance. However, where the stately home housed collections of paintings, sculptures, rugs, and china, carefully cleaned and maintained over centuries, the workspace was not afforded such care, so dressing an historic place of work took on what Corner and Harvey (1991) describe as an 'exhibition aesthetic', which though an important element, was not always an accurate one.

Initial sales for the Spring Summer 2009 collection were encouraging, however the Wall Street Journal (Rowedder, 2008) reported that Burberry's profit margin had been hit again, this time hitting a six-year low. 'Customer caution' (Rowedder, 2008) was cited as the main factor behind the slump, forcing the brand to again regroup and consider how to move forward. As the worldwide economic meltdown continued, Burberry again chose a more conservative route forward, deciding that in times of crisis it was important to 'go back to the DNA and the roots of what Burberry's heritage is about' (Trend Hunter, 2009) a position agreed by fashion journalist Hilary Alexander (2008) who wrote in the Telegraph

'In times of economic uncertainty, so the fashion legend goes, hemlines supposedly sink faster than share prices. But designers, it seems, also find a sense of security in fashion's great comfort zone - tradition.'

(Alexander, 2008)

The classic trench coat is arguably Burberry's most traditional product, and it became the focus of their new collections. However, despite the underlying 'traditional' aesthetic, which called for very little re-design, this marked a radical departure for the brand, as it was their first major attempt to build a new consumer demographic that was entirely online, and they developed the project in collaboration with Facebook. However, as Burberry preferred what Arvidsson (2006) termed a 'pre-structured' consumer involvement - where the

brand guides the consumer in the desired direction, ‘Art of the Trench’, though ostensibly a social media platform and open-access online gallery, was simply an extension of their marketing programme. The design of the microsite seems to provide an opportunity for consumers to upload their own images of Burberry trench coats, however in reality, the space is tightly controlled by the brand. Burberry’s content guidelines are clear that very few images will be selected:

‘Not all photographs submitted will be published on Art of the Trench. We will use our absolute discretion when selecting photographs for inclusion. Please do not email us asking why your photograph has not been selected. Only a very few photographs are likely to be selected. We hope you will not be disappointed if your photograph does not make it.’ (Terms and Conditions, Art of the Trench)

Burberry’s approach to ‘Art of the Trench’ was to commission high profile photographers to contribute to the pages, and the site resembled a street-style photography blog, an increasingly popular aesthetic methodology dating from the mid-2000s. Scott Schuman, known internationally for his blog ‘The Sartorialist’, was invited to shoot the first set of photographs to appear on the site, and his images gave the overall site an ‘attractive, high quality content’ (Bunz, 2009) but equally they lent it a repetitiveness, as images shot in cities as diverse as London and Shanghai looked very similar to one another.

Burberry were vocal about their partnership with Schuman, and their approach helped in two specific areas: firstly, to extend the brand in precisely the direction they required, and secondly, to create value using behind-the-scenes data mining from a highly engaged audience. Burberry also benefitted from its links to New York-based Shuman, as it allowed them to create a new space between The Sartorialist’s own international following and the Burberry site. Posts onto the Sartorialists’ pages demonstrate this crossover as they use Schuman’s tacit recommendation of the brand to investigate the Burberry trench coats for

themselves, as this post shows

Barbara (9 November 2009)

'The immortal trench coat!!!! I've checked the Burberry website and those pictures are simply amazing. As always:)' (Sartorialist.com)

However, when an anonymous post on his site asks 'were you looking for people wearing burberry trenches or were you carrying some around with you?' (Sartorialist.com, 9 November 2009) they inadvertently reveal how some shots were fabricated specifically for the site. Even in his on-site biography, Schuman describes Burberry's initiative as their 'groundbreaking social media-cum-advertising 'Art of the Trench' project' (The Sartorialist, 2009)

'Art of the Trench', far from being a community-building platform, was simply an extension of the brand in an online marketplace, and there are numerous reports from people who were invited to get involved in the campaign, including Swedish born, New York-based model, stylist and blogger Carolina Engman, aka 'FashionSquad', who reveals that

'Burberry invited me to take part in their Art of the trench project back in September and now I can finally share some of the pictures from the shoot' (FashionSquad, 2013)

Similarly, Chicago socialite, fashion blogger and former model, Candid Candace, was invited to take part in the Art of the Trench photoshoot that coincided with the opening of the Chicago flagship store in 2012. Amy Creyer of chicagostreetstyle.com was assigned for the shoot, and Burberry's invitation made it clear that although the trench coat was the focus, it didn't necessarily need to be the model's own

'The shots aim to capture the personality of the individual wearing the

coat, therefore, if you have your own trench coat we would love to photograph you in this. If not, then we will provide trench coat options for you.' (Candace, 2012)

According to Business Today, Burberry's intention was to capitalize on Facebook's '175 million users' (Grieve, 2013) and the brand started to allocate marketing and public relations spend in order to build a dedicated team. Business Today (Grieve, 2013) also reported the success of the initiative, which not only attracted a high volume of traffic, but also resulted in higher sales.

'In the year following the launch of the Art of the Trench in November 2009, Burberry's Facebook fan base grew to more than one million, the largest fan count in the luxury sector at the time. E-commerce sales grew 50 per cent year-over-year, an increase partially attributed to higher web traffic from the Art of the Trench site and Facebook. The site had 7.5 million views from 150 countries in the first year. Conversion rates from the Art of the Trench click-throughs to the Burberry website were significantly higher than those from other sources. By all metrics, quantitative and qualitative, the campaign was a success.' (Grieve, 2013)

Each strand of the campaign, including the collaboration with The Sartorialist, and the partnership with Facebook, gave a public face to what had been a largely unseen act of purchase, and a demographic described by Lash and Lury (2007) as 'imagined communities' were made real for both Burberry and its consumers. Men's wear blogger 'Cloud 10 by LV' was typical of the demographic Art of the Trench was trying to reach, and he neatly sums up the aspirational qualities of the campaign:

Cloud 10 by LV (12 November 2009)

'My dream is to own the classic tan Burberry trench... I am slowly but surely working towards that goal.' (Sartorialist.com)

Cloud 10 by LV's blogspot tells us that he is a young black student from Ottawa in Canada, and that he works part time for the Mexx fashion chain. He regularly blogs about men's fashion and lifestyle and 'likes' GQ, Kanye West for APC, and Jay-Z. That he also aspires to own a 'classic tan Burberry trench' is an outward sign of the success of the Art of the Trench campaign and its positioning alongside other, cooler, digital initiatives, in what Cova (1997) describes as 'linking', where the value of the product is fed by an exchange value originated by the consumer. So as consumers 'elaborate' the brand through loyalty, esteem indicators, and 'good feelings', brand equity rises, which helped Burberry to 'extract value' (Arvidsson 2006) created by consumers and turn it into profit.

The online initiative was a lot less expensive to operate than a print campaign, and it allowed the brand access to valuable consumer information, however Burberry stopped short of fully engaging its followers, and never allowed consumers to 'talk back' (Lury, 2004) to the brand. Independent brand strategy consultant Brian Phipps argues that the Art of the Trench site

'...does not seem to encourage high levels of user interaction. [Burberry states that it wants customers to be "involved," but the level of involvement seems constrained. As a fan, one's role is mostly to "celebrate" Burberry. Only positive clicks ("I like it") are allowed] (Phipps, 2009)

Although Burberry had gone some way of investing in consumer involvement, Phipps' quote shows that the company's use of brand management as an 'active' process (Arvidsson, 2006) was deeply one-sided.

'Some Aristo' Goes into the Information Age

There was little consumer involvement in Burberry's runway shows at Milan Fashion Week, however the brand used them as a platform to tell stories about English history and company heritage, and following the Spring-Summer 2009 runway show that played with elements of the 'rustic', came this collection (see image below) for Autumn Winter 2009-10, which referenced a more industrial side to British history. Though the T-shirt forms a contemporary element featuring a 'historical' printed portrait and faux jacquard pattern on the hem, the overall silhouette of the collection gave an impression of the Victorian era at the height of its sober approach to men's clothing. But this was not an aristocratic aesthetic of top hat and skirted frock coat, but one associated with the Victorian working classes, signified by a narrow-cut, rough herringbone tweed coat with patch pockets and epaulettes, flat cap, and a plain black shoe. Though this look seems distant from the bucolic abundance of Petersham Nurseries, it shares a sense of deception that Mellor (1991) argues is common in re-staging 'heritage' aesthetics where viewers and visitors use a point of reference in which exploited labour and economic hardship were off-set by a supposedly close-knit community and sense of neighbourliness:



*Burberry, Autumn-Winter 2009-10.
Image courtesy of firstVIEW*

'One might perhaps call this 'nostalgia', but to do so implies quite a strong notion of misrecognition; a judgement that those memories of a lost,

urban working class Gemeinschaft are not merely consolatory, but also counterfeit.' (1991: 100)

The Victorian era referenced in Burberry's Autumn-Winter 2009-10 ready-to-wear collection became part of another idealized past, this time connected to the working classes, where poverty, disease, and crime were rendered invisible, and though this is not uncommon in the fashion sector, the timing of this particular collection was fateful as it coincided with the company's decision to pull out of another UK-based production plant, putting over 500 workers, mainly women, into unemployment. The mood at Burberry was downbeat, and press reportage towards the brand was largely hostile: The Times (Olins, 2009) report on the less flamboyant collection was typical of many:

'There was no complicated explanation from Christopher Bailey after Burberry's show. Clothes, he said, should simply be earnest, truthful and nostalgic. Well, after yesterday's announcement of 540 job losses at the 153 year old company and closure of its sewing facility in Rotherham, south Yorkshire, it wasn't exactly time to be bathing in experimental glory.'

'Sales increase of 12 per cent in the last quarter proved that despite the redundancies, Bailey still knows what he is doing; even if he wasn't quite sure who the man on many of his printed T-shirts actually was ("some aristo" was about as much information as we got) In short, this was a solid, unpretentious collection, mainly in grey.' (Olins, 2009)

Despite the job losses, and the on-going bite of the recession, sales at Burberry continued to rise, and they did so on the back of brand repositioning that placed a distinct, but hybridized sense of 'heritage' at the heart of the company, this time by utilizing the company's birth in the industrial era.

The Autumn-Winter 2009-10 women's wear collection shared a similar aesthetic

to the men's wear show, and was described by British Vogue as a modern take on 'old-fashioned romance' comprising pleated silk chiffon cinched at the waist, thick tights and laced boots, which gave it a 'Victoriana feel' (Jones, 2009) Vogue also noted that this collection was 'another clever turn in the archives [that took] modern nostalgia' (Jones, 2009) as its theme. This seemed like business as usual, however the manner of its launch was entirely new, as this collection saw Burberry further develop and embrace a range of digital technologies to launch their 'Runway to Reality' initiative in September 2009.

The first attempt was aimed solely at

'VIP clients [who] were invited to key flagship stores to watch the runway show live on commanding digital screens. Each was provided with an iPad that could be used to order product direct from the catwalk, for delivery in an unheard-of six weeks.' (Doran, 2014)

'Runway to Reality' started to use Burberry's outbound logistics – processing and delivering an order, as a part of its marketing strategy, and turned it into another element of its value chain. By re-defining this very traditional component of its business, Burberry was able to optimize and co-ordinate what Porter (2004) describes as 'linkages', which also meant that they were able to reduce costs through better procurement technologies. Burberry showed how it could manage those 'linkages', which Porter (2004) argues is a

'...more complex organizational task than managing value activities... given the difficulty of recognising and managing linkages, the ability to do so often yields a sustainable source of competitive advantage.' (2004: 50)

Burberry had refined its 'transactional data' (Lury and Moor, 2010) systems examining consumer behaviour as part of Art of the Trench, so it was in a perfect position to exploit new opportunities for profit at different points in the value chain by 'adding value' to the consumer experience via Runway to Reality,

but also by being able to capture and extract profit for the brand through those same systems.



*Burberry, Autumn-Winter 2010.
Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives*

Ahrendts' drive to use new technologies to manage seemingly disparate brand channels put Burberry on a more confident path, however the design elements remained static, and the company did not deviate from its pattern of using the archive as a central design element, as the Autumn-Winter 2010-11 campaign (see image above) shows. It featured military-style tailoring and aviator jackets for men and women, and Bailey told Style.com

“I was thinking of uniforms and cadet girls—but it all started when I looked at an aviator jacket in the archive.” (Mower, 2010)

Ahrendts had a clear eye for what she considered to be a ‘pure’ brand, and Bailey’s designs (and those of the merchandising team) kept that purity on track.

Ahrendts insistence that a ‘pure’ brand was one that projected a consistent experience across all elements of its business in order to stand out from ‘today’s

cluttered consumer arena' (Burberry Annual Report 2010-11) arguing that

'...sharp definition communicates the point of difference and informs consumer choice, while also conveying authenticity and integrity, which are vitally important to a heritage brand such as Burberry.' (Burberry Annual Report 2010-11: 12)

In line with Ahrendts desire to create a high degree of differentiation, in the last quarter of 2010-11, the group launched 'Burberry World', a website that aimed to provide 'a complete expression of the brand with full e-commerce capability.' (Burberry Annual Report 2010-11: 12)

Burberry World was what Ahrendts described as the million-square foot store, and it offered consumers access to some of the brand's most important features, including 'heritage and archival imagery, behind-the-scenes footage of key events, such as runway shows and photo shoots, philanthropic activity and comprehensive product views and information – the site contains the most complete product assortment available for purchase anywhere' (Burberry Annual Report 2010-12). Arvidsson (2006) argues that the value of particular capital lies in the 'social or symbolic' relations they can mobilize (2006: 125) so where Burberry offered consumers access to an exclusive network of photographers, stylists, models, products and stores that had a genuine pedigree of history, brand value continued to rise.

The site gave consumers a consistent experience across all of its collections, and the brand was able to move away from its slightly ramshackle, local approach where consumers took potluck with customer service and product range. The site also appeared to offer a high level of consumer connectivity, and campaigns including Runway to Reality and Art of the Trench cannily judged how consumers might 'elaborate' the brand. This helped to build a strong relational network not only for fashion consumers, but also within the

technology sector where Burberry attracted a range of awards for its online initiatives, including the ‘Best use of Tech in the Digital Economy’, the People’s Choice Award at the FITC (Future, Innovation, Technology, Creativity) in the ‘Advertisement (Web)’ category, and it was also ‘FWA Winner – Burberry Digital Experience Autumn-Winter 2010’.

By 2011, Burberry’s Annual Report states that they were using digital content as the primary vehicle to engage consumers and to communicate brand identity. The brand also made a commitment to expand the digital team in order to develop ‘rich bodies of consumer-oriented content around any brand activity’ – which meant that still images from their main advertising campaigns were enhanced with video stories, traditional product shots became video clips, and local store openings became global events through live-streamed productions, via the Ahrendts-directed ‘Burberry Retail Theatre’. This included digital innovations

‘...such as virtual trunk shows, which allow runway show viewers to select items for immediate purchase, [and] further immerse consumers in the brand’ (Burberry Annual Report, 2010-11)

The company used single focus data points during Burberry Retail Theatre events to follow what Berry (2011) argues

‘For every explicit action of the user, there are probably 100+ implicit points for usage, whether that is a page visit, a scroll etc.’ (2011: 152)

This allowed the brand to speedily pinpoint consumer favourites, and manage their inventory and stock movements more accurately. But it also signaled to Ahrendts and Bailey that centralizing ‘the archive’ as the key design feature was the way forward, and by enveloping these key aspects of ‘heritage’ in an ambitious programme of leading-edge technical innovation in some sense placed Burberry back to its origin in the nineteenth century, when its founder

created what was then considered a new ‘hi-tech’ fabric. This helped to indicate that the twenty first century brand was effectively mirroring the success of the historic company and carrying on its legacy for innovation.

The level of consumer involvement increased exponentially when Burberry streamed its Spring-Summer 2011 catwalk show live from London Fashion Week into twenty five global flagship stores and allowed shoppers to place orders with an estimated seven week delivery period. The Retail Theatre platforms helped Burberry to maintain a tight grip on its presentational media, using what Lash (2002) describes as an ‘event-like communication’, where fans of the brand come together for a short period of time in the same way as they would for a live runway show. Invitations to these shows created a form of ‘niche envy’ (Turrow, 2006) as Burberry used instant data mining to classify consumers and make offers based on a perception of their ‘worth’ and value to the brand.

Burberry also made use of relational databases, partnering with non-competitor companies including Verizon, Apple, and even co-developing ‘a custom-built Blackberry application’ (Seares, 2010) specifically for its live-stream retail initiative. Media attention on Burberry heightened during this period, but the focus was largely on the digital interface between the brand and its consumers as it moved forward with what was essentially a major change in luxury retail custom and practice. Bailey told the Telegraph (Alexander, 2010)

“So it’s a big deal. It’s changing the whole system of buying, and the whole cycle of production. Basically you can buy every bag that goes down the runway and every coat and all the make-up as well.”
(Alexander, 2010)

Burberry created a surround-sound-and-vision for the collection that corralled ‘the clothes, the music, the energy and the atmosphere’ (Seares, 2010) into an exclusive in-store digital experience, however the ‘real-time’ event wasn’t a fixed

point, and the Telegraph (Alexander, 2010) noted that all the ‘livestream’ in-store content was centralized, edited, personalized and broadcast globally from the Burberry headquarters in London.

By September 2011, Burberry had raised the stakes again with the introduction of ‘Tweet-walk’, a collaboration with Twitter, where backstage images of the Spring-Summer collection were shown to its Twitter followers minutes before the live runway show. The Telegraph’s Digital Media Editor reported that ‘the digital show will enable those at home to see the clothes before fashion’s elite’ (Barnett, 2011) The Tweet-walk project

‘...created an enormous amount of traffic on Burberry’s Twitter page, catapulting both ‘#Burberry’ and ‘Christopher Bailey’ into the social media site’s worldwide ‘Trending’ list.’ (Warburton, 2011)

The ‘Tweet-walk’ helped Burberry to break the brands’ ‘mentions-per-minute’ record (Warburton, 2011) and the backstage images received more than 50,000 views within half an hour of the show. Burberry’s Facebook fans were also treated to a live-stream of the show, and the brand created a link for ‘every one of its eight million fans to stream the show through their own personal profile pages.’ (Barnett, 2011) The invitation to interact with the brand created a feeling of goodwill towards the company, as Facebook fans and Twitter followers were given an elite status, one that was comparable with VIP guests at the live runway show, however Turrow (2006) argues that it also puts pressure on consumers to provide additional personal details in order to achieve ‘better customer’ status.

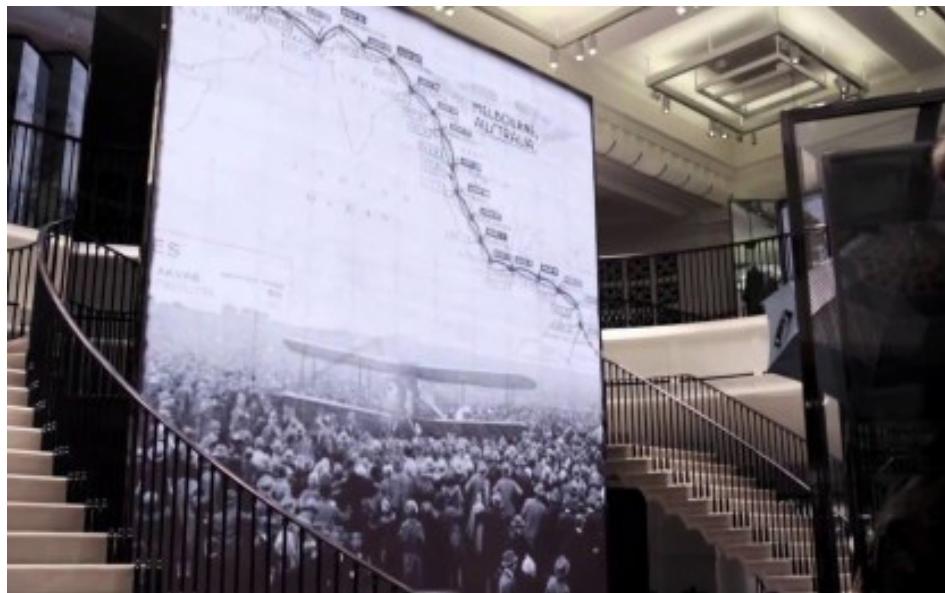
Throughout the Twitter and Facebook initiatives, Burberry continued to deliver what the Telegraph described as ‘detailed handcrafted pieces’ (Barnett, 2011) employing what Armstrong (2011) termed ‘textile craft techniques’ and by 2012,

this was partnered by the new, digitally enhanced flagship store on London's Regent Street - 'Burberry World Live'. The store brought the handcrafted and the digital - two seemingly disparate elements, together, under one roof, and acted as a denouement of Ahrendts' thinking and brand strategizing over the previous six years.

The opening of the flagship store attracted national and international coverage from the architectural press, fashion media, financial news, social channels, brand experts, and creative consultants. Burberry put together a downloadable PDF fact sheet on the building, titled 'Celebrating Heritage through best of British Design & Craftsmanship', containing a history of the Regency building, constructed in 1820. Extracts from the fact sheet show how Burberry brought elements of British heritage together with in-store technology and digital innovation under one roof to seamlessly deliver a vision of their brand values.

'Made in Britain: In restoring Burberry Regent Street, Christopher Bailey worked in partnership with the best of British craftspeople including master carpenters, stonemasons, metal workers, welders, specialist gilders, decorative plasterers, cabinet makers, mill workers, wood carvers and joiners. [The store] houses British-made bespoke lanterns, furniture, plasterwork and floors.' (Burberry Regent Street fact sheet, 2012)

It is clear that the restoration of the Regent Street flagship store wasn't a run-of-the-mill shop fit, but a physical manifestation of their brand personality, where technology was 'woven throughout the period architecture of the building' (Burberry Regent Street fact sheet, 2012) in order to give customers an immersive audio-visual experience within a heritage setting. A 6.9 metre screen (the tallest indoor retail screen in the world) dominates the main floor, showing films including this one (see image on following page) of the MacRobertson air race in 1934, co-sponsored by Burberry.



*Burberry Regent Street interior, 2012.
Image courtesy of YouTube*

Mike Moriarty, a partner at retail consulting firm AT Kearney pointed out on CNBC news that “Burberry has a long story, they are an Asia story and they have figured it out. The Asian consumer loves a very traditional story” (Shin, 2012) and so genuine historic links like the McRobertson air race help to immerse the Asian consumer further into the brand. However, Burberry.com and its counterpart, the flagship store on London’s Regent Street, helped to convey a sense of the brands’ ‘tradition’ not only to the emerging Asian market, but to the global marketplace, and the ‘long story’ was just one of multiple approaches of deepening consumer engagement with the brand, as Bailey told the financial review site afr.com (Cartner-Morley, 2012)

“People arrive at Burberry.com from many different entry points,” said Bailey, “because that’s how the internet works. They might find us through music, for example.” (Cartner-Morley, 2012)

Ahrendts used the fact that ‘60% of the world’s population is under 30’ (Leahy, 2012) to determine that Burberry’s long term aim was to attract the ‘under 30 millennial consumer’, and in an interview with Fortune Magazine (Leahy, 2012) she revealed that at the outset of her tenure at Burberry, she’d brought

in research consultants who produced figures showing that in growing global markets this was also ‘where the high net worth customers are’ (Leahy, 2012) and that Burberry’s future hinged on this market. By using new technology to present ‘archive’ images and footage, alongside promotional films for musicians and singers signed to Burberry Acoustic (which were also available on YouTube and iTunes) Burberry signaled to its global consumer fan-base that as a luxury British brand with a strong sense of its own history, it was also a hip one. And as many consumers had a purely online relationship with the brand, Burberry’s social media platforms Art of the Trench, Runway to Reality and Burberry Acoustic were used as a way of ensnaring this ‘digitally savvy’ (Smith, 2013) demographic, offering distinct entry points to ensure there was plenty to choose from.

Burberry’s social feed reflected consumer fascination with the ‘heritage’ elements of the brand, but also its strong ties to Britain, for example on Instagram

‘A 158-year old company with a distinctly British attitude’

‘From the mill to the workshop discover the craftsmanship of the Burberry heritage scarf’

Google+

‘Crafting the Burberry heritage trench coat – from the iconic check lining to the hand stitched collar’

‘Woven in Scotland – discover the unique craftsmanship of the Burberry heritage scarf’

Pinterest

‘Made in England – rolling hills behind the Burberry mill in Keighley, where cotton gabardine is woven’

‘The label of the Burberry heritage trench coat features the Burberry

Knight motif – a winning entry from a design competition circa 1901'

The text refers to the handmade and the bespoke, and heavily underlines the specialist roles played by British craftspeople. Revisiting Corner and Harvey's (1991) assertion that the skilled craftsman is often appropriated to serve a very particular role within heritage, we clearly see that Burberry's text is intended to emphasize an aspect of rare and valuable skilled craftsmanship.

Ahrendts' aim of 'nabbing those digital natives' (Leahy, 2012) went to the heart of the organization, as she built an employee base that could communicate with a millennial audience through digital and social media.

"That's their mother tongue," she says of young people. Today, 70% of Burberry employees are under 30, and 40 nationalities are represented in her London office alone.' (Leahy, 2012)

Ahrendts business model closely follows Ollins' (1978) call for a more 'total' approach to corporate communications - one that is concerned with external and internal perceptions of the corporation, and one that can bring about behavioral change, something that would have been unimaginable under Bravo's control just a few years earlier.

By the time the Autumn-Winter 2012-13 campaign was shot, the brand was following a clear aesthetic pattern, embodied in their choice of models, photographer, clothes and accessories. The venue for the 2012-13 campaign was the old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, and the Burberry press office reported that it was their largest production shoot to date, and was approached 'on a cinematic scale'. The press release stated that the brand had created a series of 'story telling' videos which aimed to give context to the clothing collection for the first time, and actor Gabriella Wilde and musician Roo Panes (who was signed to Burberry Acoustic) were assigned to front the promotion as a 'romantic couple'.



*Behind the scenes at Burberry's campaign shoot, Autumn-Winter 2012-13.
Image courtesy of the Daily Mail*

Burberry commissioned a series of six short films – ‘London Mist’, ‘The Encounter’, ‘Greenwich by Night’, ‘The Icons’, ‘London Streets’ and ‘Midnight Rain’, and each one-minute film was accompanied by a soundtrack written by Panes and released onto Burberry’s YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+ and Pinterest pages, and was simultaneously available to buy on iTunes. A special gallery was created on the Burberry site that allowed customers to buy directly from the promotional films using a special app, and there was also a link to the Burberry Acoustic pages. The films helped Burberry to conjure a strong sense of ‘old London’, and the use of the ‘romantic couple’ as models helped to make a connection between the ‘heritage’ brand and younger consumers. Posts by subscribers on Burberry’s YouTube site describe how the films make them feel about Panes and Wilde - “nah i love this one better than cara and eddie, cause gabriella and roo version seems so mysterious and elegant and stunning and intense at the same time” (krn strong, August 2013) while other posts concentrate on Panes’ ineffable qualities of ‘looking hot’ (Danielle Flakes, September 2012) and his ability to model and write songs “So the dude who’s modeling is also singing the song. Wow, I’m so jealous.” XD’ (Peter Cho, October 2012) However, Alex Mora and Charlie Lefty sum up what Burberry must have hoped to achieve from their investment

“I don’t know if I’m in love with the clothes or the people or the music or the british style or... Oh! Wait! I’m in love with Burberry!!” <3 :’ (Alex Mora, YouTube: August 2012)

“Good Music + British Style + Cool People = Burberry.” (Charlie Lefty, YouTube: July 2012)

Burberry’s end-of-year profits for 2011-12 reflected a rise of almost 25% to £265.4 million ‘resulting from growth in every single product category and

global region' (Milligan, 2012) and after the success of initiatives including the Tweet Walk from 2011-12, it is unsurprising that they invested so heavily in this campaign, where pre-tax profits for 2012-13 showed an increase of £52 million (Burberry Annual Report, 2012-13) demonstrating how well each element of this campaign had been judged by Burberry.

Marketing Magazine (Clark, 2012) concentrated on the digital and creative aspects of Burberry's Autumn-Winter 2012 campaign, and in an interview with Bailey he described how the campaign

‘...’celebrates our brand and London through imagery, film, music, weather and our iconic outerwear in a very British way” (Clark, 2012)

Marketing Magazine praised the interactivity of the campaign, reporting that Burberry had significantly boosted its digital profile by allowing consumers to buy from the collection ‘ahead of traditional drop dates’. (Clark, 2012) But the campaign was more than just a chance of receiving an early delivery, as Burberry had utilized what scientific data analysts WaveMetrix referred to as the ‘people talking about this’ metric, and successfully converted hundreds and thousands of ‘likes’ on its social networking pages, into sales.

We can see from the YouTube comments how Burberry customers had stated to weave their own stories into the brand (for example, by imagining the relationship between Panes and Wilde, and comparing them to the previous incumbents – actor Eddie Redmayne and model Cara Delevingne) encouraged by the images the company used in their outward-facing communications. The mix of British models, actors and musicians, combined with souvenir images of London that ‘stood in’ for Britain led WaveMetrix to report an increase in consumer association between Burberry and ‘British heritage’.

‘The London photographs spread Burberry’s British heritage: 42%

of comments on the London photographs associate Burberry with Britishness, saying it “embodies British style” for example.’ (Bulman, 2012)



*Burberry's Instagram pages featuring model Cara Delevingne, 2012
Image courtesy of Instagram.com*

This strip of images (see above) from Burberry's Instagram pages in September 2012 shows how the company creates a strong sense of narrative, history, and inclusivity via its user interface.

'British model @CaraDelevingne at the #LiveAt121 event in the Burberry Regent Street store tonight' (131,148 likes; 197 comments)

'The golden #Burberry balloons – sighted over Trafalgar Square #London this afternoon (21,492 likes; 155 comments)

'The #Burberry Blaze Bag in degradé duchess satin backstage at the S/S 2013 show #LFW' (19,153 likes; 390 comments)

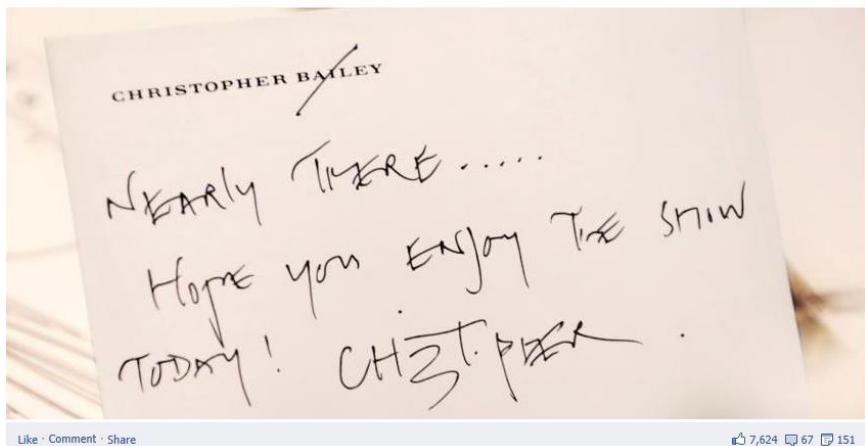
'The #Burberrygifts swoop over Tower Bridge as they continue their festive #London journey' (23,255 likes, 193 comments)

The text is concise and the sequence of the images is very specific, starting with a shot of Cara Delevingne, who receives the most ‘likes’. The Burberry social team makes use of the hashtag to promote the party at the Regent Street store, where Delevingne, a globally recognized model, will be making an appearance later that day, and this event drove site traffic upwards again as followers were eager to see her. Delevingne is positioned next to an image of Trafalgar Square, and the social team uses an ongoing ‘travelogue’ narrative of the Burberry gifts/balloons as a device to link the brand back to an historic and easily recognized London landmark. A close up of the ‘degradé duchess satin’ purse from the new collection is sandwiched between the image of Trafalgar Square and Tower Bridge, and this helps to cement the relationship between the apparently disparate elements of Burberry, heritage Britain, the 20-year old Delevingne, and London Fashion Week.

WaveMetrix (2012) reports that the photo posts contributed to an increase in traffic on Burberry’s social media sites (where posts to Google+, Pinterest, Twitter and Facebook are almost identical) ‘as they are posted almost every day and receive a high number of likes and comments.’ (Bulman, 2012) According to WaveMetrix, conversion from ‘likes’ into sales and revenue can be a major stumbling block for many luxury brands, however Burberry, who in September 2012 (when the Instagram sequence appeared) had an international fan base of over eight million across its social media platforms, had no trouble in encouraging their followers to engage with specific messages and follow through to make a purchase.

By 2013, Burberry deepened its links to the past through the use a nineteenth century ‘virtual’ calling card on Facebook. The handwritten note (see image on following page) invited followers to watch the live runway show, and appeared to be from Christopher Bailey himself.

A handwritten note to Burberry Facebook fans from Christopher Bailey - Watch the show live on the Burberry Facebook page today, 4pm London time



Burberry Facebook page, 2013.
Image courtesy of Facebook.com

'A handwritten note to Burberry Facebook fans from Christopher Bailey 'Watch the show live on the Burberry Facebook page today, 4pm London time' 'Nearly there....Hope you enjoy the show today! Christopher' (18 February 2013)

The calling card was historically used as a way for the middle-classes to enter the elite social circle of the British aristocracy, but it also served as mechanism to keep out 'social aspirants who could be held at a distance until they could be properly screened.' (Hoppe, 2014) Nonetheless, in 2013, Burberry used the calling card as a sign of etiquette, which helped to feed a notion of exclusivity (despite Burberry's massive Facebook following) and further emphasized the connection between 'heritage' Britain and Burberry.

Also in February 2013, an image of a brass nameplate digitally personalized in response to followers who re-tweeted one of its images appeared on Burberry's Twitter site. The 'Piece of the Runway' image (see following page) captured Burberry's heritage aesthetic, whilst still appealing to premium fashion consumers; it acted as a reward for engaging with the content, helped to create a personal attachment with the brand, and it's also likely that recipients shared



'A Piece of the Runway' on Twitter
Image courtesy of econsultancy.com

the new images amongst their friends.

The digitized 'brass' nameplate created by Burberry's social team alludes to the handmade and historic nature of engraving, and to long-term product identification that could survive the wear and tear of continued use. The image (see below) is from Burberry's

'Smart Personalization' sales strategy, where for a limited time VIP customers were able to have their name engraved into a real metal coat tag or bag plate. The Twitter 'Piece of the Runway' drive ran concurrently alongside the 'Smart Personalization' sales campaign, and was an attempt to attract younger



'Smart Personalization' in-store engraving
Image courtesy of econsultancy.com

consumers to not only connect with the brand, but to make a purchase. The digitized image was exciting for Twitter followers that were featured in the promotion, as it bestowed a 'preferred customer' status, however the 'gift' from Burberry helps the brand to achieve what Mauss (1950) describes as making

and re-making social relationships, which he argues has a relational purpose, making the recipient feel compelled to give something back as they feel ‘bound’ to the brand.

The pace of Burberry’s digital and in-store marketing took off towards the end of 2013, and their off-line and online activities became increasingly blurred when the company’s ‘festive van’ was again seen on the streets of London. The festive van first appeared in 2012 as one element of their Christmas marketing scheme, when its sole job was to circulate around its London stores and other ‘iconic London locations’ (Baker, 2012) and updates on the van’s journey were posted onto Burberry’s social media platforms including Instagram and Twitter. However in 2013, the brand stepped up its campaign, and invited customers to participate in the ‘Burberry With Love’ social networking campaign, which gave those who signed up free entry to a prize draw that saw the

‘Burberry Festive Van turn up to the winners homes and deliver their selected product.’ (Identica Chronicles, 2013)

In the images (see following page) we see the custom-built ‘vintage’ van emblazoned with company livery and a specialist roof rack carrying gift-wrapped Burberry products. The goods on display are easily seen from the street, and these deliveries – which are fundamentally a routine ‘outbound logistic’, again become a form of marketing, as images of the van were circulated to millions of fans via Burberry’s social feed. Both images use high profile, instantly recognizable sites, including St Paul’s cathedral and Tower Bridge, and share similar characteristics to the Instagram strip from 2012.

The images of the festive van summon an ‘ideal type’ model of a Christmas spent in London, and indeed the range of images used in the ‘Burberry with Love’ campaign included a perfectly snow-covered Regent Street, rosy-cheeked



burberry

St Paul's Cathedral

1w



31113 likes

burberry On the 13th day of December, see the festive van continue its journey across London delivering #BurberryGifts

[view all 147 comments](#)



*Burberry 'festive' van, December 2013.
Images courtesy of Facebook*

children dressed in tiny Burberry trench coats carrying branded gift boxes festooned with ribbon, and an elegant couple battling against a turbulent wind shielding under a Burberry check umbrella, all of which offered the consumer something sociable, inviting, but ultimately deeply nostalgic and conservative.

Conclusions

This chapter shows how Burberry learned how to add value to the brand by loading products and marketing materials with a symbolic sense of ‘heritage’, and though we see the company falter on occasion, they eventually found their way and now stick very firmly to a winning formula where the ‘archive’ has been centralized as a design direction and changes to the mainstream collection are minimal. Burberry has made ‘heritage’ central to its brand personality and used it to steer a clear course to profitability.

Both CEOs – Rose Marie Bravo and Angela Ahrendts, used the term ‘heritage’ in highly distinct ways: Bravo used important geographical sites, including London’s Bond Street and Tokyo’s Ginza district, and mined their connections to a long and illustrious history of luxury retail to achieve a sense of ‘heritage’ for the emerging brand. Ahrendts used ‘heritage’ as a way of creating a ‘pure brand’, and as a consequence of this desire, the wording ‘Luxury British heritage brand Burberry’ is now used in every element of its outward-facing communication including press statements, annual reports, and messages on its social feed, and we see how this tightly controlled use of words helps Burberry to prescribe its meaning in advance, while delivering the consistency that Ahrendts aimed for.

The full effect of embodying ‘heritage’ into its brand personality came under Ahrendts’ leadership, starting in 2006 when Burberry began to develop a digital

strategy, as this gave them the opportunity to access a huge global market in which they could develop a plausible ‘heritage’ narrative. Ahrendts’ decision to merge new technologies with aspects of Burberry’s history and other more generic elements of England’s past, accurately judged consumer need for reassurance and stability in a shrinking global economy.

This chapter shows how Ahrendts’ business model closely resembled Olins’ (1978) description of the ‘new trading communities’ that were still in their formative stages during the late 1970s, and the retail landscape that Burberry looked out onto in the mid-2000s mirrored a similarly new era, as the company understood that many consumers, and particularly the under-30s, enjoyed a purely online relationship with the brand, and it became one of the few luxury brands that communicated with its consumers using digital initiatives and social media platforms. Burberry was highly conscious of the social networking platforms emerging in the mid-2000s, and under Ahrendts guidance the brand was already looking at potential collaborations to further immerse the consumer in to the brand. And though Burberry’s first online initiative - Art of the Trench, in partnership with Facebook, wasn’t launched until 2009, it’s important to note that this was still one year before the advent of Instagram.

This chapter highlights Burberry’s role in harnessing new technology to capture market share, and that they are considered to be one of ‘the world’s most digitally competent luxury brands’ (Seidler, 2013) however they are disinclined to fully engage with social media platforms including Facebook, Google+, Pinterest, and Twitter and never allow consumers to ‘talk back’ to the brand. On Twitter (home of the Tweetwalk in 2011) for example, the brand does not respond to other Twitter users through their feed, as their tweets are essentially pre-planned marketing messages. Similarly on Pinterest, Moth (2013) argues that because ‘every single pin was either uploaded by Burberry or links to its ecommerce store’ it makes Burberry look as if it ‘shies away from actively

engaging with its followers', however Moth (2013), in common with many brand consultants, argues that this adds to their allure 'as it remains aloof and exclusive rather than being friendly and accessible.' (Moth, 2013)

Burberry uses a plethora of in-house microsites including Art of the Trench, Runway to Reality, and Burberry Acoustic as a way of enticing a wide range of consumers to the brand, providing what Henrion and Parkin (1967) describe as 'many points of contact with various groups of people' (1967: 7) but one that has been finessed into a single brand channel, and is able to withstand consumer scrutiny.

Though Burberry remain distant from its own workforce, they nonetheless fall back on to an aesthetic that refers directly to the labour process, and some of the products to emerge under Ahrendts tenure include the faux hand-stitched broderie anglaise fabrics and rustic smocks from the Spring Summer 2009 collection, and the metal castings and 'traditional' tweeds in the Autumn Winter 2012 collection, all of which allude to 'the handmade', and effectively turn the products into signs of a classic and comforting heritage narrative. Lash and Urry (1994) argue that in a post-Fordist era, the design process has displaced the labour process and contributes the lions share of overall profitability, and this chapter shows that Burberry actively combine the two elements and produce products that are, aesthetically at least, highly connected with the skilled production of 'the past'. The products are also indicative of handmade couture garments, helping to boost company revenue through this profitable connection as they correspondingly command a higher price in the global marketplace.

Similarly, the new flagship store on London's Regent Street played an important role in underlining Burberry's links to the handmade, and where the 2009 and 2012 ready-to-wear collections capitalized on the faux-craftsmanship alluded

to in the fabrics, weaves, and prints, the authentic craftsmanship within the flagship store gave the brand ample opportunity to refer consumers to the value of ‘heritage’ via the skilled artisan, which was embodied in the fine plasterwork, bespoke furniture, and custom-made stone masonry, and these very specific qualities, and corresponding images, are replicated on their social networking sites.

Another key motivation for Burberry to strengthen its connections with England, and specifically with particular aspects of English history and company history, was to strengthen its appeal within a global market. Wave Metrix showed us that Burberry’s international fans respond well to easily recognized London landmarks, and when seen in proximity to Burberry products, consumers connect the brand with ‘British-ness’ and feel it to be an embodiment of ‘British style’. Retail consultant Moriarty (Shin, 2012) tells us that within the emerging and lucrative Asian market, consumers of luxury goods love a ‘traditional’ story, and Burberry has become an acknowledged expert at tying brand image to tradition. Though it can be such a slippery term, Burberry indicate ‘tradition’ through a narrow selection of images that includes Tower Bridge, Trafalgar Square, the river Thames, and Big Ben, monuments that have no connection to the company but which signify ‘souvenir’ London and are recognized the world over.

‘Heritage’ can be seen as a force for good, yet in many ways it is a battle over private property, and a way of covering up all manner of social, economic and cultural ills. Burberry has cleverly used gaps in company information to present an image of the brand that irons out many of the unpalatable elements of globalized production and retail, and have successfully used the ‘past’ to stabilize its future.

Ultimately, Burberry has attempted to position itself as the leading consumer-centred luxury fashion brand, but found that it was on the horns of another dilemma - how could it use the 'open hand' of social media as a way of enticing consumers, whilst exercising an 'iron fist' of brand protection? Burberry, scared of repeating its call to working class consumers, uses a 'sinking into the background' approach to multi-media that includes recommendation and prediction through data mining, which serves a dual purpose of screening 'preferred' customers, whilst building brand loyalty for customers with a high net worth.

Chapter eight Conclusions

Burberry's long life in fashion and apparel manufacturing and retail has seen it come through some of the biggest changes in UK consumer culture, however its biggest challenge was its transformation from a plain commodity to global brand where, using Lash and Lury's (2007) terms, Burberry was transformed from manufactured object to 'cultural product'.

Burberry's lifespan - which stretches from the industrial revolution to the information age, reflects those radical changes, and the company underwent a change that Lash and Lury (2007) describe as 'identity to difference': they argue that in the intervening sixty years after the publication of Horkheimer and Adorno's seminal text, 'Dialectic of Enlightenment' - where the assumption was that cultural products, once made, 'would circulate as commodities, as identical objects' (2007: 4), whose movement would contribute to capital accumulation, everything changed.

'[In global culture industry], products no longer circulate as identical objects, already fixed, static and discrete, determined by the intentions of their producers. Instead, cultural identities spin out of control of their makers; in their circulation they move and change through transposition and translation, transformation and transmogrification. In this culture of circulation [cultural entities take on a dynamic of their own; in this movement, value is added].' (2007: 4-5)

Burberry can be seen as an archetype of the construction of difference, and it has a history that moves from functionality, for example the trench coat as a garment to keep out the rain, through to cultural product: a trench coat worn by Kate Moss is highly distinct from a 'serviceable' garment, as it has been

re-framed using ‘multiple and sometimes divergent layers of activity’ (Lury, 2004: 16) – of whiteness, of class, of out-of-control behavior in a UK context, and as a symbol of a global style icon in an international context. I argue that Burberry, more than any other luxury fashion brand, has spun out of the control of its makers and has become highly contested in its difference, perhaps most famously in context to class hierarchy, but also its geographic location where the company trades on and profits by its ‘British-ness’ yet retains only a tiny percentage of its production within the UK: its ‘production of locality’ (Lash and Lury, 2007) emerges through its marketing campaigns, and its online and offline brand channels. Ultimately, the Burberry brand acts as a ‘medium’ (Lury, 2004) within which ideas about design, class, heritage, and labour are immersed and which then re-appear within the brand’s public interface.

Labour

This thesis opens in 2007, during one of Burberry’s most exposed moments in the company’s history, as labour relations between the brand and employees at its Treorchy production plant is at breaking point. The stakes are high on both sides of the dispute – the workforce may lose their jobs, and the town may lose one of its last remaining manufacturing bases, potentially damaging an already fragile local economy. The subsequent closure was deeply shocking not just for the workforce, but for many residents of the town itself, and in this case, the ‘brand’ can be seen as a mark of shame, stigmatizing Treorchy after the withdrawal of industry.

The testimony of women I interviewed show how the space they once thought so familiar had become a space in which they are unable to map their own positions, in what C Wright Mills (1959) described as ‘the misery of vague uneasiness’, and this once-thriving industrial, social, and cultural centre has been fragmented. Similarly, the loss of the centre – the industrial heart of the

town, has left Treorchy as what Jameson (1991) describes as ‘decentred’, leaving its inhabitants with a feeling of uncertainty, which Back (2012) argues that, as a result of a neo liberal consciousness, is turned into personal failure, divorced from any collective cause or remedy. The closure impacted on employees’ chances of finding another source of employment, and their considerable skills were lost in the increasingly casualised local employment market.

We see Burberry in a rare moment of self-doubt – what they’d planned as a routine cost-cutting exercise has attracted international media attention, which grew exponentially over the course of the closure, and the protests orchestrated by the local GMB union were able to unnerve the company as the anti-closure campaign involved not just employees, but Burberry’s customers. The transitory partnership between the consumer and the producer successfully opened a debate about the ‘value’ of Burberry’s luxury goods, which, as the company trades on and profits by its ‘Made in Britain’ status, led Cadwaldr (2012) to describe Burberry’s actions as ‘audacious’ given that the majority of its production takes place overseas.

The mass of national and international media coverage is contrasted by the tiny, three hundred-strong Treorchy workforce, and Blyton and Jenkins’ (2012) study of the closure at Burberry’s Treorchy plant highlights how this cohesive but socially isolated workforce was confronted by ‘the world out there’ (2012: 25), which took the form of a wide-ranging and long-running press coverage of the fight to keep the plant open. As Lury (2004) argues, although the brand

‘...contributes to the processes of identity formation by consumers [the tendency to emphasize the relationship between identity and consumer behavior eclipses another crucial relationship – with those employed to produce the goods we consume]. In short, the interface of the brand is

revealing of some relationships, but it keeps others very well hidden.' (Pavitt, 2000b: 175, cited in Lury, 2004: 50)

The relationship between Burberry and its employees at the Treorchy plant is exposed in both Blyton and Jenkins' (2012) and my own study (Weston, 2009), showing how media attention effectively prised the lid off employees' work lives and exposed the inner workings of the luxury brands' production methods. This included elements that Burberry had not publicly revealed, such as wage levels and profit margins on individual products - a breach of brand transparency that negatively impacted its brand identity and reputation. Though Lash and Urry (1994) argue that the labour process has become less important than the design process in company profitability, we can see from consumer involvement in the anti-closure campaign that key elements of production, including where products are made and by whom, became an important issue to luxury goods customers, but only on a temporary basis. In this instance, consumer boycott of Burberry was short-lived, however Moor (2007) argues that this is largely as a result of a lack of political intervention, and not simply consumer apathy:

'There are, in any case, reasons to be cautious about a situation in which ethical behaviour becomes a matter of market exchange between private individuals and companies, rather than a matter for national governments or international institutions and agreements. Apart from the fact that this is precisely the route that neo-liberal governments would like to see taken (for it makes ethical behaviour a matter of individual 'freedom' and avoids too many awkward confrontations between government and big business) it also means that ethical practices will be limited in scope and uneven in distribution.' (2007: 147)

The large-scale structural inequalities between parent company and workforce combined to create an unequal powerbase, and it is hardly surprising that the Treorchy workers felt overawed by Burberry's strength as a 'big business'.

However Blyton and Jenkins (2012) make important claims about the Treorchy workforces' dutiful nature, and certainly at the outset of the protest campaign one of the GMB's biggest stumbling blocks was to challenge the employees' 'quiescent' (2012: 26) nature towards its management, and to underline that the phrase 'if you're with Burberry, you're right for life' had ceased to apply. However, by the time the plant closed, Blyton and Jenkins show that the Treorchy workforce did not attribute blame to 'nameless market forces' (2012: 26) but held the company entirely responsible for failing its workforce and the town itself. In this case, the rise of the brand

'...heightened this hierarchical division of labour (although to see it as a binary divide undoubtedly overstates the simplicity of the hierarchy) with design-intensive producers located at the top of the hierarchy and many of those actually involved in manufacturing the products or delivering the service at the bottom.' (Lury, 2004: 36-37)

Was there simply insufficient information given to employees about the restructuring going on at Burberry? Or did the tall hierarchical structure obscure the major changes happening at the top of the company? Certainly, the women I interviewed were absolutely confounded as to why a profit-making plant would be closed down completely, and they applied what Blyton and Jenkins (2012) describe as a 'moral critique' against corporate greed, and successfully resisted the 'market-led rationale that they should be cast aside as no longer of productive use while their employer continued to be profitable' (2012: 36).

The fundamental reason for Burberry to close the Treorchy plant was to move production from Wales to China in order to increase overall profit for the company, however Burberry's departure marked a substantial loss of British production capacity within the fashion and apparel sector. This was a major cause of concern for employees and their families, but also to customers and

indeed to political representatives from the area, who were fearful of further job losses in an already depressed labour market, hence the attendance of Chris Bryant, MP for Rhondda, and Welsh Assembly Member Leighton Andrews at the reunion party in 2008. In Burberry's case, where it produced its clothing - its place of origin, was both straightforward and problematic: as a brand asset, origin can provide what Lury (2004) argues is a guarantee of quality, which helps to secure the trust of consumers, however Lury also argues that it limits a company's ability to move production 'to take advantage of lower labour costs outside [national territory]' (2004: 54). Though Burberry does not deliberately place its origin within the interface of the brand (as straightforwardly as Lury argues Swatch does), the company nonetheless successfully produce a sense of location through its tagline 'A 159 year old global brand with a distinctive British attitude', which implies the use of British labour. And certainly, its British origins are important to Burberry - we saw in chapter three how they lobbied against the EU ruling in 2004 and vigorously protected its 'Made in Britain' status, despite producing only a small percentage of its clothing, accessories and apparel in the UK.

Lash and Lury (2007) suggest that the 'global flow' of brands is one reason that makes the 'production of locality – as a structure of feeling, a property of social life and an ideology of situated community – increasingly difficult, but not impossible' (2007: 150), and certainly Burberry have made the most of its 'situated community', which now resides online, free and clear from its labour force.

As the Treorchy workers became momentarily visible as a UK-based labour force, they were replaced by an unknown and UK-distant workforce, a group who fall into

'...Castell's second category, so-called generic (or commodity) labour. This labour is easily substitutable and disposable, is institutionalized

in organizationally sanctioned scripts, and co-exists in circuits with machines and unskilled labour from around the world (Hochschild, 1983; Gabriel, 1995; Rizter, 1993, cited in Lury, 2004: 36)

What becomes clear is that the Chinese workforce who took on the production for Burberry, were positioned within the market hierarchy as a marginalized group, unseen and unheard within the global market.

In chapter two, we see that the strained labour relations in 2006-07 had a historical precedent dating back to the First World War, where Burberry were challenged by the ruling Government over their rough tactics towards their employees, but refused to enter into any kind of arbitration. This high-risk strategy risked valuable military contracts issued by the War Office, which at the time formed a sizable share of company income, and Burberry's hard line stance against its employees enraged both Parliament and the unions. Burberry had only been viewed as a viable supplier of military uniform for a short number of years – since the Boer War in the late nineteenth century, and did not have a monopoly on production, yet it rested on its reputation as a supplier of quality goods and provided a guarantee of consistency to its buyers and sellers through its trademarked products. In this context, we start to see Burberry as a relative newcomer, competing against military and legal outfitter Thresher & Glenny ('fitting the Lords and Gentry since 1696'), who had a long and distinguished history of tailoring officers' uniforms. Also occupying the same marketplace was Burberry's close-in-age competitor Aquascutum (established just five years before Burberry) and all three companies vied against each other to supply uniforms to military officers. Yet despite its Jonny-come-lately status, Burberry showed supreme confidence in its trademarked products, and skilfully created a differentiation between the company and its rivals through the insertion of a military 'celebrity', Lord Kitchener. While Thresher & Glenny and Aquascutum relied on their expertise as tailors – placing the workforce at the centre of the company, even at this stage in its history, Burberry's use of Lord Kitchener can

be seen as more than a mark of identity, but as a ‘cultural text’ (Coombs, 1998: 89, cited in Moor, 2005: 110), in this case a decorated war hero and member of the gentry. Moor (2005) also argues that celebrity names have significant economic value, so, as Burberry looked as if it were risking an important revenue stream by alienating its workforce, it combated this by offering up an important celebrity icon with strong ties to the war.

Though the 1916 struggle between Burberry and its locked-out workforce was newsworthy, reports omitted to mention that the dispute was entirely between the company and its male workers, and the women who worked at Burberry remained, to a large extent, invisible. However, this situation changed in 1917, and we begin to see gender inequality in action at Burberry when seamstress Alice Attwood and her female colleagues were singled out by MP James O’Grady, when he drew attention to the firm for employing women ‘in place of skilled men at piece rates much less than those paid in fair houses’ (Hansard 1803-2005), and he criticized the women for not only taking valuable work away from men, but for working at home in order to boost income, and for this they were censured for contravening the Factory Act.

Nearly one hundred years later, during the 2006-07 Treorchy dispute, the female workforce became visible again, but this time their visibility was to a significantly larger audience through global media coverage. However, the protest campaigns in 1916 and 2006 show a lack of variance from Burberry towards its own workforce, particularly its female employees, and in both temporal contexts ‘fairness’ and equality were highly class-specific. Skeggs (1997) argues that this ‘does not mean the women would experience inequality any differently; rather, it would make it more difficult for them to identify and challenge the basis of the inequality which they experience’ (1997: 6), which, as Burberry’s female employees were involved in what was regarded as unskilled labour, it was essentially business as usual for these working class

women. However, the 2006 campaign contributed an important element relating to brand transparency, and consumer scrutiny of women's labour essentially 'outed' Burberry as a tough employer, if only briefly. Lury (2004) contextualizes Burberry's response to its workforce as an adoption of 'codes of conduct that seem to be much more to do with protecting corporate reputations and attracting customers and better recruits than they are to do with pay and conditions of workers' (Royle, 2000: 9 cited in Lury, 2004: 162).

Despite the brands' heavy reliance on British workmanship, a labour hierarchy is clearly evident as we saw a repeat of the lockouts in early twentieth century when Burberry used private security guards to circle the Treorchy plant during the Notice of Closure, which physically blocked the path of its own workers. It is inexplicable, then, that Burberry continues to use images of its workforce within its marketing campaigns, but as we saw in chapter five, these are only in the form of historic, nostalgic 'heritage' images.

Heritage

Despite experiencing two potentially damaging incidents exposing a hostile management style towards its production employees – one via a ruling government during the First World War, and a second through national and international media coverage of the Treorchy closure during the winter of 2006-07, Burberry features its labour force in their online marketing and within its network of stores, but only in the form of an idealized history. The brand's use of images of workers from a bygone era stand in for its actual workforce, and they help consumers to focus on elements of traditional expertise and craftsmanship within a contemporary retail context; at its Regent Street flagship store, within its social media feed and throughout its e-commerce site, the company intertwine images of aproned men at cutting tables and looms alongside short films featuring, for example, cutters and tailors from the 1950s

(see image below, a still from Burberry's YouTube channel), which not only reinforces a gendered approach to production, but also underlines the brands' valuable 'heritage' elements, an invaluable source of brand equity.



*Still from 'Craftsmanship: Burberry Tailoring' YouTube, March 2012.
Courtesy of YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_phxLpmf3QY*

How did Burberry arrive at the decision to centralize 'heritage' into its corporate personality? We know from chapter five that one of CEO Angela Ahrendt's commands was to look back into Burberry's history and 'exploit that heritage' (Leahy, 2012), but another route, chosen by Rose Marie Bravo, emerged as a consequence of the company re-brand in 1997. Moor's (2007) description of a decline in UK and US manufacturing in the late 1980s, and a corresponding growth of the service industry would have given Burberry the necessary framework for a company re-brand, as areas including the heritage sector took on an increasingly important role within the British economy. The company re-brand was immensely valuable to Burberry, and it gave them an opportunity to create a hip version of 'heritage' England for the export market, and both post-rebrand CEOs, Bravo and Ahrendts, used a cool international eye to create a version of 'old England' that delivered premium-price elements of tradition and

expertise to consumers in a global marketplace.

Similarly, the move from manufacturing to the service industry gave Burberry a chance to create a media content company that was used as a vehicle to tell their story, and which eventually became a central element of Ahrendts' vision of a 'pure brand'. The creation of an online identity and social media platforms that embraced 'heritage', alongside cutting edge technologies helped the brand to significantly increase sales amongst a younger demographic, and their visible consumption of the brand, for example on Art of the Trench – an exclusively online brand channel, actively contributed to Burberry's meaning and value creation amongst this group. The re-brand also helped Burberry to move from being manufactured object to what Lash and Lury (2007) describe as a 'medium', that is

'...a means of communication, a communications technology, or a (distributed) surface in which other cultural products [can be communicated].' (2007: 43)

So, for example, artists on the Burberry Acoustic platform are filmed for a global audience and re-presented on a double-height screen in the Regent Street flagship store (see image right).

The backdrop gives strong visual cues to the brands' heritage and their history in another century, and by re-inserting the artists into the store and online, the images and clips work to create a connection between hip young British



*Burberry's Regent Street flagship store, 2012.
Image courtesy of Burberry.com*

musicians playing live, and the skill of the British craftsman whose labour is evident in the store, and both elements act as an interface to communicate key values about musicianship and craftsmanship.

Burberry has successfully identified that ‘points of access to the brand have now come to include not simply the point of purchase and associated advertising and promotion, but also ‘special’ events’ (Lury, 2004: 42), and they surpass many other fashion retailers, especially those in the luxury fashion sector, in devising and delivering special events for its customers through a range of programmes including Burberry Acoustic, Art of the Trench, Runway to Reality and via ‘virtual’ trunk shows. In each of these areas Burberry has a chance to embed strong links to its ‘heritage’, and arguably its ‘customers are here explicitly adopted as sales people and as marketing tools’ (Lury, 2004: 43) in order to spread the heritage word.

Although Burberry embraces the digital, they remain close to heritage as bricks and mortar, which between 2000 and 2012 was embodied by its Bond Street store, but is currently exemplified in the refurbished flagship store on London’s Regent Street (part of Nash’s ‘Regency Curve’), which uses and self-promotes aspects of ‘authentic’ craftsmanship – the stonemason, the wood carver etc., through its online platforms, that narrate the building’s rehabilitation to its former glory in 1820. We saw how the brand uses Burberry Acoustic and its London flagship store as a way of disseminating its ‘heritage’ narrative, however as Lash and Lury (2007) argue, the store on Regent Street

‘...isn’t a store at all: it is ‘an experience’. In other words, the physical environment is the setting for immersion in a highly mediated brand experience; very concretely, it is the installation of sensation.’ (2007: 9)

Burberry has developed a strong template for its shop-fit rollout in order to

develop ‘consumer sensation’, and the design of its stores can be understood as both ultra-modern, with a gleaming and branded edifice (see image below) combined with a homogenized interior aesthetic comprising identical neutral-coloured soft furnishings and furniture, and the same hi-tech immersive multi-media content – including the Burberry ‘rainstorm’ and RFID-fitted tags and mirrors as the London flagship.



Burberry's new flagship store in Shanghai, 2014
Image courtesy of altaviawatch.com

Wherever Burberry opens a new store, the brand continues to use its connections to ‘heritage’ London and to the British craftsman, as this press release about a store in Shanghai makes clear:

‘Inspired by 121 Regent Street, the brand’s global flagship, Burberry Kerry Centre brings its London flagship experience to life in the heart of Shanghai. Incorporating British craftsmanship and materials, the space reflects the architectural design concept developed by Chief Creative Officer, Christopher Bailey. The flagship brings the brand’s digital world to life in a physical space, where customers can experience every facet of the brand from events, to music, to heritage, while housing the fullest breadth of Burberry collections in Asia.’ (Burberry Press Office, 2014)

Burberry Shanghai opened in 2014, and though it may be ‘inspired’ by 121

Regent Street, it shares none of the Regency building's architectural details, however a pattern emerges in Burberry's approach to its global stores, as in chapter three, we saw the same claim about one of its LA stores which was described as 'a smaller version of the London flagship on

Bond Street' (Herman-Cohen, 2001). At the time the LA store opened in 2001, Burberry's UK market had been sidelined as insignificant, yet Britain's heritage was still considered a valuable brand asset, and this aspect continued to be fed into Burberry's profile.



*Inside the Shanghai flagship store, 2014.
Image courtesy of pursuitist.com*

Burberry followed other dedicated retail stores that 'function as marketing devices' (Lury, 2004: 40) by providing a space in which consumers could be immersed within new technologies - including the Burberry rainstorm, and what Creative Review described as a 'digitally enhanced exhibition space on the first floor, showing vintage Burberry clothing not for sale' (Williams, 2012). It could be argued that the Burberry showroom had become a laboratory where consumer behavior was closely monitored, but in an online environment, the computer 'back-end' as Lash and Lury (2007: 192) describe it, was used to scrutinise consumer actions, and its activities were even more intense. Where once customers had peered into Burberry's original plate glass windows in its London store, in the digital age marketing was 'no longer a passive activity, driven by the manufacturer, it was increasingly about the consumer as a pivotal resource.' (Lury, 2004: 23) Burberry's data mining, now conducted through the twenty first century equivalent of a plate glass window - a tablet screen or smart phone, showed that as the brand positioned 'heritage' elements (for example,

images of Trafalgar Square, St Paul's Cathedral, or Tower Bridge) adjacent to its own products and experiences, its global approval rating, or 'people-talking-about-this' metric, improved immeasurably.

Burberry has successfully capitalised on what Robins (1991) describes as a powerful effect of globalization - that is, a growing mobility across national frontiers that makes it difficult to maintain coherent and well-bounded local cultures. Burberry has carefully judged which elements of 'heritage London' to include within the brand, and during the global economic crisis in the mid-2000s, this indicated a return to the 'archive' as a design direction. This manifested itself in a range of products and experiences including Art of the Trench, a mass-produced Broderie Anglaise fabric, 'cast' metal umbrella handles and a collection of belt clasps, a return to the nineteenth century 'farmers' smock, and the Burberry 'gift van' – a bespoke faux-vintage delivery vehicle seen on the London streets at Christmas. In chapter five, we saw how Cannadine (1989) described how economic downturn often proved to be a strong link to heritage consciousness, and Burberry has not only weathered a difficult financial storm, but has successfully navigated a passage that embraced 'the past' alongside a range of exciting digital initiatives, successfully embedding a sense of stability for global customers both online and off-line.

British-ness

The development of 'heritage' products and brand channels helped Burberry to create links to a very particular sense of British-ness, one that Linda Colley describes as contradictory, characterized as it is as an 'asymmetrical, composite state full of different but inchoate allegiances' (1999). But Burberry has also been identified as what Goodrum (2005) describes as an 'iconic British organization', one that has become a

'...byword for 'authentic' British style [that has] built up a portrait of the

nation in which [it] is free to dictate and define who and what belongs there,' (2005: 18)

And certainly, we've seen how Burberry has attempted to define who belongs at the company by embracing aristocratic stateliness as an important selling point. However Burberry's construction of British-ness can be distilled in to three key figures - the aristocrat, the military man, and the adventurer, and throughout its history the company has carefully woven these characters into a vision of conservative Britain through its national and international advertisements. Indeed many advertisements developed for the New York and Paris markets dating back to the first decade of the twentieth century show a wide streak of conservatism and an overt lack of 'conspicuousness', making the hunting, fishing, anti-fashion 'country gent' Burberry's archetypal character in the early years of the twentieth century.

This conservatism rolled forwards through the British military officer, who took over the central role in Burberry's advertisements during the first and second World Wars, however in post-war Britain the company turned its attention towards the British Monarchy, firstly by positioning the company in close proximity to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in the early 1950s, and subsequently in the form of Lord Lichfield, the Queen's cousin, who became Burberry's in-house photographer in the early 1970s. Lichfield's tenure marked a deeper conservatism within Burberry that saw the company move away from the experimental images shot at the Hayward Gallery in the late 1960s, and gravitate again towards images of the British aristocracy at their country homes, often with Lichfield himself in the shot (see image on following page).



Burberrys

London and Paris



**Stroll round to East 57th Street
and enjoy a breath of English country air.**

In England, it's impossible to imagine a weekend without Burberrys. True, some people do somehow manage to struggle through Saturday and Sunday without the benefit of a Burberry weathercoat, or unattired in fitting manner in jacket, skirt or trouser. But one feels they must have a trumpery time.

On the other side of the coin, observe Lord Lichfield and friends enjoying a Sunday constitutional.

The good news, as far as New York's concerned, is that these inestimable accompaniments to civilised weekending now have a home of their own. Floor after floor of The Burberry Look (punctuated here and there by one or two other British stalwarts like the famous Scotch House, Church's

shoes and Herbert Johnson hats) tempt the eye and oblige the limb. It's enough to make the most fanatical Corporate Man think longingly of wet leaves and wood smoke.

If you have a taste for relaxation and an appreciation of style, amble over to our country place on East 57th. Browse, peruse and (abetted by our assiduous but unpushing staff) generally walk around.

We don't say it'll bring the colour back into the cheek, but it could evoke a considerable sparkle in the eye.

**9 East 57th Street.
The home from home of
the Burberry Look.**

Vintage Ad Service
Security Blank

9 East 57th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022 Tel: (212) 371 5010.

*Burberry New York, 1978
Image courtesy of vintageadservice.com*

During this era, and in the absence of a recognizable logo, Burberry used its Royal Warrants alongside images that referred to ‘old’ England, like the one above, to develop a relationship between consumer and company, and a strong part of that relationship was bound up in what Moor describes as ‘national and imperial themes [incorporated into brand identities]’ (2007: 115) Moor argues that branded goods and packaging ‘played an active part in the circulation of popular national and imperial consciousness, bringing national or imperial imagery and concerns into the most mundane forms of consumption’ (2007: 115), and at Burberry this meant that it used branded goods – the trench coat, the Nova check cape, alongside images including a stately home and private parkland in order to create a feeling of enduring exclusivity, privilege and wealth.

Similarly, as chapter three showed, the brand’s use of titled women as models helped to confirm its links to the British aristocracy, and this practice was widespread and on-going: in Lichfield’s era Burberry used Lady Anne Curzon, in Bravo’s time it was Stella Tennant, daughter of the Hon Tessa Tennant and granddaughter of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, and during Ahrendt’s tenure the task fell to Gabriella Wilde, who is a descendant of the Anstruther-Gough-Calthorpe Baronetcy. And as chapter five showed, Burberry’s ‘re-imagined’ links to the elite Bloomsbury Group in its 2004-05 collections, and to the Duke and Duchess of Windsor for Autumn-Winter 2006 deepened the brand’s connection – real or not, to Britain’s illustrious past. However, as other companies followed British brand consultant Wally Olins advice, dating from the late 1970s, to ‘consider shedding the national connotations of their brands’ (Moor, 2007: 115) in order to compete internationally, Burberry continued to develop its British-ness as a key element of its brand equity. Olins’ second warning, also written in 1978, against companies ‘tearing up and throwing away their roots’ in order to move towards a more homogenous global identity was heeded by Burberry, and this remained their standard business model until Angela Ahrendts took over in 2006, when it was to change completely as she

actively sought the smoothness of a global brand – the same service, the same product lines, every time, in every store.

Before Ahrendts' changes, however, another element of British-ness became highly visible at Burberry, as after the company re-brand in 1997, ethnicity, in terms of white British-ness, reared its head. This was rendered through a choice of models that included Kate Moss and Stella Tennant, who each provided a paradigm of British-ness, but who are nonetheless polar opposites – socially, culturally, and in terms of class. In the US, these aspects of the brand became a key selling point as they were used to summon a cool, fun-loving characteristic, and an aristocratic eccentricity. Conversely, in the UK, the inclusion of Moss caused the brand to veer towards a white, working-class consumer demographic, who, in Goodrum's (2005) terms, have been defined as not belonging to the brand. In this case, 'ethnicity' through whiteness created a class-based contradiction, which at Burberry can be understood as both white working class and the white aristocrat, and while Lawler (2005) describes how the white working classes are seen as 'lacking' in moral values, equally this can be applied to the Ferry brothers, Isaac and Otis, as their 'lawlessness' indicates an authentic lack of moral values. Despite this class struggle, Bravo's intervention proved to be important in terms of distilling key elements of British-ness through her choice of models, venues and products in order to satisfy large and underpenetrated markets in China and the US, consumers that Bravo had identified as being interested in 'the British lifestyle'.

The selection of British actors Hugh Dancy and Ioan Gruffudd to front the 'Burberry Brit' and 'Burberry London' fragrance campaigns indicated a different approach to disseminating the brand's British-ness. Each actor had instant crossover appeal in US and UK markets, as both were well known to audiences via their respective roles in television mini-series 'Daniel Deronda' and 'Hornblower', roles which in many ways mimicked Burberry's century-old

characters – the aristocrat and the heroic adventurer. Both Gruffudd and Dancy, though identifiably British, had relatively high profile international acting careers, which helped to boost the connection between Burberry and its British roots, however their inclusion wasn't as straightforward as Burberry would have liked, as Moor (2005) argues,

‘... the names and likenesses of celebrities are also very often part of a society’s cultural heritage, visual and material objects that ‘resonate with meanings that exceed the intentions or the interests of those they identify or resemble. For precisely these reasons, however, celebrity names, images and other associated signs also have significant potential economic value.’” (Coombes, 1998: 89 cited in Moor, 2005: 110)

Conversely, as chapter two shows, the link to Gruffudd was not totally advantageous to Burberry as he defended the Welsh workforce during their protest campaign and, at the request of the GMB, he publicly withdrew his services as a model. On this occasion, Gruffudd's celebrity name and significant economic value flowed away from the brand, and at stake was the loss of



a high percentage of British-based production, which had the potential to weaken Burberry's claims to British authenticity.

One element that could not be claimed as inauthentic was Burberry's use of a British fictional character and, whether intentionally or not, the brand used elements of comedy in its

*Burberry's 'Sherlock', New York Times, 1970.
Image courtesy of Burberry Archive*

two configurations of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's character, Sherlock Holmes (see previous page and below).

Burberry's use of Britain's literary heritage helped the company to make two important connections to elements of British-ness, firstly to the British upper classes and social elite, and secondly to an ironic and dry sense of humour, embodied by both the 1970s Sherlock (as he descends from a rooftop helipad, that his character pre-dates by some one hundred years); similarly, model and socialite Delevingne, who is well known for her anti-model rubber-faced posturing on Instagram, uses her sunglasses as a mock Meerschaum pipe. However, as chapter three shows, in two campaigns fronted by Kate Moss, the 'Pearly King & Queen' campaign from 2003 and the infamous 'shoplifting' scene from 2001, which respectively helped to underline the brand's links to



*Cara Delevingne as 'Sherlock', 2012.
Image courtesy of Twitter.com*

an old and 'cheery' East End tradition, and to the recognizably British 'Carry On' cinematic genre, in the UK the campaigns again took the brand back into a British white working class context.

As chapter five shows, Burberry fought back by centralising an unmistakably strong icon of British-ness – the London 'souvenir' landmark, and as its digital

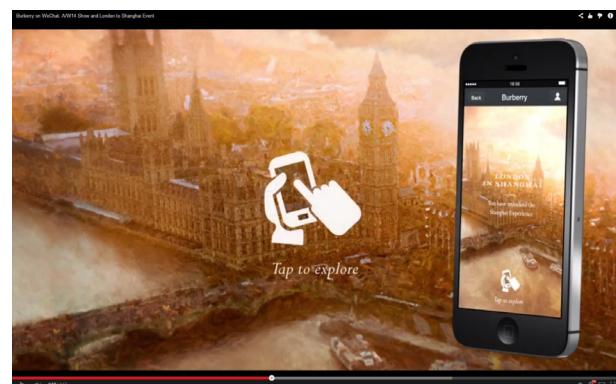
presence expanded, Burberry's use of London images grew exponentially, many of which had no connection to the brand, but which included St Paul's cathedral, the Houses of Parliament, Trafalgar Square, and Tower Bridge.

Images like the ones above are used liberally on Burberry's Twitter, Instagram, Google+, Facebook, and WeChat pages, and in many instances, London is conflated with Britain. Burberry understood that instant recognition by global consumers helped the brand to confirm its British-ness, however it could be argued that Burberry's global image is constructed around what Buckley (2007), writing about English design from the point of view of the radical 'DIA Quarterly Journal' in 1929 described as an 'everlasting reproduction of century-old designs' (2007: 10).

The distillation of both Bravo and

Ahrendts' clear vision of British-ness

contributes to what Arvidsson (2009) describes as 'accounting' for intangible values, and in its post-rebrand state, Burberry revealed itself as a master of 'valuing' a multitude of British constituents.



*Burberry's WeChat collaboration, 2014.
image (top) courtesy of jingdaily.com;
(above) courtesy of news.yahoo.com*

Consumption

As chapter two shows, Burberry's starting point was essentially as a fancy goods store with no fixed prices, however over a period of one hundred and fifty years, the British producer and retailer moved into an era dominated by what Lury describes as a 'global marketing revolution' (2004: 22). Lury (2004) shows how marketing took on an active role involving 'a reorganization of processes of what Callon calls 'product qualification and requalification, [which] puts more and more emphasis on differentiation.' (2004: 23) The statistical devices used to measure product classification and differentiation increasingly showed that the market had moved beyond price, and that

'Marketers found ways to show that products are not adequately defined by their functional properties alone. Instead, qualification trials demonstrated that the product could not be limited to its physical characteristics – that is, they demonstrated that a product's existence extends beyond being a discrete good.' (Lury, 2004: 24)

At Burberry, that impacted on one of its central products – the trench coat, as throughout its history it had been primarily described by its functional properties alone, coping as it did with 'drenching or continuous rain', while embodying qualities that made the product 'naturally ventilating – airtight – cool on warm days'. As a consequence, Lury argues that 'attributes that had previously been held constant (apparently fixed properties) were now made variable' (2004: 23), leading to a state that she describes as the 'intensively differentiated, distributed product.' (2004: 23)

In the 1960s, Burberry briefly showed how it could differentiate itself from other manufacturers and retailers of outdoor apparel via the photoshoot at the Hayward Gallery, but it quickly relinquished its position as a forward-thinking company and lapsed back into its role as a 'seller' - what Levitt (1960)

describes as someone pre-occupied with the need to exchange goods for cash; Burberry was not a 'marketeer' who attempted to satisfy the 'needs of the consumer by means of a product and the whole cluster of things associated with creating, delivering and finally consuming it' (Levitt, 1960 cited in Lury, 2004: 22), and right up to the mid-1990s, Burberry showed that it was unable to manage the 'multi-dimensional aspects of the products - above all, brands, service, packaging.' (Cochoy, 1998: 213, cited in Lury 2004: 23) Burberry's radical change didn't occur until its re-branding exercise in 1997, a re-brand that coincided with what Lash and Urry (1994) describe as a rise in creative advertising in the 1980s and 90s, which promoted

'...new forms of consumer research (especially lifestyle research, attitudinal and motivational research and psycho-demographics), but also aimed to construct for consumers an imaginary lifestyle within which the emotional and aesthetic values of the product were elaborated.' (Nixon, 1997: 195, cited in Lury, 2004: 25)

After its re-brand, Burberry started differentiate itself from other companies in the same marketplace including, for example, Aquascutum, by developing an 'imaginary lifestyle' that initially focused on Stella Tennant's chic rural life that successfully elaborated an existence of wealth and privilege. The company moved away from simply 'meeting the needs of people at the lower end of Maslow's scale' (Lury, 2004: 34) - for example keeping the wearer dry and warm, to what Marzano describes as higher levels of need, such as 'self-actualization and cultural well-being' (Marzano, 2000: 59 cited in Lury, 2004: 34).

Burberry understood and accepted that 'the organizing principles of product qualification were not to do with function, but with identity and communication with a specific group of consumers' (Lury, 2004: 58), and this knowledge led

the company to reach out and communicate more fluidly and confidently with younger consumers: by putting Kate Moss in a classic trench coat, it ‘re-framed’ the market as it stopped being a garment to keep out the wind and rain, and became instead a stylized, high fashion element of the brand that told a myriad different stories.

The downside for Burberry however, was that by re-framing the market to attract younger consumers to the brand, they also – through Moss, attracted young working-class consumers, a situation that was deepened by the addition of lower cost items – the Nova check bikini, bandana and baseball cap, to their product range. The inclusion of Moss disrupted a one hundred and forty year vision of the brand as belonging to the aristocrat, and brought with it significant complications of consumption, as despite the company’s successful manoeuvre into the realms of top international luxury brands, one of the biggest thorns in Burberry’s side was how to deal with the ‘misappropriation’ of its products by working class consumers. However, as chapter four shows, the company failed to learn its lesson about introducing new product lines without addressing issues of class, and the inclusion of Moss as brand ambassador sent mixed messages to working class consumers, particularly in the UK.

The ‘imaginary lifestyles’ that Burberry conjured through its advertising campaigns were highly contradictory, as the brand hadn’t configured which lifestyle consumers would ‘see’. So for example, in the ‘hen party’ advertisement, where Moss wears a Nova check bikini and white bridal veil, and we see a group of friends having fun - all signs of a pleasurable lifestyle, and indeed for many consumers it was an image that signalled a lifelong commitment and wedded bliss. However the same image was also able to trigger a much darker affect – one that Skeggs (2005) argues can be read symbolically as ‘disgusting, hen-partying woman’ (2005: 965) and the image becomes one that provoked moral outrage against white working class women,

which in turn prompted outpourings of hate-speech on UK-based bulletin boards. As chapter four shows, the company emerged unscathed, as pro-Burberry consumers weighed in on their behalf, condemning those who bought the brand without the requisite cultural capital. However none of this should have been a surprise to the company, as Lash and Lury (2007) remind us that the brand is largely a ‘source of domination, of power’ (2007: 5), and so it remained at Burberry.

Subsequent condemnations of working class women consuming Burberry followed, and a clear gender divide can be detected. Within ‘classic’ post-War subcultures attributed to men, including the Mods and even the terrifying Zulu Warriors, Partington (1992) argues that as they are thought to ‘reject commodities or subvert their values’ (1992: 149) this led to a development of subcultural ‘style’. In comparison, women are thought to consume passively with a focus on ‘fashion’, and certainly ‘Oldfart’s’ online comments to ‘Legs from Leeds’ emphasise the transitory nature of ‘fashion’, and its subsequent negative impact on quality. This lends male working class culture the status of ‘subversion’ - wearing Burberry can be viewed as creative appropriation, and attempting to dress like an ‘English country gent’ becomes a valued cultural practice. However, we know from chapter four that being ‘respectable’ was important to working class women, and in Britain’s post-War era they used consumption for what Partington (1992) describes as a ‘means of social betterment’ (1992: 149) however after Danniella Westbrook was photographed with her child wearing Burberry head to toe, everything changed.

As Westbrook became what Lawler (2005) describes as ‘the bad object’, we can see from the multiplicity of press reports and online bulletin boards that attributing negative value to working class women wearing Burberry had become commonplace and went unchallenged. The long history of working-class consumption of luxury brands was not able to stem the flow of excessive

class hatred towards what had become known as ‘chav’ culture, and especially for what Tyler (2010) describes as the ‘celebrity chav’, and Westbrook became a target for what Tyler (2010) argues is the ‘embodiment of class hatred’ (2010: 379). Westbrook was attacked twice – once as a working class woman and again as a ‘celebrity chav’ and she became inextricably bound to all that was

‘bad’ about consuming Burberry, including the over-consumption of what might have been fake products. Westbrook stood in for, and became emblematic of other working class women who were deemed ‘tasteless’, and her lack of cultural capital left her defenseless to accusations of lacking moral values. Equally, she was also used as an example of the drift away from the ‘old’ working class values of ‘thrift’ and ‘respectability’ to the far-removed ‘chav’ culture.

*Nova check ‘shell suit’
Image courtesy of chavscum.co.uk*



The pejorative ‘chav’ label became gender neutral, and those identified as belonging

to this subculture were pushed to the margins as being abject and pathologically excessive. We see how these ‘bad’ consumers were bound up with incidents of counterfeiting at Burberry, however the brand continued to triumph through increasingly rigorous trademark laws. Lury (2004) points out that legislation

‘...recognizes the mark holder’s right to protection in terms of distinctiveness in such a way to promote the ownership of an investment in innovation (whether it is inventive or not) while denying the capacity to innovate to consumers.’ (2004: 128)

It could be argued that by reconfiguring a Nova check ‘shell suit’ (see image on previous page) comprising a baggy top and tracksuit bottoms, the ‘bad’ consumer has innovated using readily available materials, however the new silhouette contravenes trademark law, and in this instance the brand acts as a ‘pre-emptive barrier (a limit) against innovation by others.’ (Lury, 2004: 159) In many ways, the ‘bad’ Burberry consumer provides a classic example of Lash and Lury’s (2007) argument that its products are no longer identical objects, determined by their intentions as producers, and that the cultural identity of the Nova check suit has spun out of their control, crucially however, this movement does not contribute to any form of capital accumulation.

Middle-class consumption of Burberry can be understood within Lash and Lury’s (2007) argument on the construction of difference: where working-class consumption of Burberry was predominantly linked to the highly distinctive Nova check, and its wearers have been identified as sharing the ‘same’ largely retrogressive identity, middle class consumers strive for difference and actively add value. Burberry caters to middle-class needs by offering a range of products and experiences that develop an intimate profile of the consumer that simultaneously encourages difference and brand loyalty. For example within Burberry Bespoke, where customers ‘design’ their own trench coat using a selection of fabrics, finishes, lengths, colour choices, and fastenings, critics - including digital marketing research company Econsultancy, have pointed out that Burberry Bespoke isn’t bespoke at all, but is closer to ‘mass customization’ (Chownay, 2011) as its links to tailoring and made-to-measure are nonexistent. However the value in Burberry Bespoke lies in developing what Lury (2004) describes as a genuine one-to-one relationship with its target customers. Similarly, as chapter five shows, Art of the Trench, a street-style photo-blog that was intended to be an inclusive brand platform exhibiting the diversity of Burberry’s customers, is found to be a ‘social media-cum-advertising [project]’ (The Sartorialist, 2009). The friendly face of the brand is communicated to

consumers through an apparent generosity, however the real motivation behind both Art of the Trench and Burberry Bespoke was the wealth of information it gave the brand on individual customers. Though Lury (2004) writes about Levi's 'Personal Pair' customized jeans in a pre-digital age, the reasoning behind the project shares many similarities with Burberry's online brand channels:

'The programme is also important for another reason: size, style and colour preference details of each customer can be stored and accessed, giving the company a wealth of valuable information about each 'Personal Pair' customer. Since these individuals tend to be some of the most motivated and loyal Levi's brand customers, our ability to know who they are and what they want provides us with a powerful way to ensure their continued engagement with the Levi's brand today and in the future.'

(Holloway, 1999: 71, cited in Lury, 2004: 42-43)

Through Ahrendts, Burberry has successfully developed its online profile and systems of communication with its customers, some of which are strikingly similar to Levi's 'Personal Pair' initiative back in 1995, and in an interview with the Wall Street Journal (Sonne, 2011) Ahrendts, speaking about Burberry Bespoke, tells them "Honestly it makes no difference at all" how many custom coats Burberry sells, Ms. Ahrendts says. "It's customer engagement. You want them to engage with the brand." (Sonne, 2011)

What is undoubted is Burberry's development of highly specific brand channels that attract and engage a diverse range of consumers, including Burberry Bespoke, Art of the Trench, but also Runway to Reality and Burberry Acoustic, where the brand collects and analyses personal data of its consumers. Lury (2004) argues that 'the ways in which the incorporation of information about the everyday activities of subjects – which may be collected with or without their knowledge or permission – is an essential part of brand-making.' (2004: 8-9)

However, this raises some important questions for brands in terms of personal privacy, and ‘makes the distinction between surveillance and assistance’ (Lury, 2004: 136) hard to trace. With Burberry’s wholehearted embrace of the digital in both their online platforms - where consumer activity is tracked through multiple data points, and within their bricks and mortar stores, where Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology builds up a detailed consumer profile, it has become difficult to judge if the brand is helping customers or spying on them.



Burberry's RFID tags in interactive mirror show of A-W 2013 overcoat
Image courtesy of images.idiva.com

The RFID tags and corresponding images in the interactive mirrors serve two specific roles: firstly they allow the brand to personalize images for each consumer and to re-embed some of its other key selling points – for example that Burberry still uses hand-made production techniques (see the hand stitching in image above), which allows the brand to charge premium prices, and secondly, the technology can record not just what consumers have purchased, but what they have tried on in the changing room. At Forbes ‘Brand Voice’ (Soudager, 2013) they report that Burberry’s use of big data is used to build

[consumer profiles] based on what garments the customers have tried on (they are tracked using those RFID tags — with the customers' permission, of course). Burberry recently launched a program called Customer 360, a data-driven shopping experience which invites customers to digitally share their buying history, shopping preferences and fashion phobias. The program relies on SAP HANA platform — which can analyze huge amounts of data quickly — to analyze customer likes and tastes and deliver that information to employees on the sales floor via their tablet devices. Sales associates who are assisting customers can also access information about their past purchases on a tablet computer. (Soudager, 2013)

The mannequins, the interactive mirrors, and the RFID tags in Burberry's stores all work collectively to deliver what Manovich (2006) describes as an experiential environment as data 'embedded in objects located in the space around the user' (2006: 221) and used not only to give information to the consumer, but are also forms of powerful data extraction for the brand.

As chapters three and five show, Burberry's transformation from commodity to cultural product carried a level of uncertainty, yet it used its brand interface to confidently declare its differentiation from other luxury fashion brands by using a wide range of brand channels to reach new consumers and to retain and engage existing ones. One of its most high profile initiatives, Runway to Reality, transformed the localized runway show at London Fashion Week, usually seen by a handful of fashion insiders, into a cultural production viewed as it happened on a global basis. By providing instant access to almost every element of the catwalk show, from the models' backstage preparations to a glimpse of the new collections moments before Burberry's VIP guests, but chiefly because Burberry had developed proprietary software that allowed any customer with access

to a laptop, tablet or smartphone, to make an instant purchase as the show progressed, which fundamentally shifted the contemporary production / retail model. Christopher Bailey, Burberry's Chief Creative Officer, described the new retail model to the Telegraph (Alexander, 2010) "You can buy the clothes, the accessories, and all the make-up too" as they come down the runway. This challenged other forms of retail production and delivery, however what hasn't changed is that consuming the clothes is still a matter of 'chance'. Though referring to Nike, Lury (2004) argues that 'as a brand, Nike is available both as a matter of course and a matter of chance' (Lury, 2004: 67), and this argument can be readily applied to Burberry, as despite the promise of a quick delivery via Runway to Reality, chance is still a factor. However, as Marshal Cohen, chief industry analyst at market research firm NPD Group points out "Luxury isn't luxury if everyone has it" (Sonne, 2011), and this element of chance has helped Burberry overcome a particular dilemma as 'the waiting list' is a tried and tested luxury fashion barometer, indicating levels of desire even before products have arrived in store.

Burberry was able to use the support of London Fashion Week – part of an official international programme organized by the British Fashion Council to promote Runway to Reality. However as the brand had created its own event, it essentially had no competitors on social media within the luxury fashion sector, and Runway to Reality successfully attracted a wide ethnoscene, particularly in China, North America, Japan, Spain and Russia. However, Burberry's runway shows have become what the Guardian (Cartner-Morley, 2015) described as 'not so much a fashion parade as a key messaging moment for one of the giant brands of the modern age', and that the

'...physical audience at the Kensington Gardens venue for Monday's Burberry show at London fashion week were dwarfed by the global audience for the live stream. (Burberry opts to show at 1pm GMT, rather

than in a more traditionally prestigious evening slot, in order to reach Chinese fans before they go to sleep.)' (Cartner-Morley, 2015)

Burberry has become conscious of what Cartner-Morley (2015) describes as 'internet-eroded attention spans', and has designed its show around the constraints of a global economy.

Chapter five shows how Burberry has used other brand channels including Burberry Acoustic, Art of the Trench, as well as Runway to Reality to build what Lury (2004) describes as 'a set of relations between products and services' (2004: 26) and it has successfully constructed its own 'differential classification system' (Baudrillard, 1997, cited in Lury, 2004: 26). Burberry's system of objects includes trench coats, singer-song writers, 'vintage' delivery vans, private estates, and street style 'selfies', all of which have helped it to attract an immense global following, who encounter and engage with the brand from many different perspectives. Burberry Acoustic helps consumers to access the 'abstract surface' (Lash & Lury, 2007: 103) of the brand through non-visual cues - via the purity of their voices and instruments, and by showcasing 'young British bands that Burberry believes in alongside content on the Burberry clothes collections' (Sander, 2014), Burberry engages consumers with the wider culture of the brand. This is in many ways a return to what Lash and Lury (2007) term 'narrow casting', as consumers find their way to the brand through artists on Burberry Acoustic, they selectively choose, and subscribe to, the Burberry channel on YouTube as a way of listening to their favourite artists. Burberry Acoustic has combined fashion and music - which are both viewed as 'cultural products' as a way of achieving what Lury (2004) describes as a 'process of brand positioning.' (2004: 31) Burberry has inverted McLuhan's (2005) argument that the medium is the message, and seized upon Castell's (1996) view that in the information age, the message is truly the medium.

Burberry's use of social media platforms has won a range of prestigious innovation awards, yet it remains what the Big Group describe as 'anti-social social media' (Williamson, 2013). Burberry's reluctance to allow consumers to 'talk back' to the brand echoes another of Lury's (2004) arguments that 'while brands rely upon the participation of consumers, they place severe limits on interactions with them.' (2004: 137) However, it could be argued that this limitation is consistent with the shallowness of what Lash and Lury (2007) describe as 'the flattened medium, the browsing depth, of the internet' (2007: 196), and certainly the brand has deployed innovative ways of developing a deep relationship with consumers that helps to move beyond a one-way model of exchange and single stage transaction, to one that ultimately leads to a long-term, inherently dynamic and interactive marketing practice. Lury describes this practice as 'relationship marketing' (2004: 44), and one that 'subsumes consumer activities into itself' (2004: 47), and Burberry uses its social media platforms as a way of presenting a personality to its global audience, one that 'enables the brand to appear to address, to recognize and thereby 'to love' the consumer.' (Berlant, 1993: 186, cited in Lury, 2004: 92)

Though Burberry has been very reluctant to communicate directly with their consumers, one of the ways in which it connects with them is via online initiatives involving 'little presents'. Chapter five shows a campaign involving Burberry's Twitter followers, 'A Piece of the Runway', where the brand used a digital facsimile of an engraving featuring a customers' name. This 'gift' aimed to promote the 'Smart Personalisation' programme, and directly engage consumers, encouraging them to 'trade up' to the premium price scheme. And as part of its Facebook strategy, the brand launched its Burberry Body fragrance exclusively to Burberry Facebook subscribers in August 2011, one month ahead of the official release date in September. Though ostensibly a 'gift' to its Facebook followers, the strategy had four main advantages for Burberry: firstly it was able to deny access to beauty bloggers, many of whom broke

strict embargoes set by brands, and who could ruin a launch with a single bad review; secondly, it made conventional launches by PR firms seem outmoded; thirdly, in order to receive the ‘gift’, consumers were forced to ‘like’ the Facebook page and give personal details to the brand, and finally it made Burberry look generous to its consumers. However as Bourdieu (1977) points out, ‘little presents’ can also be seen as

‘...halfway between ‘gratuitous gifts’ and the ‘most rigorously forced gifts.’
(Bourdieu, 1977 cited in Lash and Lury, 2007: 137)

And as Mauss (1950) argues, the ‘gift’ makes and re-makes social relationships; the gift is highly structured and has a relational purpose - it creates a compulsion to give and receive. So as Burberry give away samples of its new fragrance, consumers feel pressured to give away more and more personal details to the brand, on the understanding that this might give them a ‘better consumer’ status. However, as Lash and Lury point out, the ‘social bond it creates is not, as in the classic gift, lifelong and enduring,’ (2007: 206) which compels the brand to keep on offering ‘gifts’ in exchange for information.

Burberry didn’t just offer digitized engravings or samples of Burberry Body to its consumers, in Chapter one we saw how it made little gifts to its workforce at Christmas time. These ‘gifts’ were much higher in value, but performed the same role, as they ‘bound’ employees to the brand. As Lash and Lury argue, free gifts ‘[in their movements] create and reinforce binding yet symbolically attenuated social relationships’ (2007: 142) In this instance, ‘the little gift’ was rendered useless, and rejected on the grounds that it was a cruel reminder of better times. This ‘gift’ fell into what Lash and Lury describe as an element ‘characteristic of the global culture industry’ (2007: 206), and one that has been replaced by ‘a social bond of weak ties’ (*ibid*). Burberry’s parting ‘gift’ to the town of Trefor was its ten-year trust fund, however this has proved to be

inaccessible to many of its intended recipients, and further underlines the decay of the relationship between Burberry and its workforce, rendering it the ultimate social bond of weak ties.

Burberry can be summed up as a classic component of the global culture industry, one that Lash and Lury (2007) argue is ‘at the same time deeper and more superficial than classical culture and the classical commodity’ (2007: 182), and certainly Burberry attempts to flatten any sense of difference in the way the brand is experienced on a global basis, whilst mining ever deeper into consumer activity via the ‘flatness of the interface’ (2007: 182) - the screen of the smartphone or tablet, and not the plate glass window of the store. Ahrendts’ desire to create a ‘pure’ brand has helped to smooth out any irregularities experienced by consumers, and her reasoning behind her decision is strikingly simple, as she told the Harvard Business Review in 2013:

“From Apple to Starbucks, I love the consistency—knowing that anywhere in the world you can depend on having the same experience in the store or being served a latte with the same taste and in the same cup. That’s great branding.” (Ahrendts, 2013)

However, as Lash and Lury (2007) point out ‘there is always a tension in the culture industry, always a tension between standardization and difference. [At stake in the global culture industry is something that is neither singularity nor commodity, but difference itself. Difference in an age of globalization, of flows, is always abstract difference.]’ (2007: 187) We’ve seen how Burberry has struggled with this sense of difference, shackled as they are to primarily the same signature products, where they are compelled to produce variations on the trench coat season after season, and while the brand has attempted to capture an ‘abstract’ difference, through their choice of models, venues, and advertising storyboards, it has not always been successful. It could also be argued that Burberry is ‘caught between the logics of utility and emotion’ (Lash

and Lury, 2007: 191), creating a strong link between the ‘dependable’ trench coat, and an emotional bond to Kate Moss, who has played a long-term, but an uneven role in Burberry’s post re-brand life. The trench coat is a strong element of Burberry’s brand interface: it is situated as a communication device within the consumer experience, and is a key element in its global visibility. Which, given that the trench coat is ‘a true classic; the trench coat is the holy grail of wardrobe staples’ (Warburton, 2014), and ‘as essential to your wardrobe as jeans’ (Wang, 2014), indicates Burberry’s success at achieving a high level of distinctiveness and difference to other brands.

However, the difficulty faced by Burberry is that the brand is still in a state of flux, and as Karin Knorr-Cetina argues

‘[Objects] are characteristically open, question-generating and in the process of being defined.’ (Knorr-Cetina, 2000 cited in Lury, 2004: 129)

Burberry’s long biography and its emergence as a brand is in many ways ‘a process and projection rather than [a] definite thing.’ (Knorr-Cetina, 2000 cited in Lury, 2004: 129-130). And the possibilities raised by the ‘openness’ of the brand – which has been consumed as an element of warfare, as a sign of class hierarchy, and as an object of resistance, are infinite.

Burberry’s connections to contested labour, ‘bad’ consumption, questionable management tactics, and ersatz heritage, has not impacted on the brands’ global profile in the long term, and the company treats them as isolated incidents, local to the UK. And though Burberry depends heavily on its ‘Britishness’ as a key selling point, it has transcended mundane geographical links in order to conjour an image of the country through imaginative associations – the aristocrat, Pearly Kings and Queens, and Regency architecture, amongst others, that help the brand to ‘stay British’ without the need to produce its products in Britain, which has rendered the company as a high value brand.

Ultimately, however, in Burberry's long history, the single most talked about incident was Danniella Westbrook's ill-fated connection with the company, which has become one that encapsulates a bitter dispute about brand value and brand values and is indicative of Burberry's contradictory position as an upper class brand and valued icon of British conservatism.

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